



The lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak has disrupted supply chains. One crucial chain is delivery of information and insight — news and analysis that is fair and accurate and reliably reported from across a nation in quarantine.

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'By Diwali, we should be getting the bulk of our air traffic back in form'

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MINISTER FOR CIVIL AVIATION,
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BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNNY



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APRIL-JUNE FIGURES

Fears of contraction, GDP data today will mark Covid effect & phase of recession

Most estimates put first quarter contraction at an average of 20%; agriculture outlier

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

THE APRIL-JUNE Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will mark India's entry into a recessionary phase — with two consecutive quarters of GDP contraction, the trend is expected to continue in the July-September quarter as well.

With economic activity severely disrupted in the first two months of this fiscal, hit hard by a series of localised lockdowns and rising Covid-19 cases, GDP contraction for the first quarter is being pegged at an average 20 per cent by economists, with the de-growth range between 15.2 per cent and 25.5 per cent.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) will release data for April-June Monday which is expected to be the worst since India started reporting quarterly data in 1996. The UK economy has seen the biggest slump in June quarter GDP among the top 20 global economies, with a 21.7 per cent annual contraction in growth — its deepest recession on record.

Experts, however, warn that the numbers are unlikely to capture the real extent of the economic crisis, given that the small-scale sector and informal sector are more affected than the organised sector. This distress will not get reflected in the GDP

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Daily cases scale record peaks, govt hopes it only reflects massive testing

KAUNAIN SHERIFF M
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

AS INDIA discovers a record number of new novel coronavirus cases, more than what any other country has reported on any single day since the outbreak began, the government is taking heart from the fact that there has been no unusual rise in the positivity rate, suggesting that the surge in cases could only be due to the increased testing numbers in recent days.

For the last four days, India has been detecting more than



Students leave after appearing for the B.Ed. entrance exam, at the Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi on Sunday. The university is holding entrance exams for undergraduate and post-graduate courses in two phases — August 24-31 and September 9-18. BHU Controller of Examinations, Manoj Pandey, said they were following the Covid-19 protocol. PTI

EXPLAINED
Benchmark for road ahead

MONDAY'S DATA is critical because it will provide the first benchmark on the state of the economy after the pandemic and the series of lockdowns. RBI, GST meeting, McKinsey's report on jobs — all point to severe challenges. When the pandemic curve begins to flatten will be key to recovery too.

TRACKING INDIA'S COVID CURVE

181 DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN
CASES: 35,42,733
RECOVERED: 27,13,933
DEATHS: 63,498
TESTS: 4,14,61,636 **DOUBLING RATE: 32.93****



KEY STATES TO WATCH	TOTAL CASES	SURGE IN 24 HOURS	7-DAY AVG GROWTH*	DOUBLING RATE**
■ Maharashtra	7,64,281	16,286	1.86%	38.78
■ Tamil Nadu	4,15,590	6,352	1.54%	46.73
■ Andhra	4,14,164	10,548	2.64%	27.32
■ Karnataka	3,27,076	8,324	2.68%	26.91
■ Uttar Pradesh	2,19,457	5,633	2.67%	26.94

* Compounded Daily Growth Rate over last 7 days ** Calculated over 7-day growth

CASE FATALITY RATIO	POSITIVITY RATE	DAILY IN, DAILY OUT
7 DAYS EARLIER: 1.86 NOW: 1.79	7 DAYS EARLIER: 8.63 NOW: 8.54	DETECTED TODAY: 78,761 RECOVERED TODAY: 64,935
Deaths as a ratio of positive cases (in %); indicator of progress in averting deaths	Positives against number tested (in %); indicator of the spread of disease	Becoming sick vs recovering; more recoveries for 14 days may signal the peak

Data as on August 29, released by Union Ministry of Health, ICMR and states. Often daily numbers include data from previous days. As such, trends based on daily numbers are indicative, not definitive

EXPLAINED

SIMPLY PUT WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN GDP DATA**WHY FIRST REINFECTION CASES WON'T CHANGE APPROACH**
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Covid response: external lenders commit \$6.5 bn, five times the Budget estimate

GEORGE MATHEW & SUNNY VERMA
MUMBAI, NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

MULTILATERAL AGENCIES such as World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have committed \$6.5 billion (around Rs 48,000 crore) to India to fight the novel coronavirus since April — this is more than five times the \$1.29 billion (Rs 9,558 crore) that the government had estimated from these agencies this year in the Union Budget, which was presented a month before the pandemic began to spread rapidly in the country.

Much of this funding is being frontloaded for disbursal in the current year as an emergency response to the impact of the pandemic; some of the loan will likely come in 2021-22, government sources said. The biggest chunk of the funding is from the World Bank, which has extended \$2.75 billion to India as part of a Covid relief package.

The sources said the government expects net receipts to increase further as multilateral agencies step up funding to build health facilities and related infrastructure. The Finance

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BJP MLA QUERY TO HOUSE

UP govt asks for count of Brahmins with gun licences, then backtracks

Letter to DMs for details on those killed; House official says query not accepted

MANISH SAHU
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 30

RESPONDING TO a query to the Assembly by a BJP MLA on the "killing" of Brahmins, their insecurity and gun ownership data, the Uttar Pradesh Government sent an unusual letter to all District Magistrates asking for details on the number of Brahmins who have applied and received arms licences.

The letter, signed by Prakash Chandra Agarwal, Under Secretary, state Home Department, was sent on August 18 seeking details from the districts by August 21.

Agarwal declined to comment but a senior official signalled a backtracking by the government and said the details "are no longer being pursued."

However, at least one district has sent the data the letter had asked for.

The letter says that Devmani Dwivedi (BJP MLA from Lambhua in Sultanpur) had sent a note on August 16 to UP Vidhan Sabha Principal Secretary (Pradeep Dubey) raising questions as per Assembly rules and procedures.



Issue gained momentum after police killed Dubey (above) & aides, all Brahmin

Dwivedi, the letter said, had sought information from the Home Minister — who is Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath — on how many Brahmins in the state were killed in the last three years; how many killers were arrested, how many were convicted; what are the government's plans for providing security to Brahmins; will the government provide arms licences to Brahmins on priority basis; how many Brahmins applied for arms licences and how many of them have been issued licences.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

22-year-old Pulwama shopkeeper chose target of attack: NIA

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

WHILE EACH step of the February 2019 Pulwama attack was carried out on the directions of the Jaish-e-Muhammad bosses in Pakistan, the target itself — a convoy of vehicles carrying CRPF personnel — was chosen by a 22-year-old shopkeeper from Kakapora in the same South Kashmir district, investigators have found.

This man's contribution to the attack was highly appreciated by the key planner of the attack, Mohammed Umar Farooq — in a voice message sent to Pakistan, Mohammed Umar compared him to Afzal Guru, the 2001 Parliament attack convict who was hanged in 2013.

In its 13,500-page charge-sheet, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has claimed that



NIA found Shakir Bashir Magrey's photo from Umar Farooq's (right) phone

this man, Shakir Bashir Magrey, a fresh JeM recruit who ran a furniture shop near the Lethpora bridge on the Jammu-Srinagar highway, was the most important local cog in the February 14, 2019 terrorist bombing in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed.

The NIA announced the arrest of Shakir Bashir Magrey in February this year.

After Jaish chief Masood Azhar's nephew Usman Haider

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Year later, NRC in limbo but those out of it paying the price — passports to marriage

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, AUGUST 30

IN MARCH, Shahjahan Ali Ahmed, in his early 30s and a social activist in Assam's Barpeta and Baksa districts, filed his nomination as a candidate of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections.

Since then, however, local

workers of the ruling Bodoland People's Front (BPF) have posted a barrage of comments on social media deriding the candidate. "His name is not in NRC, how can this problematic man be the UPPL's candidate?" read one comment.

Ahmed and 29 other members of his family did not find a place in the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) published on August 31 last year. He



At an NRC centre in Guwahati. Express file

says the family has documents dating back to 1951, well before the cut-off date of March 24, 1971, and wants to appeal and get their names re-included.

But how, he asks. It's been a year since 19 lakh people were excluded from the NRC in Assam. And they have not yet been issued rejection orders with which they can appeal at the state's Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

AC train passengers may not get pillows, sheets, towels even after pandemic is over

AVISHEK G DASTIDAR
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

THE INDIAN Railways may stop providing blankets, pillows, hand towels and sheets in its air-conditioned coaches when it resumes full services, even after the pandemic ends.

While a formal decision is yet to be taken, the issue is learnt to have been discussed at a high-

level video conference between Railway Board top brass and zonal and divisional officials earlier this week.

Three top officials who attended the video conference confirmed this to *The Indian Express*. "We are moving in that direction," said a senior Railway Ministry official.

Sources said a committee is being formed to decide what to do with the mechanised mega

laundries, set up to wash the linen under the Build-Operate-Own-Transfer model across India.

The Railways is estimated to spend Rs 40-50 for washing each linen set. According to estimates, there are about 18 lakh linen sets in circulation at present. A blanket remains in service for about 48 months, and is washed once a month. At present no new linen items are being procured, sources said.

Besides the cost involved, linen sets, especially blankets and sheets, have been a regular cause of passenger complaints and even Parliament questions.

Moreover, in the last few months, about 20 railway divisions have given contracts to private vendors for selling disposable blankets, pillows and sheets at stations at cheap prices.

Danapur Division of East

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PAGE 1
ANCHOR**HAMZAK KHAN**
JAIPUR, AUGUST 30

■ "Baba, tu yeh bata ki yeh sab kya kar dala tune. Jaldi bata (Baba, tell me why you did all this. Tell me quickly!)", I asked him in a gruff voice. What he said in response astounded me. 'Galti kar di, galti kar di maine (Committed a mistake, I committed a mistake).'

■ "The Gujarat police...re-



vealed that... they [Asaram's followers] had planned to kill her [Investigating Officer Chanchal Mishra] by installing an IED and blowing up her vehicle."

■ "Tum aisa nahin kar sakte. Tum ko abhi upar se orders aa-jayenge ki mujhko arrest nahin kar sakte (You can do nothing of the sort. You will soon receive orders from superiors that you cannot arrest me)", Asaram tried bluffing...In response, Subhash took out his mobile

phone from his trouser pocket and switched it off..."

SELF-STYLED GODMAN Asaram Bapu was arrested seven years ago. But even today, IPS officer Ajay Pal Lamba, who led the police team that August, says he gets threat calls from the rape convict's followers. So much so, that Lamba's wife once even stopped sending their daughter to school for a few days.

All that trauma, and all the drama, behind that sensational arrest has now been captured in a book *Gunning for the Godman: The True Story Behind Asaram Bapu's Conviction* by Lamba him-



Asaram Bapu was arrested in 2013. File

self. "Ever since they (Asaram's followers) came to know that a book has been written, the threat calls have increased," says Lamba, 42, who is now Additional Commissioner of Police, Jaipur.

Parts of the book, which will be released virtually on September 5, read like an OTT thriller, starting with how Lamba chose the best officers, in his team "Tough Twenty", who went undercover and mingled with Asaram's followers or excelled at legal angles, interrogation, surveillance and cyber skills.

Lamba writes that he even

asked them to keep an eye on each other in case anyone was being affected "or compromised due to political and departmental pressures, influences, threats or monetary offers".

Published by Harper Collins and co-authored by Sanjeev Mathur, editorial head at The Book Bakers Literary Agency, the book highlights how the 2005-batch IPS officer leveraged the TV screen to flush out Asaram before arresting him in 2013 within 10 days of receiving a rape complaint from Delhi Police.

Lamba, who was DCP (Jodhpur West) at the time,

writes that he bluffed at a press conference about dispatching a team to arrest Asaram. A friend, who had watched the telecast, informed that Asaram had turned up at Bhopal airport. Lamba then shared this nugget with the media.

"It was exactly what I had wanted. With the media following the man and recording every movement of his from Bhopal airport onwards, I did not need any kind of surveillance to be put on him from our end. The man was running scared and heading straight towards the net that we

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5 GOVT & POLITICS

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



NOT FOR NOW

KEEPING IN mind the Covid-19 situation and the suffering it has caused, Justice Arun Mishra, who is set to retire on September 2, declined to attend a virtual farewell organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association as per tradition. Requesting that he be excused, Justice Mishra wrote to the SCBA President and senior advocate Dushyant Dave, promising to pay the Bar a visit when the situation normalises.

WAIT AND WATCH

THE SUPREME Court had announced last week that it is set to restart physical hearing of at least 1,000 cases on a trial basis from September 1. Keeping in mind social distancing, officials had redesigned seating in some courtrooms. However, sources indicate that few lawyers have consented to appearing in court next week. If the turnout remains low, the court could call off physical hearings for now.

FOR NUTRITION

AS ONE of the solutions to malnutrition, the Ministry of Women and Child Development is now pushing the development of kitchen gardens. "Poshan ke liye Paudhe" is now being envisioned as a means to tackle malnutrition by growing "nutrient-filled" fruits and vegetables. The kitchen gardens are proposed at anganwadi centres in villages and towns to begin with. The announcement comes at the onset of September, which is celebrated as National Nutrition Month in the country, and will be a part of a number of events planned by the Ministry, which will mostly be virtual.

Maken says BJP killing democracy but couldn't succeed in Rajasthan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR, AUGUST 30

NEWLY-APPOINTED Congress in-charge for Rajasthan and the party's national general secretary Ajay Maken said on Sunday that the BJP is killing democracy in the entire country through its money power and misuse of security agencies but the party could not succeed in Rajasthan.

Maken said this on the sidelines of his first visit to the state after being appointed as the in-charge of Rajasthan following the month-long political crisis in the state.

"Rajasthan is one such state which proved one thing last month. If anyone had doubts about the warriors of Rajasthan, that will not be there now. In the entire country, by using its money power and unethically misusing the CBI and ED, the BJP killed democracy in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Manipur, Goa. After that when they tried this in Rajasthan, they had to suffer a stinging defeat," said Maken, in Alwar district on Sunday.

Maken, who later arrived in Jaipur, will remain in Rajasthan till Wednesday and interact with party workers and leaders from various regions of the state such



Ajay Maken meets Ashok Gehlot on Sunday.

as Jaipur and Ajmer divisions.

He later met both Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Pilot at their respective residences in Jaipur. State Congress president Govind Singh Dotasara accompanied Maken to both Gehlot and Pilot's residences.

Maken had replaced Congress leader Avinash Pandey as the in-charge of Rajasthan after the party appointed him to the post following the truce between the party high command and the MLAs loyal to former deputy chief minister and party president of the state, Sachin Pilot.

Maken is also part of the three-member committee set up by the Congress to look into the grievances raised by Pilot and his loyalist MLAs.

Indian Express that only 11 per cent of Bihar's population is urbanised. While he admitted there could be a dip in some urban pockets, he added that there is "still at least two months time".

Modi also said that the "panic" seen in the previous months is now dissipating gradually.

A senior RJD leader, however, said that according to the party's reading, the RJD-led Opposition alliance is likely to be the beneficiary of any change in the voting pattern.

The RJD leader said: "We believe this (dip in voting percentage) will be of particular harm to the BJP. The fear of Covid is highest in urban areas, and among

MANN KI BAAT

PM: Time to be vocal for local toys, India can be major hub

Modi also urges people to consider keeping dogs from Indian breeds as pets

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday called upon start-ups and entrepreneurs to work towards promotion of the indigenous toy industry.

In his monthly radio address, Mann ki Baat, he also called for promoting indigenous dog breeds.

Pointing out that India had a "very little" share in the global toy market of Rs 7 lakh crore, he said, "Now, just spare a thought for a nation which has so much of heritage, tradition, variety, young population, will it feel good to have such little share in the toy market? Not at all..."

He called upon "start-up friends" and "new entrepreneurs" to "team up for toys..." and said it is time to "get vocal for local toys".

The Prime Minister said that in the National Education Policy, "a lot of attention has been given on the impact of toys on different aspects of children's lives". He said toys "augment activity; and also "give flight to our aspirations". "I read somewhere what Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore had said about toys, the best toy is that which is incomplete; a toy that



PM said India had a very small share in the global toy market

children together complete while playing," he said.

The Prime Minister said he had held deliberations with Children University of Gandhinagar and ministries of Women and Child Development, Education and Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises on how India can become a big hub of toy production. "There has been a rich tradition of local toys in our country... Some parts of India are developing also as toy clusters... Like, Channapattina in Ramanagara in Karnataka, Kondapalli in Krishna in Andhra Pradesh, Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, Dhubri in Assam, Varanasi in UP..." he said.

Referring to computer games, he said the themes of these games are currently "mostly extraneous". "Our country has so many ideas, so many concepts; our history has been very rich. Can we make games based on that? I call upon the young talent of the country—make games in India and make games based on India too," he said.

Cows are like family, sin to kill them, says Karnataka minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU, AUGUST 30

COWS ARE akin to a family member and it is a "sin" to kill them, Karnataka Medical Education Minister K Sudhakar said Sunday, even as the BJP government in the state mulls bringing back the anti-cow slaughter law. He also said cow dung acts as a disinfectant, recalling his family had owned a few cows in the past.

Terming cow slaughter a "sin", the minister said he would request CM B S Yediyurappa to ban slaughter of the animal.

"Cow is like a member of the family and its a crime to kill cows," Sudhakar said at the inauguration of a cow shelter in Chikkaballapura, a release from his office said. Also, there was a need for people's movement to create awareness against cow slaughter, he said, adding "being Indians, all state governments should ban cow slaughter".

Sudhakar said a detailed discussion on banning beef exports was required in both Houses of the Legislature. "Our party is committed to ban beef exports, there will be a decision soon on this," he said.

Animal Husbandry Minister Prabhu Chavan had recently said the state would soon implement a ban on cow slaughter, sale and consumption of beef, in line with other states.

CAG REPORT ON RAJASTHAN

In ODF state, toilets missing in half of PMAY houses surveyed

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

HIGHLIGHTING "SHORTCOMINGS" in the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) and its convergence with other schemes, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found that about half of the verified houses built under the scheme in Rajasthan did not have toilets, even though the state was declared 'Open Defecation Free' in 2018.

During a performance audit of PMAY-G in Rajasthan, CAG conducted a physical verification of 590 houses listed as "completed" in 59 gram panchayats across seven districts -- Baran, Bikaner, Bharatpur, Dausa, Jodhpur, Tonk and Udaipur. The findings have been presented in Report No. 1 of 2020 - General and Social Sector, Government of Rajasthan, which was tabled in the Assembly last week.

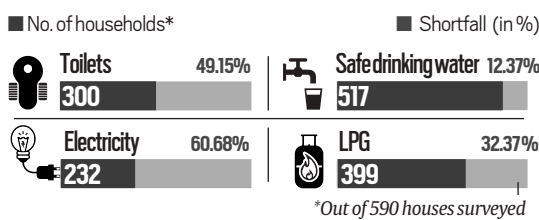
As per the Framework for Implementation of PMAY-G, issued by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2016, a house shall be treated as "complete" only after a toilet has been constructed. Toilets were supposed to be provided to PMAY-G beneficiaries through funding from Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G), MGNREGS or any other dedicated financing source.

"In the joint physical verification of 590 houses under PMAY-G, Audit observed that 290 houses (49.15 per cent) were



Report says many houses shown as "completed" were found incomplete during verification. Source: CAG report

WHAT CAG FOUND



*Out of 590 houses surveyed

Source: Report No. 1 of 2020 - General and Social Sector, Government of Rajasthan.

without toilets even when these houses were shown as 'completed'," says the report.

"Interestingly, 49.15 per cent of the sampled completed houses were without toilets even though the State has been declared Open Defecation Free," adds the report.

During the physical verifica-

tion survey, CAG also found that out of the 590 completed houses, only 232 (39.32 per cent) had electricity connection. "...358 houses (60.68 per cent) constructed remained without electricity connection," says the report.

Highlighting that many PMAY-G beneficiaries did not

who not only live for the country but also sacrifice themselves for the country. Such canines have played a very important role in thwarting blasts and terror conspiracies," he said.

The Prime Minister said the government's Aatma Nirbhar Bharat App innovation challenge saw around 7,000 entries "of which nearly two thirds" were from "youth of tier II and tier III cities". "This is a very auspicious indication for self-reliant India, for future of the country..." he said.

The PM said nourishment plays a big role in children being able to fulfil their potential and said September will be observed as Nutrition Month.

He said the government was setting up an Agricultural Fund of India which will have information about crops grown in each district and their nutritional value.

Reminding that the country will celebrate the 75th year of Independence in 2022, he said, "It is imperative that today's generation, our students remain familiar with heroes of freedom struggle... When our students are apprised of the history of the freedom struggle viz-a-viz their local surroundings—only then will we see the reverberations of it on the personality of the student."

SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT DEATH

Cong targets BJP over 'links' to film producer Ssingh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

THE CONGRESS Sunday waded into the Sushant Singh Rajput case, raising questions over the alleged links of film producer Sandip Ssingh with the BJP and claiming he had made "53 phone calls" to the Maharashtra office of the saffron party over the past few months. This came a day after Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said he would forward to the CBI complaints he had received about Ssingh, who produced the film *PM Narendra Modi*, and a "drug nexus" in Bollywood.

So far, the Congress at the national level had kept its distance from the row. With Ssingh's name surfacing, it has sensed an opportunity to turn the tables on the BJP. On Friday, the Maharashtra Congress said there was a need to probe the "BJP angle" in Rajput's death.

Spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi Sunday alleged the producer had made 53 calls to the Maharashtra BJP office in the last few months. "Was Ssingh the reason for showing alacrity in ordering CBI probe?" he asked.

Singhvi claimed that the posters of the PM biopic were unveiled by BJP leader and then Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis. "Who is the special per-

CBI QUIZZES RHEA FOR 3RD STRAIGHT DAY

Mumbai: For the third day in a row, actor Rhea Chakraborty was questioned by CBI in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case. She was questioned for nearly eight hours before she was allowed to leave around 7.30 pm. The agency is likely to also speak to Sushant's sister Meetu Singh, who was present at the actor's residence a day before he was found hanging on June 14. **ENS**

son... who is taking responsibility for this person, who claims to be the best friend of Rajput?" asked Singhvi.

On Friday, Maharashtra Congress spokesman Sachin Sawant had shared a picture of Ssingh with Fadnavis.

Fadnavis Saturday denied any link to Ssingh. "Why did the Mumbai Police not investigate these people earlier? The person in question may have been present at some function where I was present. There is also some report that the same person was the director of a movie to be made on Balasaheb Thackeray," he said.

Singh was unavailable for comment.

BENGAL

3 Visva-Bharati varsity officials dismissed for 'tampering' with minutes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 30

THREE SENIOR officials of Visva-Bharati University, including former acting vice-chancellor Sabujkalyan Sen, have been dismissed for allegedly tampering with a resolution recorded during the institute's executive council meeting in 2018.

The EC took the decision on Friday evening based on the recommendations made by the one-man Justice (retd) Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya Committee. Justice Bhattacharya went through the findings of another inquiry committee in the case that had found Sen and two others guilty of tampering "with the recording of an EC meeting held in February 2018".

According to an EC member, former officiating registrar Sougata Chattopadhyay and ex-finance officer Samit Roy were the others removed. The council, in an emergency meeting, dismissed all three with immediate effect. It comes just three days before Sen's retirement.

Sen was appointed the officiating V-C on February 2, 2018, days after Prof Swapan Dutta retired. Her tenure was set to last only for a few days. Sen, with the help of Chattopadhyay and Roy, allegedly "tampered with the minutes of the meeting" to extend her term. Sen termed the decision as "vindictive".

Covid fear may hit urban voting, Oppn hopes to gain

BJP, JD(U) leaders acknowledge percentage may dip, but say things will normalise in two months

DIPANKAR GHOSE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

AS INDICATIONS grow that Bihar Assembly elections will be held on time, political parties have begun analysing the peculiarities of voting and campaigning in times of Covid-19, in particular the effect on voting percentages, even as a section of Opposition leaders claim that this could be to their benefit.

Leaders across political lines agreed said that elections in these times could see a drop in voting percentages if the fear of coronavirus persists.

On Tuesday, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Sushil Modi told *The*

Indian Express that only 11 per cent of Bihar's population is urbanised. While he admitted there could be a dip in some urban pockets, he added that there is "still at least two months time".

Modi also said that the "panic" seen in the previous months is now dissipating gradually.

A senior RJD leader, however, said that according to the party's reading, the RJD-led Opposition alliance is likely to be the beneficiary of any change in the voting pattern.

The RJD leader said: "We believe this (dip in voting percentage) will be of particular harm to the BJP. The fear of Covid is highest in urban areas, and among



Dy CM Sushil Modi said only 11 pc of Bihar is urbanised

the rich and the affluent. Urban areas are where BJP is the strongest. The party claims to have the vote of upper-castes and Baniyas, communities that are by and large well to do. Many of these people may feel that it is too much of a risk to stand in queue with so many others to vote."

According to this leader, there may not be sweeping changes, and there will be some effect on the creamy layer of

other castes as well, "but in close seats it can be a big factor in our favour".

A senior JD(U) leader, who is a state minister, acknowledged that this is "something we have to look at and consider", but remained confident that the "weight of the caste arithmetic and the face of Nitish Kumar" make these conversations irrelevant.

"There are three big players in Bihar, and when two of them are together, it is almost impossible for any other government to be formed," the JD(U) leader said. "Internally we are talking about these voting patterns, and we will have to consider them, but the alliance (NDA) also has the support of other sections:

the SCs, EBC, and OBCs. If the wealthy BJP voter does not go to vote, will the healthy Yadav go to vote?"

In any case, the minister said, Bihar is slowly returning to normalcy, "and in two months the situation will be better".

But a leader from Lok Janshakti Party, an NDA constituent that has been critical of Nitish, said anti-incumbency could also play a role in these voting patterns.

"Anti-incumbency doesn't only mean voters shifting from one party to another. It also means voters not being enthusiastic to go out to vote for a particular side...(and) small shifts can affect close elections," the LJP leader said.

As Tej Pratap seeks tickets for loyalists, RJD tries to avoid repeat of rebellion

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, AUGUST 30

TEJ PRATAP Yadav, the elder son of RJD chief Lalu Prasad, is learnt to have demanded Assembly election tickets for four of his loyalists—an attempt to chisel out a more prominent space for himself within the party a year after his rebellion.

Tej Pratap recently visited Ranchi to meet the RJD chief, currently in jail, to put forward the demand. The former health minister is said to be weighing a contest from Hasanpur (Samastipur) if his estranged wife Aishwarya Rai contests from Mahua (Vaishali), which he represents.

Now, Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav is trying to avoid



Tejashwi Yadav met brother Tej Pratap on Saturday.

a repeat of the Lok Sabha poll drama of 2019 when his brother rebelled and fielded his own candidates as Independents from three Lok Sabha seats.

It is unclear what transpired in the conversation between Tej Pratap and Lalu. What is known, however, is that Tejashwi visited his brother's residence in Patna on Saturday night for dinner.

The names mooted by Tej

Pratap are that of Angesh Singh (Sheohar), Chandra Prakash (Jehanabad), Dr Sandeep Kar (Karakat) and Dharmendra Kumar (Harnaut). There is no word from the party on whether they will be given tickets.

An RJD source said: "Most senior party leaders want just one power centre and have been rallying behind Tejashwi. Several senior leaders could be upset if their candidates cannot be accommodated... But the party does not want to turn Tej a rebel."

On Tej Pratap's plans to contest from Hasanpur, this source said: "He probably does not want a situation of any rival party fielding his estranged wife Aishwarya Rai against him," Tej's father-in-law Chandrika Rai, a former minister, recently joined JD(U).

No lockdown in Haryana from September 1: Vij

Chandigarh: There will be no lockdown in Haryana from September 1 as the state government has withdrawn its August 28 order directing shops and malls to remain shut on Mondays and Tuesdays. Over the past fortnight, Haryana has changed its decisions on reimposing lockdown restrictions. On August 21, the state government had issued orders imposing a weekend lockdown for shops, shopping malls and offices across the state. Barely a week later, on August 28, it said shops and shopping malls will remain shut on Mondays and Tuesdays instead of the weekend. On Sunday, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij announced that the state government has withdrawn that order too. "There will be no lockdown in Haryana," Vij tweeted Sunday. The state also issued orders that all guidelines issued by the Union Home Ministry for 'Unlock 4.0' will be implemented across Haryana. **ENS**

TN relaxes curbs: no e-pass within state, malls to reopen

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, AUGUST 30

THE STATE government on Sunday announced several significant relaxations to the Covid-driven lockdown in the state, while a general lockdown will remain in place till September 30. For the first time since March, the government has allowed the operation of passenger bus services, both government and private, within the state from September 1. In a major relief for many, e-passes will not be needed from September 1 to travel within the state. However, those entering the state will have to obtain an e-pass. Also, tourists travelling from other districts or states to Nilgris, Kodaikanal and Yercaud areas will



Edapaddi K Palaniswami

have to apply for e-passes — a measure to restrict traffic and the number of people visiting these hill stations. The intensified lockdown on Sundays was also revoked and Chennai Metro rail services will be allowed to resume operations from September 7. However, suburban train services will not be operational. Also, regular passenger train services will not be operational before September 15. These relaxations, however, will not be applicable to containment zones. As the measures are largely to spur economic activity and growth, all shops, malls, places of worship and clubs will also be allowed to function from September 1, according to the government. Theatres, swimming pools, amusement and entertainment parks, large auditoriums, convention halls, beaches, zoos, museums and other such places of public interest will remain closed. Schools, colleges, research centres and all types of educational institutions will remain closed till September 30. But on-line classes can be conducted. However, Section 144 of the CrPc, which prevents the assembly of more than five persons, will still remain in place across the state. Also, from September 1, state government offices will be allowed to function at full staff capacity. Shopping malls and indi-

vidual shops will also be allowed to function from Tuesday with full staff. The government has advised companies in the IT/ITES sector to encourage their staff to work from home, however, they will be allowed to run at full staff capacity from September 1. The government will issue a separate set of standard operating procedures for public places of worship which will specify the number of people allowed. Shoots for TV and film will also be permitted to resume, but with a maximum of 75 people on set. Chief Minister Edapaddi K Palaniswami, in a statement, requested the public to adhere to safety precautions and wear masks. He also advised people to make it a habit to wash their hands regularly and maintain social distancing in public places.

Critical patients to get free Covid treatment in pvt hospitals: Gehlot

Jaipur: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Sunday that when required, critical patients of Covid-19 can avail free treatment in the state's private hospitals, according to an official government release. During a review meeting held at his residence on Sunday, Gehlot said adequate arrangements for beds with oxygen supply have been in government hospitals. Despite this, if more beds are needed, the help of private hospitals should be enlisted, he said. In this regard, the District Collector will be able to arrange free treatment for critical patients in private hospitals under the prescribed rates of the government. Urging private hospitals to increase their oxygen and ICU bed capacities, Gehlot said DCs should ensure private hospitals tie-up with hotel operators to make beds available for asymptomatic patients so that beds are available in hospitals for critical patients. **ENS**

GUJARAT
NHRC notice to Gujarat Chief Secy over 'falsely implicating' lawyer

PARIMAL DABHI
GANDHINAGAR, AUGUST 30

THE NATIONAL Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a show-cause notice to the chief secretary of Gujarat asking him why the state government should not pay Rs 1 lakh as compensation to a human rights lawyer in South Gujarat who was "admittedly" falsely implicated in a criminal case by police in Surat district. The chief secretary has been directed to submit a reply within four weeks. The lawyer has been identified as Bilal Kagzi (39), a native of Kosamba village in Surat district. The NHRC passed the order dated August 17, 2020, while acting on a complaint lodged by Human Rights Defenders' Alert (HRDA) — India, a Tamil Nadu-based forum that functions "to initiate action on behalf of human rights defenders under threat or with security concerns". The HRDA had lodged a complaint in September 2019 on the basis of a communication it received from Kagzi and other sources. As per the complaint, Kagzi and seven others were booked in Kosamba village for attempt to murder and other offences on August 12, 2019. "The complainant in this case (against Kagzi and others) alleged that all the accused at a temple to kill him. But Bilal was at his home due to the festival of Bakri Eid and was nowhere near the place where the alleged offence took place... his name was inserted by the police in collusion with the complainant as he is representing the co-accused in a number of criminal cases against the complainant," says the complaint. Following the complaint, the NHRC asked Surat's SP to file an action taken report, which was eventually submitted. Referring to the district police report, the Commission said, "It is reported that the allegation levelled against the victim was not substantiated during the course of inquiry and the victim had supply (sic) CCTV footage wherein he was not present at the alleged incident spot. The IO of the case had been directed to investigate the case and file the chargesheet with deletion of the name of the accused." The order further also said it has considered the report and there was an admitted lapse on the part of the police officials as the victim was falsely implicated. Speaking with *The Indian Express*, Kagzi said, "Apart from my regular legal practice, I have also been fighting for the rights of Dalits, tribals and the underprivileged... as part of which, I got several complaints of police atrocities lodged. So, they (police officials in Kosamba) have been nursing a grudge against me." "Also, there are two groups in my village fighting against each other for local dominance. They are involved in a number of criminal cases and I represent one of the groups. In the FIR on August 12 last year, the police connived with the opposite group who lodged the complaint and framed me..."

Kerala: Man commits suicide after PSC rank list expires before his appointment

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUGUST 30

A 28-YEAR-OLD man hanged himself to death after failing to get a government job despite clearing a competitive exam held by Kerala Public Service Commission. S Anu, from Karakkonam village in Thiruvananthapuram district, died by suicide after the rank list expired before he was appointed. Anu had ranked 76 in the examination for recruitment to the post of civil excise officer. Seventy-two people from the list got jobs before it expired in June — after an extension from April due to the pandemic. Anu's body was found hanging at his home Sunday morning. He left a suicide note that read: "I don't feel hungry for the past few days. Don't know what to do. Can't act in front of anyone. Unemployment is the reason for everything. Sukumaran Nair said, "A government job was my dream. He had struggled for years to prepare and clear the exam." Anu's suicide has triggered widespread protests against the state government, which has been

accused of recruiting sympathisers of the ruling CPM instead of making appointments from rank lists. However, PSC chairman and lawyer M K Sakeer said the rank list had expired in April. "We extended tenure up to June. During the extended period, seven more people were appointed. Others did not get jobs as vacancies did not come up..." said Sakeer. Opposition parties Congress and BJP took out protest marches in several parts of Kerala. BJP workers marched with the body of the victim to the residence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, but were stopped by police. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Ramesh Chennithala visited Anu's home and called him a "martyr of the cruelty of the state government and the PSC". "All rank lists should have been extended further due to Covid-19... Government is not keen to fill vacancies from PSC. It wants to make backdoor appointments..." he said. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor tweeted, "... When a human being commits suicide because he is unemployed, it is an indictment of our entire society & of those who have reduced our economy to such a pathetic condition."

Government of Punjab
National Health Mission
Department of Health and Family Welfare, Punjab
Prayas Building , 5th Floor , Sector-38-B, Chandigarh
Tel. No. 0172-2688438
NOTICE INVITING SHORT TERM E-TENDERS
FOR SUPPLY OF FINGERTIP PULSE OXIMETERS
Ref No. E-Tender/Proc-Cov/2020/NHM/PO
The National Health Mission, Punjab (Department of Health & Family Welfare, Punjab) invites online bids through www.eproc.punjab.gov.in for the supply of Fingertip Pulse Oximeters in the State of Punjab. Detailed requirements and terms and conditions are available in the tender document available on website www.eproc.punjab.gov.in.
Closing Date & Time : 07.09.2020 up to 11:00 am.
Opening of Online Technical Bids : 07.09.2020 at 11:30 am
For details log onto www.eproc.punjab.gov.in.
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.

Mission Director

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER WATER SUPPLY MASTER PLAN DIVISION SRINAGAR
Sub:- Corrigendum No. 01 to e-NIT NO:-17/WSMP OF 08/2020 Dated 17-08-2020 (2020-21)
Due to prevailing situation by COVID19/ Lockdown bidders who Could not attend the pre bid meeting for above noted e-NIT scheduled today can e-mail their quarries on xenwsmp@gmail.com
All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the above e-NIT.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Water Supply Master Plan Division
Srinagar
No:-WSMP/CC/4369-4402
Dt:- 27-08-2020

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता,
लोक निर्माण विभाग, (वि./यां.) मण्डल,
बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)
ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना
Portal:http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in
छत्रीसगड शासन, लोक निर्माण विभाग, वि./यां. मण्डल, बिलासपुर में निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-
नि.आ.सू. दिनांक २८.०८.२०२० तथा डाऊनलोड की अंतिम तिथि 16.09.2020
प्रथम आमंत्रण

क्र.	नि.आ.सू. क्रमांक	ऑनलाईन टेंडर नंबर	कार्य का नाम	लागत (लाख में)
1	09	67442	Providing Street Light & Pole in centre divider at Bishrampur town on Katni-Gumla Road NH-43, Dist. Surjapur (C.G.)	101.40

निविदा में भाग लेने की प्रक्रिया एवं निविदा के संबंध में विस्तृत जानकारी विभाग के उपरोक्त वेबसाइट में देखे जा सकते हैं।
हस्ता/-
अधीक्षण अभियंता
83370
लो.नि.वि., (वि./यां) मण्डल बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER
MAHANADI PROJECT: WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
RAIPUR (CHHATTISGARH)
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
eProcurement Portal: https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in (FIRST CALL)
System Tender No. 67267 / NIT No.: 04/SAC/20-21 Raipur Dated: 28.08.2020
Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 18.09.2020 at 17.30 Hour
Name of work : Remodeling and Cement Concrete Lining of Dy. No. 9 from RD 0 m to 2310 m with Construction of 05 Nos. Structures and Minor No. 1 of Dy. No. 8 from RD 0m to 2640m with Construction of 6 Nos. Structures and Sub Minor No. 01 & 02 of Minor No. 2 of Dy. No. 8 of Mandhar Branch Canal.
Probable Amount of Contract: Rs. 255.72 Lakhs
The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) from Date 04.09.2020, at 17.31 Hours,(IST) onwards.
NOTE- All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Water Management Division No. 1, Raipur
For, Chie Engineer, Mahanadi Project
Raipur (C.G.)
83367

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
Office Of The Executive Engineer Rural Water Supply Division, Ganderbal
H.Q: Cheki Duderhama Ganderbal.
E – mail. pherwsd@gmail.com / pherwsd@yahoo.in Phone/ Fax: 0194 – 2416292.
Pg 1 of FRESH e-NIT No. 25 of 2020 - 21
Notice Inviting e – Tenders
FRESH e-NIT No:-25/PHED/RWSD/CIVIL OF 2020 – 21.
For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of UT of J&K FRESH e-tenders(Two cover System) on Turn Key Basisare invited including the maintenance cost for a period of Five years from reputed and resourceful contractors/Firms/companies/ joint venture of reputed in PWD or Equivalent in CPWD/Railways and other state Governments for the following works:
and other state Governments for the following works:

Table (I)		Tender Cost including all Taxes		Cost of Document	Earnest Money (Rs. in Lacs)	Time of Compl-Deposit	Tender Call etion	Tender opening Place and (Technical Cover only)	Class of Contractor date
Sr. No.	Name of Work	Construction Part (Quotable)	Maintenance Part (Fixed Cost)						
1.	Design, Construction, successful testing & Commissioning of Slow Sand Filtration Plants of 0.90 Lac Gallons and 1.30 Lac gallons capacity at Sumbal & Surfaw with Service Reservoirs of 0.45 Lac Gallons, 0.65 Lac Gallons respectively including Chain link fencing around structures, construction of retaining wall, Chowkidar quarter, Providing, Laying fitting of Pipe network in Mains, Sub Mains, Distribution system along with saddle blocks as required with Trial run for 06 months after completion of the Construction work and maintenance for a period of five years on TURKEY BASIS for WSS Sumbal Bala Surfaw under Langshing Programme (JKIDFC) including Conducting complete necessary soil tests as required at selected site, as per the Parameters/ Specification mentioned in the tender document." Architectural aesthetics shall also be kept in consideration to make the structures appealing. LUP Code:-2319".	₹409.63 Lacs	₹ 26.86	₹ 0.05 (Favoring Executive Engineer RWSD Division Ganderbal under MH 0215)	₹ 08.20 (Pledged to the Superintending Engineer Hyd. Circle Srinagar/ Ganderbal)	12 months	3RD	Office of the Superintending Engineer, Hyd. Circle Srinagar/Ganderbal on 17.09.2020 AT 10.30 AM	"A" Class - Reputed and resourceful contractors/ Firms/ Companies/ Joint Venture of reputed in PWD or Equivalent in CPWD/ Railways and other state Governments..
2.	Design, Construction, successful testing & Commissioning of 0.30 MGD Rapid Sand Filtration Plant, Chlorinator, Flash Mixer with inbuilt backwash tank, Construction of 1.50 lac Gallons Service Reservoir, Chain link fencing around various structures, Chemical shed near filtration plant, Wash room , Providing Laying & fitting of pipe in mains, sub mains & distribution system for WSS Haripora . Bonital with Trial run for 06 months after completion of the Construction work and maintenance for a period of five years including other existing Structures like PST & RWM on TURKEY BASIS under JKIDFC including Conducting complete necessary soil tests as required at selected site, as per the Parameters/ Specification mentioned in the tender document." Architectural aesthetics shall also be kept in consideration to make the structures appealing. (LUP Code – 2333).	₹365.06 Lacs	₹ 26.85 Lacs	₹ 0.04 Lacs (Favoring Executive Engineer RWSD Division Ganderbal under MH 0215)	₹ 07.35 Lacs (Pledged to the Superintending Engineer Hyd. Circle Srinagar/ Ganderbal)	10 months	3rd	3rd Office of the Superintending Engineer, Hyd. Circle Srinagar/Ganderbal on 17.09.2020 AT 10.30 AM	"A" Class - Reputed and resourceful contractors/ Firms/ Companies/ Joint Venture of reputed in PWD or Equivalent in CPWD/ Railways and other state Governments..
3.	Design, Construction, Successful testing & Commissioning of 2 nos. of existing tanks 20's for Proposed Existing Plants, Platform cutting , leveling of ground at various sites, 0.85 lac Gallons capacity Slow Filtration Plant, 0.45 lac gallons capacity RCC Service Reservoir, Sluice Chambers (RCC's), Chemical shed, Steel Truss over 0.10 MGD Filtration Plant at Galkhul-Arhama , Retaining /Brest wall, Reinforcing of existing Slow Sand Filtration Plant including RCC jacketing, Chain link fencing around various structures (03Spots), Chowkidar quarters 2nos i.e at Galkhul and Benwas, Wash Rooms at 02nos' spots , Record Room at RWS Division Ganderbal including Trial run for 06 months after completion of the Construction work, and maintenance for a period of five years on TURKEY BASIS for Water Supply Scheme Benwas-Andawan under JKIDFC including Conducting complete necessary soil tests as required at selected site, as per the Parameters / Specification mentioned in the tender document. Architectural aesthetics shall also be kept in consideration to make the structures appealing. LUP Code:- 2330.	₹219.98	₹ 28.70	0.04	₹ 4.50 (Pledged to the Superintending Engineer Hyd. Circle Srinagar/ Ganderbal)	08 months	3rd	3rd Office of the Superintending Engineer, Hyd. Circle Srinagar/Ganderbal on 17.09.2020 AT 10.30 AM	"A" Class - Reputed and resourceful contractors/ Firms/ Companies/ Joint Venture of reputed in PWD or Equivalent in CPWD/ Railways and other state Governments..
4.	Design, Construction, successful testing & Commissioning of PST for 0.21 MGD R.S.F. Plant, Two No Service Reservoirs (0.50 lac gallons and 0.40 lac gallons), Sluice Chambers, Chowkidar's Quarter, Retaining wall / Brest wall, Construction of Crate/protection work at off take point, RCC Jacketing to old SR's, Intake Chamber, Indkl L/F of pipes, construction of saddle anchor blocks & Chain link fencing around various structures for WSS Rayil Gund with Trial run for 06 months after completion of the Construction work and maintenance for a period of five years including other existing Structures like RSPR RWM , mains , sub mains & distribution Network on TURKEY BASIS under NABARD including Conducting complete necessary soil tests as required at selected site, as per the Parameters/ Specification mentioned in the tender document." Architectural aesthetics shall also be kept in consideration to make the structures appealing.	₹ 164.78	₹ 25.00	3.30	₹ 3.30	07 months	2nd	2nd Office of the Executive Engineer PHE RWSD /Ganderbal Srinagar on 17.09.2020 at 10.30 AM	"A" Class - Reputed and resourceful contractors/ Firms/ Companies/ Joint Venture of reputed in PWD or Equivalent in CPWD/ Railways and other state Governments..
5.	Design, Construction, successful testing & Commissioning of 0.20 MGD Rapid Sand Filtration Plant along with flash filter, chlorinator with inbuilt backwash tank for WSS Baba Reshi Cherdara with Trial run for 06 months after completion of the Construction work on TURKEY BASIS under NABARD including Conducting complete necessary soil tests as required at selected site, as per the Parameters/ Specification mentioned in the tender document." Architectural aesthetics shall also be kept in consideration to make the structures appealing.	₹ 92.11	₹ 0.025	₹.85	₹ 1.85	06 months	3rd	Office of the Executive Engineer PHE RWSD /Ganderbal Srinagar on 17.09.2020 at 10.30 AM	"A" Class - Reputed and resourceful contractors/ Firms/ Companies/ Joint Venture of reputed in PWD or Equivalent in CPWD/ Railways and other state Governments..

Position of Funds - Available: Major Head of Account: JKIDFC
The following detailed instruments in shape of original and Scanned/ Photostat copies in separate envelopes for each work be submitted by the successful bidder to the Tender Receiving Authority i.e. **OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER HYDRAULIC CIRCLE SRINAGAR / GANDERBAL / EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHE RWS DIVISION GANDERBAL / SRINAGAR H.Q CHEKI DUDERHAMA GANDERBAL** in person or by Registered Post / Courier within 04 days after opening of the bid online, failing which the Earnest Money shall be forfeited without any correspondence in this regard, besides the bidder shall be debarred from participating in tendering process for two years which may be noted. All these documents must also be uploaded while uploading the tender.

01	Earnest Money in shape of CDR / FDR	Original (S No 01 to 04PLEGDED IN FAVOUR OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER HYDRAULIC CIRCLE SGR/GBL (HQ. ENGINEERING COMPLEX RAJBAGH SRINAGAR) & (S No 05 PLEDGED IN FAVOUR OF THE Executive Engineer PHE RWSD Ganderbal/Srinagar HQ CHEKI DUDERHAMA GBL)
		Original (PLEGDED IN FAVOUR OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER RWS DIVISION GANDERBAL/SGR HQ CHEKI DUDERHAMA GBL.
02.	Treasury Receipt (T.R) / Challan as cost of tender document.	
03	Valid Registration certificate of enlistment card clearly indicating date of registration along with renewal page of Current Financial Year of 2020-21	Scanned Copy
04	Latest GST clearance Certificate (NOT BEFORE MAY – 2020) along with Self Attested Photo's App Number and e-mail ID of the contractor	Scanned Copy

The Bidding Documents and other details can be downloaded from the website: <https://ktenders.gov.in>
From 28.08.2020 (10:00 a.m) To 15.09.2020 upto (04:00 p.m)
The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings (if any), Book of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms, conditions of contract and other details can be viewed/ downloaded from the website: <https://ktenders.gov.in>
Note:- Two or more Self Help Groups can form a Consortium to execute works upto 72 (two) Crores subject to the condition that the SHGs forming Consortium have been graded by the Superintending Engineers R&B/PHE/ I&FC/UEED/PDD, as the case may be, as very good and/or excellent. Furthermore, SHGs forming the Consortium must have a minimum six years of experience, each. For works beyond 72 (two) Crores no special incentive like 30% quota or 1% earnest money shall be available for them and the Consortium shall have to participate in tenders, like other contractors, for works in the common pool. Provided where there is no Superintending Engineer, the SHG shall be graded by Chief Engineer concerned. (For full details please refer to the Tender Document)
The Schedule showing the critical dates is given below
TABLE (II)

01	Date of Publishing of Tender Notice	28.08.2020
02	Date of downloading of bidding documents	From 28.08.2020 (10:00 a.m) To 15.09.2020 upto (04:00 p.m)
03	Date of Pre-bid meeting	In the Office of the: SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER HYDRAULIC CIRCLE SRINAGAR / GANDERBAL (HQ ENGINEERING COMPLEX RAJBAGH SRINAGAR (S. NO 1 TO 4 ON 05.09.2020 at 10.30 am) EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JS PHE RWSD GBL / SGR HQ CHEKI DUDERHAMA GANDERBAL (S. NO 5 ON 07.09.2020 at 10.30 am)
04	Last date of submission bid Queries	10.09.2020 upto 4.00 PM
05	Bid submission start date	28.08.2020 (10:00 a.m)
06	Bid Submission end date	15.09.2020 upto (04:00 p.m)
08	Date & time of opening Bids (Technical Cover)	17.09.2020 at 10:30 a.m.

No.- PHED/RWSD/Corrs./5232 – 56.
Dated:-26.08.2020
DIP No. DIPK-4748-20
PHE RWS Division Ganderbal/Sgr. H.Q: Cheki Duderhama Ganderbal.

KS Bajpai, former envoy, dies at 92

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30



K S BAJPAI
1928-2020

CAREER DIPLOMAT Katyayani Shankar Bajpai, who served as India's envoy to the US, China and Pakistan, died on Sunday at 92. Better known as Shankar Bajpai, the 1952-batch Indian Foreign Service officer had a long and distinguished career serving in crucial postings within the country and abroad. As a young officer, he served in Pakistan during the 1965 war. The next year, he accompanied Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri to Tashkent for a summit with Pakistan President Ayub Khan. Bajpai was also the government's Political Officer in Sikkim from 1970 to 1974, playing a role in its integration into the Indian Union. He was Ambassador to the US when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made his first trip to Washington in 1985. He also served as Chairman of the National Security Advisory Board from 2008 to 2010. He was one of the few career diplomats to have been Ambassador in India's three most important and challenging posts—China, the US and Pakistan. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar tweeted, "Deeply grieved at the passing away of Amb. Shankar Bajpai, mentor and friend. Will be missed by so many of us." Amitabh Mattoo, Professor of International Relations at JNU, called him one of India's "most exceptional diplomats". "Shankar Bajpai was a confidante of decision-makers across the political spectrum," he tweeted. After he retiring from government service in 1986, Bajpai transitioned to academic life, with

stints at the University of California from 1987-88, and as Visiting Professor at University of California, Berkeley from 1989-92. With his avid interest in foreign policy and governance, he set about founding Delhi Policy Group, an independent think-tank. He maintained an interest in diplomacy and was involved in various "track-two" interactions with the US and Pakistan. He continued to be consulted informally by the Government, particularly on relations with the US—his knowledge about the country went beyond foreign policy. He had an extensive set of contacts and friends in the US establishment. Bajpai was a man for many seasons. He would quote poetry classics from memory, had a wide and eclectic taste in books, was an avid film buff, and, above all, was known for his culinary skills and being a consummate host. He remained engaged with India's foreign policy and governance, and, at the time of his death, was working on a biography of his father, Girja Shankar Bajpai, the first Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs, and on his own memoirs. He is survived by his wife Meera Bajpai and sons Dharma and Jayanti Bajpai.

LUCKNOW DOUBLE MURDER

Got ample evidence from crime scene, say police

Lucknow: Lucknow police on Sunday said they have gathered "ample evidence" in the double murder case in which the daughter of a government officer was detained for allegedly killing her mother and brother. The victims were shot dead Saturday. Police had said that the woman's teenage daughter had admitted to killing them. "We have recovered the weapon that has the girl's fingerprints. The writing on the mirror where she wrote 'disqualified human' matches with her handwriting. The bottle from which she took the jam to write on the mirror has her fingerprints. There is no evidence of any forced entry into the house. We have also traced the girl's footprints at the crime scene. There is ample evidence," Lucknow Commissioner of Police Sujat Pandey said. "A medical examination (of the girl) was done on Sunday. She will be presented before a Juvenile Justice Board on Monday... Meanwhile, she has been kept at a hospital," DCP (Central) Somen Barma said. **ENS**

Andhra: Illegal liquor trade on a high after prohibition, over 43,000 held in 3 months

REENIVAS JANYALA
HYDERABAD, AUGUST 30

THE ANDHRA Pradesh government's efforts to implement prohibition has triggered a spike in the illicit liquor trade and smuggling of liquor from other states, and a large number of people are ending up in jail in liquor-related cases.

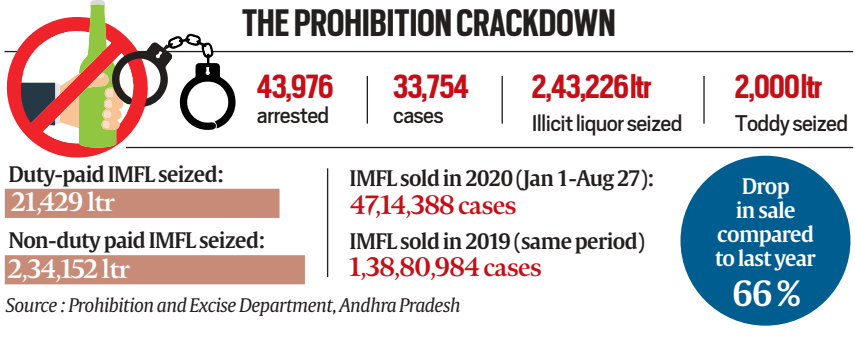
The Andhra Pradesh Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB), set up in May to curb the illegal liquor trade, has arrested 43,976 people in 33,754 cases between May 16 and August 26. These cases pertain to brewing illicit liquor, smuggling of liquor from neighbouring states, and illegal sale of liquor.

In the run up to the 2019 Assembly election, the YSR Congress Party had promised to implement total prohibition in the state and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy had said he would seek reelection in 2024 only after making Andhra Pradesh a dry state.

Last October, the state government cancelled licences of all liquor shops. The government has gradually reduced the number of liquor shops from 4,380 to 2,934 and shut 43,000 outlets known as belt shops. It has also increased the prices by 75 per cent and the maximum posses-



Liquor bottles seized by police while they were being smuggled from Karnataka. Express



sion limit of liquor and beer has been reduced to three bottles of any size.

The state government's plan to set up de-addiction centres was delayed due to the pan-

demic. The high prices and low availability of liquor has led to a

boost in the illegal liquor trade in rural areas. In the last three months, SEB and police have seized 2,43,226 litres of illicit liquor; 2000 litres of toddy; 1,35,700 litres of black jaggery; 21,429 litres of duty paid Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) and 1,617 litres of beer; and 2,34,152 litres of non-duty paid IMFL and 15,445 litres of beer.

SEB Commissioner Vineet Brijlal said that over 7,000 people have been arrested in Kurnool district for smuggling liquor from Karnataka and over 6,500 in Krishna district which borders Telangana.

V Lakshmana Reddy, chairman of the Liquor Prohibition Awareness Committee — Madya Vimochana Prachara Committee — under the Excise and Prohibition Department, said, "The illicit brewing is worrying because it is going on at a large scale. The price difference between liquor in the state and neighbouring states is very high, so inter-state smuggling has also started from Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. What has been seized is just about 10 per cent. When public transport restarts, inter-state smuggling will increase. But the state government is committed to implementing prohibition in a phased manner. We are strengthening SEB by recruiting more officials

and IPS officers will lead the teams. We have studied the Bihar model so we think that in a couple of years, total prohibition is possible and illicit brewing will also be curbed," Reddy said.

Deepak Reddy, spokesperson for Opposition TDP, said "haphazard" implementation of prohibition has spawned a huge market for illicit liquor and black marketing of smuggled IMFL. "Government should have made proper arrangements before implementing prohibition," he said.

Sources said district jails are filling up with people arrested under prohibition laws. The offences have been made non-bailable and repeat offenders are being booked under Preventive Detention Act. "Earlier, such offenders were released from the police station on bail. Now they have to wait till a court grants bail and till that time they remain in prison," an official said.

Deputy Chief Minister K Narayana Swamy, who holds the excise portfolio, said Chief Minister Reddy wants to promote healthy living. "Women, especially in rural areas, are very happy. The loss of revenue is nothing compared to the savings in lower and lower middle class households," he said

3 militants, ASI killed in Srinagar encounter: Police

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 30

THREE MILITANTS and a police officer were killed in a gunfight on the outskirts of Srinagar city on Saturday night. While the policeman has been identified as an officer of the anti-militancy Special Operations group (SOG) of J&K Police, two of the militants had no past record of militancy.

On Saturday night, militants fired at a police checkpoint at Pantha Chowk on the outskirts of the city. Police said the militants tried to snatch weapons from a checkpoint manned by personnel of J&K Police and CRPF.

"Yesterday, at about 2200 hrs, in a weapon snatching bid, terrorists fired indiscriminately upon a joint naka party of Police and CRPF at Pantha Chowk area of Srinagar," Police said in an official statement. "The attempt was foiled by the alert naka party and terrorists managed to flee from the spot."

Police said that in the initial exchange of fire, a police officer sustained bullet wounds and was shifted to the Army's 92 Base hospital, where he succumbed. They identified the officer as Assistant Sub Inspector Babu Ram.

Police sources said Babu Ram was associated with the J&K Police's elite counter insurgency force Special Operations Group (SOG) and was part of its anti-fidayeen squad.

After the initial exchange of fire, the militants escaped from the checkpoint, pursued by police

and paramilitary personnel with the help of reinforcements from the Army, said police.

The forces cordoned off the area and started searches to locate the militants.

"During the cordon and search as the presence of hiding terrorists was ascertained, they were given opportunity to surrender but they fired indiscriminately upon the search party," police said. "In the meantime, their respective families were also called and repeated surrender appeals were made to them through their family members. However, they refused to surrender and instead fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter."

Saqib Basher Khanday, Umar Tariq Bhat and Zubair Ahmad Sheikh, all residents of Drangbal in south Kashmir's Pampore, have been identified by police as Lashkar-e-Taiba militants. Police sources said that while Saqib was an active militant, there was no militancy record against Umar and Zubair.

"As per police records, the killed terrorists were part of groups involved in planning and executing several terror attacks in the area. Besides weapon snatching bid at J&K Bank Pampore, Saqib Basher was also involved in motivating and radicalising the youth of the area to join terror fold," police said.

Family members of the militants said police could have avoided killing them as they could have captured easily.

Police use teargas to disperse Muharram procession in J&K

Minor incidents of violence, says IGP

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 30

The Jammu and Kashmir police on Sunday used teargas shells to disperse Muharram processions in the Valley. On Saturday too, police had resorted to the use of pellets when Muharram processions were taken out.

Police say four people have been injured in the incidents over the past two days — three at Bemina Srinagar and one at Zadibal Srinagar.

Local residents said the police action was unwarranted as the processions were peaceful and the participants adhered to all protocols laid down to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

But, police said there were protests and slogans were raised. "Despite several meetings between leaders of Shia community and civil/police administrations and appeals made by Shia leaders, there have been some provocative & anti-national slogans, posters, banners and minor incidents of violence during processions. Police have been handling the situations professionally and without any prejudice. Three minor incidents (took place) at Zoorinoid, Bemina and Zadibal occurred, which are

part of professional hazard," IGP, Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said.

"Our police personnel deployed on the ground have been sensitised by the senior officers upto the rank of IGP. But some of our people should not have been influenced by continuous provocation by Pakistan and terrorists and should have avoided confrontation with police. Police deployments are only for their security from terrorist attacks and sectarian clashes," he added.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has banned religious gatherings in the Valley citing the pandemic.

On Saturday, several people were injured in police action in Srinagar and Budgam.

The PDP has condemned the use of force against the mourners.

"Militating against a peaceful religious gathering has reflected the government's iron fist approach that it has been adopting in Kashmir without any compunction," PDP spokesperson and media advisor Suhail Bukhari said in a statement. "The government's ruthless measures have proved beyond doubt that religion is being demonised, democratic dissent criminalised and cruelty is being normalised in Kashmir," he added.



Nirmal Harindran

(Left) An IAF helicopter airlifts people from Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh. Sixty people were evacuated from a village the district; a couple rides in the downpour at Ahmedabad

RIVERS IN SPATE, ALERT IN STATES



ANI

India records wettest August in 44 years

ANJALI MARAR
PUNE, AUGUST 30

THE COUNTRY has recorded its wettest August since 1976.

This year, the total rainfall recorded in the country between August 1 and 30 was 317.4 mm against a normal of 251.3 mm, making it a 26.3 per cent surplus for the month.

Data provided by IMD suggests that in the last 50 years, country's August rainfall, when it surpassed 20 per cent above normal, was only on five previous occasions — 1970 (26 per cent), 1973 (27.8 per cent), 1975 (21 per cent), 1976 (28.4 per cent) and 1983 (23.8 per cent).

As on August 30, the season's rainfall for the country was 10 per cent above normal. It is particularly significant after July ended remaining 9 per cent short of normal rainfall. This deficiency was mainly due to below normal rain recorded over the Central India region — Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The recovery of rainfall over this region is visible as it swung from -22.3 per cent to +61.5 per cent between July and August.

"Since August 5, there were multiple low pressure systems in the Bay of Bengal, which kept the Southwest monsoon active. Heavy to very heavy rain was reported across Central India, which is a fairly large area," said an official from Regional Meteorological Centre, Delhi.

ODISHA

WATERS OF the Mahanadi inundated several villages in coastal Odisha Sunday, officials said. Special Relief Commissioner P K Jena said flood waters have submerged many villages in Kanasa and Delang blocks in Puri district. The river also flooded villages in Banki area of Cuttack district and affected road connectivity.

Mahanadi is in spate following heavy downpour in its upper catchment areas in Chhattisgarh and flow of huge volume of water into the Hirakud reservoir.

The state government has deployed 15 units of NDRF, 14 teams of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and 119 teams of Fire Service in the low-lying areas for rescue operations. Special Relief Commissioner Jena said.

MADHYA PRADESH

A 35-year-old woman was killed and three others injured when a house collapsed after heavy rain at Sehore in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Nearly 60 stranded people were airlifted from a village in the district by an IAF helicopter, officials said.

Following heavy rain over the last couple of days, nearly 7,000 people have been rescued across the state so far and 170 relief camps set up in affected districts, said Manish Rastogi, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

GUJARAT

Two persons died in rain-related incidents in Gujarat on Sunday as the state recorded over 113 per cent of its annual average rainfall this season. Fourteen

people have died in rain-related incidents over the past two days as the state continues to receive heavy downpour. More than 3,850 people have been evacuated from Bharuch, Narmada and Vadodara districts.

As many as 149 roads, including one national highway and 15 state highways, were closed.

MAHARASHTRA

MORE THAN 14,000 people were evacuated after heavy rainfall over the past two days led to flooding in several tehsils of Nagpur district of Maharashtra, officials said on Sunday.

The administration had to call in the NDRF and the Army to rescue people at some places, they said. "Till Sunday noon, 14,234 people were evacuated from 36 affected villages in Nagpur district

as incessant downpour in the last two days resulted in flow of water from dams and rivers," Nagpur district collector Ravindra Thakre said in a statement. Several villages in Gadchiroli district witnessed flooding too, officials said.

UTTAR PRADESH

Three sisters were killed in the Raipura area of UP's Chitrakoot district when a wall of their thatched house collapsed on them after heavy rain, officials said on Sunday. Sub Divisional Magistrate of Mau tehsil Raj Bahadur said, "Following heavy rain on Saturday evening, a wall of the thatched house of one Ashok Verma collapsed, killing his daughters Ritu (12), Shivdevi (9) and Pooja (5). By the time the villagers removed the debris, the girls had died." ENS & PTI

KHALISTAN FLAG AT GOVT OFFICE IN PUNJAB

Two suspected members of KZF arrested in Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

A DELHI Police special cell has arrested two suspected members of banned terror outfit Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) in connection with a sedition case registered in Moga district of Punjab.

Police on Sunday identified the duo as Inderjeet Singh Gill (31) and Jaspal Singh (27), both residents of Moga district. "The two had allegedly raised a 'Khalistan' flag on the terrace of the deputy commissioner's office in Moga on the eve of Independence Day and also desecrated an Indian flag on the premises," a police officer said.

During questioning, it was revealed that Gill used to work as a driver. "On August 8, his maternal brother Jagga persuaded him to

access banned Youtube channel 'Sikhs For Justice', and also told him to vote for Khalistan on a WhatsApp link and become a member...He further said that one Rana, from the US, and another person gave anti-India speeches on the channel and also asked Sikh youth to wave the Khalistan flag and tear the Indian flag on August 14, 15 and 16," Yadav said. Police said Rana had declared a reward of \$2,500 for anyone who waved the Khalistan flag and for tearing the Indian flag and a reward of \$1,25,000 for doing the same on the Red Fort and other historically-significant buildings. "On August 14, Gill, Jaspal and one Akashdeep Singh, went to the DC office. Gill and Jaspal went to the terrace and hoisted the flag. Then, they lowered the Indian flag and tore it into pieces. Akashdeep, was making a video," police said.

SANTOSH SINGH
PATNA, AUGUST 30

TWO WEEKS after he was assaulted by a 45-year-old "student leader", Amrendra Narayan (37), an assistant professor of physics in the PG department at Veer Kunwar Singh University in Ara says he is being targeted for the reform initiatives he has taken at the university since he joined. Narayan holds a BTech from IIT-Kanpur and a PhD degree in nuclear physics from Mississippi State University in the US. Despite getting lucrative job offers elsewhere, Narayan says he preferred to return three years ago.

When he joined, results at the university would be delayed because it had no computer centre. Also, there were complaints of plagiarism in PhD theses. Narayan



Amrendra Narayan

was assigned the additional responsibility of developing computational capabilities to process and publish the exam results. This helped the university save crores of rupees spent on annual contracts for computation. Narayan has also played a key role in introducing plagiarism tests before submission of PhD theses.

Narayan now says that behind the assault on him are people who would make money from compu-

tation contracts and facilitate PhD submissions for a price.

Narayan was attacked on August 13 by one Vivek Pandey alias Jitendra Pandey and one of his associates while he was coming out of the computer centre at the university.

"He did not explain what he wanted. When he was not allowed access to the computer centre, he felt offended and he and his associate beat me up till I became unconscious," said Narayan.

Narayan said he did not lodge a police complaint the same day as university authorities said they would lodge it. On August 15, however, Pandey lodged a case against Narayan, accusing him of eve-teasing on the university campus, even though no student had lodged any such complaint. Police later found the allegations to be false after recording statements of over a

dozen staff members from the university.

Narayan eventually lodged a police complaint on August 17 at Sadar police station. Based on it, police filed an FIR against Pandey under IPC sections of 323 (causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint), 353 (assault) and 504 (breach of peace).

Narayan also accused Pandey of running a smear campaign against him on social media. Pandey, who had been booked in two cases of allegedly threatening professors in the past, is now absconding.

"Despite my high qualifications, I preferred to work in Bihar. Though a majority of people have been happy with my initiatives at the university, some people might be using an element like Pandey to frustrate and make me quit the institution..." Narayan said.

University proctor SP Singh said, "Local police found the eve-teasing allegations against Narayan unfounded and motivated. We took time to lodge a complaint about the assault because the university was closed on August 15."

Asked if Narayan may have been targeted because his initiatives hurt the interests of people making money, Singh said, "It could be a possible reason. Vivek Pandey has taken a Master of Education examination and has been a controversial figure. We stand with Narayan."

Bihar DGP Guptaeswar Pandey said, "The case of assault was found to be true. A warrant is being obtained from court as Pandey is absconding. We are trying to arrest him. The case is being monitored by the Chief Minister's Office."

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THE INDIAN EXPRESS, MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2020

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE
IF INDIA AND JAPAN WORK TOGETHER,
NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.
— SHINZO ABE

The Indian **EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

As ABE BOWS OUT

He leaves behind a rich legacy — his vision widened Tokyo's horizons and extended a friendly hand to Delhi

FEW MODERN INTERLOCUTORS of India brought the kind of personal affection and policy innovation that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe did in the engagement with Delhi. When Japan's longest-serving prime minister stepped down on Friday, citing health reasons, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was quick to wish him speedy recovery and note "Abe's wise leadership" in deepening the bilateral partnership. For Abe, India was very special. He has often recalled his maternal grandfather and former prime minister Nobusuke Kishi's visit to India in 1957 and the special bond he struck with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. But the warmth at the leadership level did not endure beyond the 1950s. In the decades that followed, bilateral ties were marked by political indifference, Delhi's transactional thinking on Tokyo's annual economic assistance, and widening differences on regional security. While the relationship began to improve in the new millennium, it was Abe who gave the big boost.

For Abe, India was at the heart of his plans to restructure the regional economic and security order. In his address to a joint session of the Indian Parliament in 2007, when he visited Delhi in his brief first tenure as the PM, Abe boldly reimagined the shared geography of India and Japan. Abe's vision on the "confluence of two seas" — now the Indo-Pacific — simultaneously widened Tokyo's geographic horizons to include the Indian Ocean and an invitation to Delhi to reclaim its large strategic potential in the Pacific Ocean. It was also Abe who first called for the construction of a coalition of four Asian democracies in partnership with Australia and the US. In defining the Indo-Pacific geography and developing the so-called democratic Quad, Abe was also transforming Japan's own standing in the world. Before him, Japan was widely viewed as an "economic giant, but a political pygmy". Under him, Japan has reclaimed the leadership role in Asia amidst the growing uncertainty over the US's regional role and the muscular assertion of Chinese power. Abe's Japan has become an active champion of a rules-based Indo-Pacific order that can survive the current tectonic shift in great power politics.

It is such a pity that Abe's short first term (2006-2007) and the long second run (2012-20) had to end because of ill-health. He will be remembered for long as the man who moved post-War Japan out of its defensive comfort zone under the American shadow and unveiled the possibilities for Asia taking responsibility for its own security. That job, though, remains unfinished. Japan's friends and partners, including India, will certainly worry about the dangers of Tokyo now slipping back into political instability and strategic passivity. Abe's many admirers in Delhi will have a regret of their own — that institutional inertia and political ambivalence prevented India from seizing the full range of possibilities that the Japanese leader had opened up for the bilateral partnership.

DEMAND AND SUPPLY

RBI governor warns against risk-aversion, bankers point to lack of demand for credit. Onus lies more on government than RBI

RESERVE BANK OF India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has warned banks against becoming "overly risk-averse", which will be "self-defeating". Bankers have reacted by saying the real problem isn't risk aversion, but lack of demand for credit. Both are right. Aggregate deposits with banks have risen over Rs 14 lakh crore or 11 per cent year-on-year as on August 14, whereas the corresponding credit growth has been just Rs 5.35 lakh crore (5.5 per cent). Meanwhile, their investments in government securities have gone up by Rs 7.55 lakh crore (21.2 per cent). That, prima facie, indicates banks are in no mood to lend and prefer to park their money in relatively safe sovereign paper. But the fact that banks are now also deploying Rs 6.3-6.4 lakh crore daily with the RBI's reverse repo window, which earns only 3.35 per cent annually, shows the extent of surplus liquidity in the system and few takers for their funds. In other words, there is a problem of both "supply" of credit by banks and no "demand" from borrowers, be it cash-strapped firms or insecure households.

What can the RBI do? A major reason why banks aren't making fresh loans is uncertainty over the fate of their existing loans. Following the COVID-19-induced lockdown, borrowers were offered a moratorium on payment of any interest or principal amounts due between March 1 and August 31. RBI data shows around half of the total outstanding bank loans being under moratorium as on April 30. The prospect of many of these turning into non-performing assets (NPA) once the six-month repayment holiday ends is a concern. The RBI has done well to allow a one-time restructuring of all loans that weren't NPAs before March 1, while continuing to treat these as standard assets. But the important thing is to enable such restructuring to take place quickly without imposing too many conditions. Give banks the freedom to decide on the borrowers whose loans are deserving of being restructured — remember, they weren't defaulters before the novel coronavirus struck — and ensure this is done transparently. Banks, ultimately, need to get back to the business of lending.

Creating conditions for banks to be in a position to "supply" credit will, of course, not solve the problem of "demand". That can happen only with economic activity reviving, for which the onus lies more on the government than the RBI. The economic machine today has stalled because nobody's really spending. The government must spend — rather invest — to grease the wheels of commerce. Once the economy starts moving, it will not only revive credit demand, but also improve the cash flows and debt servicing abilities of firms. And that would ease the NPA problems of banks as well.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SHYAM SARAN

CHINA HAS BEEN the chief beneficiary of the globalisation of the world economy which began accelerating since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. This phase of relatively free movement of capital and technology and goods and services enabled China to transform itself into a low-cost manufacturing hub for the world. It became an export powerhouse leveraging its access to the large consuming markets of the US, Europe and Japan. Thanks to its brand of state capitalism and managed markets, China emerged relatively unscathed from the global financial and economic crisis (GPEC) of 2007-8 while the advanced capitalist economies of the West faced prolonged disruption and stagnation. The Western consensus behind globalisation has been eroded as competition from China has sharpened. There is a rise in protectionist sentiments in the West, a greater scrutiny of inward investment particularly for acquisitions in the high-tech sector, and growing sensitivity over loss of intellectual property to Chinese firms.

China has hitherto remained a vocal advocate of globalisation and free trade, which it had leveraged for its economic success. It has been critical of the US tariffs on Chinese imports and restrictions on Chinese investment in the US. It has been particularly hurt by America denying Chinese companies access to high-tech components. During the past couple of years, the US-China trade war has intensified and China has also faced headwinds in its economic relations with Europe and Japan. As Chinese power has expanded, great power competition has resurfaced. There has been an assumption that the density of economic and commercial relations between China and its major partners — the US, Europe and Japan — would moderate security competition among them. In fact, the economic relationship is being disrupted by the sharpening geopolitical competition. The decoupling of the US and Chinese economies is a reality, though it is not clear how far this will go.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these trends. The acute awareness of how dependent countries have become on China-centred global supply chains, in-

cluding for critical health products and pharmaceuticals, the ongoing shift towards relocation or re-shoring of production facilities, the renewed stress on resilience as against efficiency — all these trends triggered by the pandemic — are stalling globalisation, if not putting it in reverse.



There is a realisation that the US-China confrontation is structural and likely to persist irrespective of who occupies the White House next year. There is also an acknowledgement that the global economic environment will become progressively less conducive to free trade and capital and technology flows. China would therefore have to rely more on domestic drivers of growth. One Chinese commentary urged that the new strategy should be approached with "the mindset of fighting a protracted war", language that harks back to the Maoist era.

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This shift in economic perspective is apparent across the world, in lesser or larger measure. In India, we have announced Atmanirbhar Bharat to signal a renewed stress on self-reliance and indigenous production. The economy will hitherto be selectively open. India, like China, also benefited from the globalised economy though it adopted economic reforms and liberalisation a decade later. However, unlike China, India did not use this favourable international environment to develop a globally-competitive economy. After the GPEC, India's growth began to decelerate and has been unable to pick up so far. The pandemic has added to the slowdown. It is unlikely that globalisation will find many champions in the corridors of power.

What is of interest is that China, too, appears to have adopted its own brand of atmanirbhar economic strategy under the intriguing label of "dual circulation". This is defined as "taking the domestic market as the mainstay while letting domestic and foreign markets boost each other". The term was first used at a Chinese Communist Party Politburo meeting held on May 14. It was described as a policy that would "fully bring out the advantage of its super-large market scale and the potential of domestic demand to establish a new development pattern featuring domestic and international dual circulations that complement each other".

Some analysts have pointed out that this policy is no different from the economic rebalancing which has been a stated objective for the past decade and more. Chinese leaders have repeatedly called for bringing about a calculated shift from an investment and export-led growth strategy to one based on domestic consumption and services. There has been progress in this respect. Consumption has risen to 56 per cent of GDP today as compared to about 35 per cent a decade ago.

Exports were 36 per cent of GDP in 2007 but constituted only 18 per cent in 2019. However, Chinese analysts argue that it is a significant policy departure which has been influenced by the emerging negative geopolitical trends and trade headwinds China is running into. There is a realisation that the US-China confrontation is structural and likely to persist irrespective of who occupies the White House next year. There is also an acknowledgement that the global economic environment will become progressively less conducive to free trade and capital and technology flows. China would therefore have to rely more on domestic drivers of growth. One Chinese commentary urged that the new strategy should be approached with "the mindset of fighting a protracted war", language that harks back to the Maoist era.

In a recent statement, President Xi Jinping has said that "dual circulation" is by no means a closed domestic loop and reaffirmed that opening up was a fundamental national policy. But it appears that the era of encouraging Chinese companies to "go out" and become global multinationals is now over. What is also interesting is that the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Xi Jinping's signature project, has barely been mentioned in the context of dual circulation. Reports indicate that as a result of the pandemic, the initiative has stalled in most countries and there are major cost over-runs and delays in implementation. Most partner countries have demanded deferral of loan repayments or converting some of the loans into grants. This is being resisted and fresh lending by Chinese policy banks such as Exim Bank has been halted. The difficulties faced by the BRI may also be reinforcing the inward turn that the new strategy suggests.

China will soon be launching its 14th Five Year Plan, which will be deliberated upon by the Party Central Committee this October. We will then get a clearer picture of what China's atmanirbhar strategy with Chinese characteristics looks like.

Saran is a former Foreign Secretary and senior fellow, CPR

THE AGE TRAP

Move to raise women's age of marriage reflects punitive paternalism



SUNNY JOSE

SHOULD WOMEN'S LEGAL age for marriage be raised? The answer to this seemingly simple question is not so simple, because the question is not simply about replacing age 18 with 21. Rather, it deals with the social origins of a "problem" not easily amenable for policy pruning, however progressive its intent might be.

Marriage at a low age is the outcome of a complex web of factors. To begin with, the socio-economic groups and regions where under-age marriages are prevalent are marked by a near absence of quality schooling and opportunities for higher education, fortified by poverty and limited economic opportunities.

An offshoot of the question posed at the beginning arises here. Why should, if at all, women's legal age at marriage be increased from 18 to 21, when 18 is considered the marriageable age in many countries? Stated differently, what are the compelling grounds for increasing women's age at marriage? One purported reason is to do away with the gender gap in the legal age at marriage, and the underlying social norm which expects women to be younger than men at the time of marriage. Another related reason is that marriage at a younger age before attaining physical, cognitive and emotional maturity leads to a suboptimal transition to adulthood.

Evidence suggests that transition from adolescence to adulthood is likely to be optimal for those who study longer years, have better nutrition and delayed marriage and parenthood. However, increasing age at marriage alone will not ensure that girls will study longer or attain better nutrition either. The nu-

tritional needs are high at late adolescence (15-19 years) and a fair measure of adolescent girls suffer from multiple forms of undernutrition, from chronic energy deficiency, iron deficiency to micronutrient deficiency. Marriage, pregnancy and delivery during adolescence not only drain their already poor nutritional reserves, but also lead to child stunting and mortality to multiple diseases at a later stage.

What can possibly address this? Delayed marriage or nutritional enhancement? Delayed marriage without improving nutrition will most likely yield the same adverse outcomes, in addition to creating new and serious problems. The proposed move to raise the marriageable age, thus, becomes a case of "punitive paternalism" — using punitive measures to achieve a progressive but difficult or elusive social goal.

Can the objective of the policy proposal be achieved through an alternative, incentivising approach? Herein, the concept of 'autonomy-enhancing paternalism' proposed by behavioural economists Martin Binder and Leonhard Lades, assumes salience. Autonomy-enhancing policy intervention promotes self-empowerment and aims to free individuals from irrelevant influences. It aims to improve well-being through improving the process of decision-making.

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In this case, incentivising and enabling girls to continue schooling up to Class 12 and helping to enhance their nutrition can stop under-age marriages. Evidence suggests that ensuring secondary level schooling among girls is likely to enhance their autonomy and improve

their health and nutrition. Also, secondary schooling of women is associated with improved cognitive abilities, mental, sexual and reproductive health. Additionally, it leads to a significant decline in teenage child-bearing, child-stunting, among others. These are important instrumental reasons to increase women's schooling. Yet, there are substantive intrinsic reasons to promoting education since it is a valid end in itself. Enhancing the nutrition of adolescent girls is also important for a range of instrumental and intrinsic reasons.

Is there a need for a separate policy increasing women's schooling up to 12 years and improving their nutrition? Existing policies can help achieve these twin important goals. What is needed is the commitment and the missionary zeal, as shown in Swachh Bharat, and an incentivising approach to make the policies work effectively. Janani Suraksha Yojana is a case of an incentive-based approach working well. A variety of incentivising schemes, from cycles in Bihar to laptops in Tamil Nadu, already exist towards ensuring girls' education.

The proposed policy, instead of addressing the causes and consequences of under-age marriages, may instead produce adverse, sub-optimal outcomes affecting the poor and marginalised the most. What is needed is an enabling, incentivising and innovative approach to implement the existing policies effectively.

The writer is RBI Chair Professor, Council for Social Development, Southern Regional Centre, Hyderabad

AUGUST 31, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

FISCAL DISCIPLINE
PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi has said that the crux of the Sixth Five Year Plan is resource mobilisation. In this massive effort, she sought the cooperation of the states even if it meant a "number of difficult and somewhat unpopular effort". She said though the Planning Commission would have liked a larger outlay, even for the Rs 90,000-crore plan outlined in the draft framework, they had to be "hard-hearted, hard-headed and practical". Calling for strict fiscal discipline, the PM said wasteful expenditure has to be controlled. PSUs have to be run efficiently and if the government's policies were responsible for their losses, they have to be corrected.

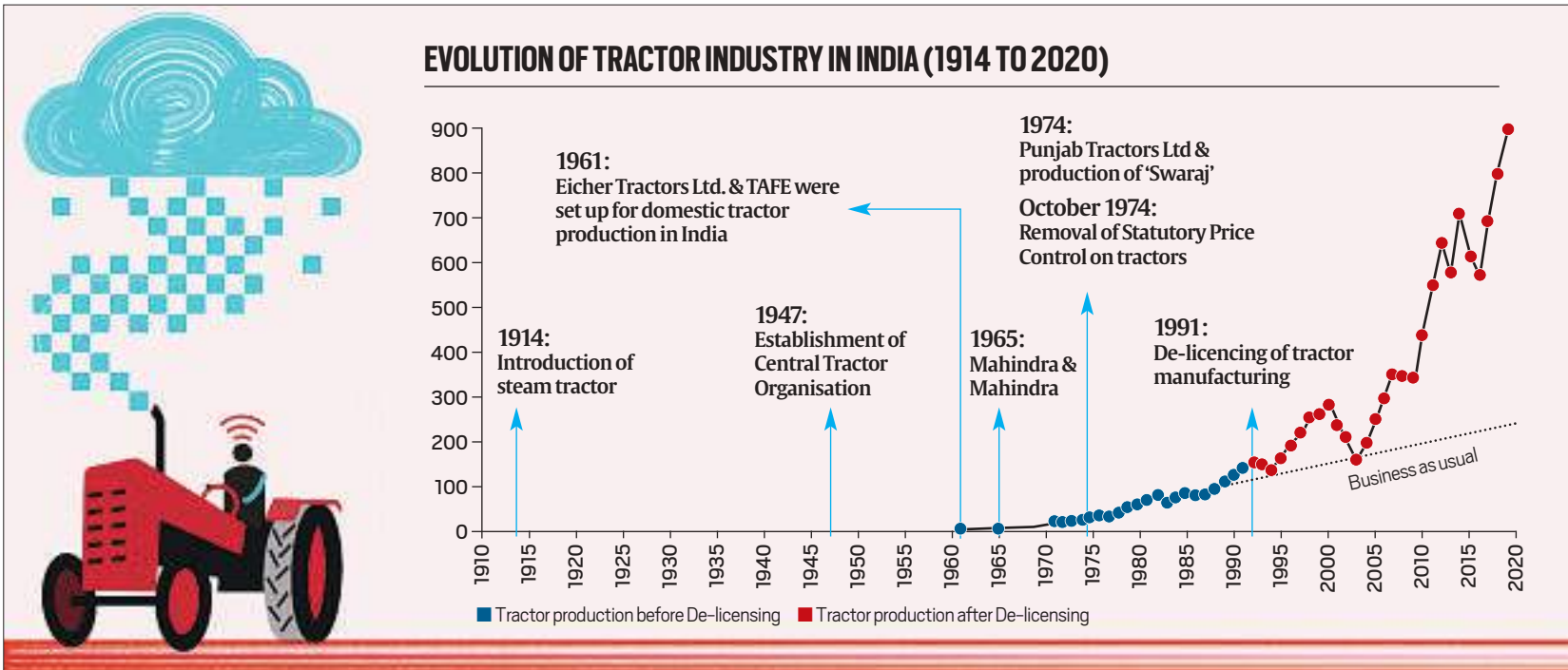
TALKS ON SIXTH PLAN
THE DRAFT FRAMEWORK of the Sixth Five Year Plan was generally welcomed by all states though some had strong reservations on the suggestion for a gradual withdrawal of subsidies and on resource mobilisation. The criticism came from the two Marxist-ruled states, West Bengal and Kerala. They called for a national wage policy and greater emphasis on employment. They were also critical of the Plan paper's approach to large industrial houses and expressed the fear that monopolies could be created.

POLISH WORKERS WIN
STRIKING POLISH WORKERS secured a his-

toric breakthrough when the government issued a statement agreeing to their demand for independent trade unions and the right to hold strikes. The agreement marks the first time that workers have won such rights in the Soviet-bloc. The government negotiating team said that the workers can form "self-governing unions". The striking workers said that the new unions will have a socialist character in line with Poland's constitution.

SATI IN RAIPUR
A 50-YEAR OLD woman, Kacheribal Bairagi of Kheda village in Madhya Pradesh's Raipur district has committed sati. She immolated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband.

THE IDEAS PAGE



C R Sasikumar

Tractor economics

India has become the world leader in tractors. The sector should now be facilitated to use digital tools to benefit small farmers



FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH
BY ASHOK GULATI AND
RITIKA JUNEJA

BOUNTIFUL RAINS AND the news of tractor sales shooting up by 38.5 per cent in July have triggered quite a buzz in the market. It is being claimed that agriculture will be the saviour of the economy this year. There is no doubt that while most of the other sectors are likely to see negative growth, agriculture will deliver a reasonably healthy positive growth. With water storage in reservoirs in good shape, not only is the kharif harvest likely to be good, there is also hope for a robust rabi crop.

Let us focus a bit of on tractors. Yes, July showed an extraordinary increase in tractor sales. But one must not forget that during the lockdown period, for the quarter April to June, tractor sales dropped by almost 14 per cent over the same quarter last year. For the investor community, therefore, it is important to have a long-term vision and not get swayed by monthly sales numbers. Here, we dive deep into the evolution of the tractor industry in India, the challenges it faces, and its growth prospects.

The history of tractors in Indian agriculture goes back to the introduction of steam tractors in 1914 for the reclamation of wastelands in Punjab. After Independence, the Central Tractor Organisation (CTO) was set up to promote the use of tractors in agriculture. In 1951, the tractor industry was included in the "Core Sector" of planned economic development, and was also placed under the "licence raj". Interestingly, even until 1960, the demand for tractors was being met entirely through imports. It was only in 1961 that two companies, Eicher Tractors Ltd. (in collaboration with Gebr. Eicher Tractorenfabrik of West Germany) and Tractors and Farm Equipment

Ltd. (TAFE) (in collaboration with Messey Ferguson of UK), started manufacturing tractors in India. In 1965, Mahindra and Mahindra jumped in the fray in collaboration with the International Tractor Company of India. As a result, domestic production of tractors rose from 880 units in 1961-62 to 5,000 units in 1965-66. But in 1967, the government imposed a statutory price control on domestically-produced tractors to protect farmers from high prices. This price control was revoked only in 1974.

The Green Revolution gave a fillip to the demand for tractors to meet the pressing need of completing timely operations in agriculture. So, the government decided to invite additional entrepreneurs into tractor manufacturing in 1968. In 1971, Escorts Tractors Limited was established and started manufacturing Ford tractors in collaboration with Ford, UK. Several other domestic manufacturers, such as VST Tillers and Tractors Ltd, also invested in the industry. Interestingly, in 1974, Punjab Tractors Ltd became the first public sector company to manufacture tractors with indigenous technology. It produced the first agricultural tractor — "Swaraj". With the arrival of many new players in the tractor industry, production crossed the 30,000-mark in 1974-75. In 1982, the indigenous Mahindra brand of tractors was also launched.

However, it was only in 1991 that tractor manufacturing was completely de-licensed in India. This was a landmark event — it increased competition, improved quality, and offered more choices to the farmers. Today, India is the largest manufacturer of tractors (excluding sub 20 horsepower (hp) belt-driven tractors used in China), followed by the US and China. Tractor production in India shot up from 139 thousand in 1991 to almost 900 thousand units in 2018-19 (see graphic). Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) has emerged as the largest player with a 40 per cent share of the market (FY 2019) followed by TAFE (with Eicher Motors) — 18.4 per cent. In 2018-19, India exported almost 90,000 tractors to various countries ranging from the US to African nations. This speaks of an "atmanirbhar" and competitive industry.

What contributed to this success of the tractor industry? First, the de-licensing of 1991

was a harbinger of major change in the industry. Second, the availability of bank credit for buying tractors helped the market to grow. Remember, almost 95 per cent of tractors are bought on bank credit.

But over time, this success is also brewing a problem. Micro surveys reveal that tractors are not being used very efficiently — their use in most states hovers around 500-600 hours per year compared to a benchmark figure of 800-1,000 hours for efficient utilisation. This is leading to "overcapitalisation of farms" in some parts of India, especially Punjab/Haryana belt.

If India has to ensure continuous growth in the tractor industry, and its efficient use on small farms, it has to undertake innovative solutions like "Uberisation of tractor services". The digital economy offers an opportunity to cut costs, increase profitability of cultivation, and thus not only expand the tractor market but also reduce drudgery in farm work. The "Uberisation model" could make tractor services perfectly divisible, accessible and affordable even by small holders without owning the machine. The government is incentivising custom hiring centres through capital subsidies — better keep their management and operations under private entrepreneurs, if India is to innovate and achieve farm efficiency with inclusiveness. But the real challenge for innovators is whether individual farmers who own tractors can also avail of this platform to render tractor services to others and earn some money. Agri start-ups and innovators of the digital world need to enter this field and promote efficient utilisation of farm machinery.

The future of the tractor industry will soon include combining tractor services for ploughing and sowing seeds to using sensors, cloud computing and artificial intelligence for precision farming. Dovetailing the digital revolution with farm machinery has already started in the US and Europe, ushering in what Howarth Buffett (a farmer and brother of billionaire Warren Buffett) calls the "Brown Revolution". India can surely do it at a lower cost and serve the 550 million small holders around the world.

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture and Juneja is Consultant at ICRIER

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"It is unquestionable that the US military feels the warnings from the PLA's actions when it flexes its muscle in China's coastal waters. The South China Sea is not the Caribbean, where the US military can act wantonly."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Daughters of the migration

There are parallels between the stories of Mughal Empress Nur Jahan and US vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris



RUBY LAL

ALTHOUGH FOUR HUNDRED years apart, the life story of Senator Kamala Harris, vice-presidential nominee for the 2020 US election, and the Mughal Empress Nur Jahan, resonate deeply. Both leaders are daughters of migrants who went to new countries in search of a better future; both were raised by strong mothers in mixed ethnic and racial cosmopolitan communities. What connects them above all is experience-building, the slow work of accumulation of power — and their rise as strong and compassionate female leaders.

Nur Jahan — born Mihr un-Nisa or Sun of Women in 1577 on the road outside Kandahar as a comet streaked across the sky — was the daughter of Persian nobles who left their home in present-day Iran, amidst increasing intolerance under the Safavid dynasty, to seek refuge in the more liberal Mughal world of India. Raised in a blend of poetic, mystical and literary traditions from her parents' birthplace and their adopted homeland, Nur first married a Mughal government official and former military officer, and with him moved to Bengal and gave birth to her only child. She experienced firsthand the machinations of centre-state political relations and the complexity of governance in a vast and diverse land. It was in Bengal that she honed her shooting skills and became a master shot, skills she later used in protecting her subjects from killer tigers. With her husband suspected of participating in a plot against the Emperor and killed in battle, the widowed Nur was given refuge in the Emperor's harem — in keeping with the Mughal practice. Her fellow harem women grew to trust and admire her, and in 1611, she became the 20th and final wife of the half-Hindu and half-Sunni Muslim Emperor Jahangir.

Soon after their marriage, her influence grew both within the harem and the court. Between 1614 and 1627, Nur served as co-sovereign, a decisive player in courtly and succession politics, and a commanding strategist. She defended her subjects against oppressive landlords and championed social justice. At the height of her power in the 1610s and '20s, princes and courtiers sought her advice and followed her commands. When Jahangir was taken prisoner by a rebellious nobleman, it was Nur who led her

imperial troops to rescue him.

The Mughal family had a tradition of strong and prominent elder women — assertive royal wives, influential mothers and aunts whose opinions were valued. But no woman had ever openly and fully taken charge of the empire. It would be another 350 years, when Indira Gandhi became India's first female prime minister, before another woman ascended to such heights in Indian statecraft. A Shia woman married to a Sunni-Hindu king, Nur Jahan was a remarkable leader in a male-dominated world. She didn't come from royalty like Queen Elizabeth, Cleopatra, or other renowned women rulers, yet she ascended from the emperor's harem to great heights as his co-sovereign and presided over a pluralistic empire that was arguably the richest in the world.

A brilliant, persistent strategist, a fascinating woman, Nur ruled an empire against extraordinary odds. What made her rise possible was the supportive network with her husband, her high-ranking father, her vivacious and astute mother, harem matrons, step-son and other members of the court. Soon, she minted coins in her name, struck imperial orders over her signature, came out to the imperial balconies, fulfilling all technical signs of sovereignty. The incredibly diverse, tolerant and mobile culture of the Mughal court and India that allowed for different sensibilities, religions, and traditions to coexist were vital to Nur's ascent.

Nur Jahan, a woman of many talents, abilities and potentialities, all of which the Emperor noticed from the very beginning, was a product of the tolerant and plural culture of India. In America, Harris, the daughter of an Indian mother and Black Caribbean father, is poised for breakthrough leadership. She comes on to the American political scene as the country grapples with attacks on its multi-ethnic, multi-racial, migration centred spirit. The very best of America — the land in which Kamala Harris became possible — is dangerously threatened.

Kamala is another name for the Goddess Lakshmi, the giver of bounty and fortune. Harris, a person of uncommon political and cultural acumen, a remarkable senator with piercing intellect and commitment to rights of immigrants, is likely to be America's torch bearer.

What came to be known as The Great Comet glowed overhead as Nur's parents left a rigid Persian regime for what they hoped was a more tolerant Mughal court in India. When Nur was born, taking the cosmic clue, they named her Sun of Women. It is certain that Kamala's mother knew the power of the name she gave her daughter.

Lal is professor of South Asian History, Emory University Atlanta and author, most recently of Empress, The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

CHANGE IS THE only constant. As our young nation strides towards development and advancing our capabilities globally, it becomes imperative to take inspiration from our ancient heritage and cultural values to transform the existing status quo with a modern and futuristic approach. The recently approved New Education Policy is a much-needed guiding light to nurture our demographic potential.

Many stalwarts have, from time to time, made arguments for a better education system for India. The British raj had delegitimised the Indian education system. After Macaulay's Minutes of 1835, the colonial government's work in education was primarily motivated by self-serving concerns. While Western education was spread among Indians, scientific, technical and moral education was largely ignored. The Indian reformers believed that to keep up with the times, a modern education system was needed.

During the Round Table conference in 1931, Mahatma Gandhi, in one of his speeches, said: "The beautiful tree of education was cut down by you British. Therefore, today, India is far more illiterate than it was 100 years ago." Babasaheb Ambedkar had also opined that everyone has a right to learn. Ambedkar even metaphorically compared education to the milk of a tigress and added that one who drinks it will ultimately strive for progressive changes in the society.

After Independence, several steps were taken by successive governments to decolonise

the education system, including through the University Education Commission (1948-49), Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), D S Kothari Commission (1964-66) and the National Policy on Education (1968).

President A P J Abdul Kalam had emphasised the need for a value-based education that instils righteousness at a young age to make a cultured citizenry capable of transforming India into a prosperous, peaceful, secure, happy and developed nation.

The National Education Policy in effect until now was 34 years old. A more apt vision was needed to meet the aspirations of the New India. Since January 2015, an unprecedented consultation that involved nearly two lakh suggestions from 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, and 676 districts took place in committees constituted under the chairmanship of former cabinet secretary T S R Subramanian and eminent scientist K Kasturirangan, which ultimately fructified into the NEP 2020.

NEP 2020 is an ambitious and futuristic policy that ensures opportunities for children to hone their talents by fixing the lacunae in the education system. Recognising the urgency of foundational learning, the shift from the 10+2 system to the 5+3+3+4 — with foundation, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages — will focus on a more holistic development of children. The emphasis on skills like analysis, critical thinking, conceptual clarity and co-curricular and vocational subjects will diversify their learning. Universal access at all levels

of school education will be guaranteed, and it is proposed that the around two crore children who drop out will be brought back into the education system.

The mandatory teaching of an Indian language will protect and promote our linguistic and cultural diversity. India has thousands of languages and dialects, and each language has its significance and identity. India takes pride in this. But on the other hand, 196 languages in the country have been included in the list of endangered languages by UNESCO. The NEP's emphasis on local languages will address these concerns. The implementation of a mother-tongue based multilingual education system will pave the way for addressing the pending demands of recognising many languages — like Rajasthani, Bhojpuri and Bhoti, among others — under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

The proposed reform in school curricula and pedagogy, a transparent process for teacher recruitment, merit-based promotion and development of the National Professional Standards for Teachers, setting up a Gender Inclusion Fund, and also Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups will empower the academic fraternity. Changes like PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) will redesign assessment and standardised the education boards across the country.

The multiple exit and re-entry system,

credit transferability across the universities, and multi-disciplinarity in the higher education system have provided flexibility to students. The internationalisation of education will be facilitated through institutional collaborations, student and faculty exchange programmes, and allowing top-ranked international universities to open campuses in our country. It is proposed that 3.5 crore new seats will be added to higher education institutions. Such prompt measures will ultimately converge the gap between industry and academia and harness our demographic dividend.

Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this well-thought and forward-looking document will be an important milestone in India's journey towards becoming a global knowledge superpower. The return of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to its earlier name, Ministry of Education, has provided a more focused and fresh perspective to the education ecosystem. NEP 2020 has been well received and Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and dedicated teams are leaving no stone unturned to ensure its implementation in letter and spirit. I urge all the stakeholders — students, parents, teachers, public representatives, universities, media, and civil society — to discuss and debate the nuances of NEP 2020.

The writer is Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises



New Delhi



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ONLY FOR ELITE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Testing times' (IE, August 28). It's easy for the Supreme Court to direct the NTA to conduct the JEE and NEET with safeguards against COVID-19. As of now, in the absence of regular trains and buses, only the elite with access to cars will be able to write the tests. Who will provide transport to almost half of the 24 lakh candidates, who come from distant places to 660 exam centres (there are 739 districts in India)?

Varin Dhir, Ahmedabad

WILL AND WAY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Burdening states' (IE, August 28). Even if we ignore the question of whether or not the delay in payments of GST compensation to states happened because of the outbreak of the COVID-19, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's words do not constitute a response befitting our country's claim to be one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Where there's a will, there's a way — the NDA government can very well bail out the state governments out of their dire financial difficulties by using funds from the PM Cares fund created for dealing with the exigencies arising from the after-effects of the deadly contagion.

Tarsem Singh, Mahipur

POOR SPORT

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Pageantry and false promise' (IE, August 28). The irony that many sports awardees and winners are struggling to earn a living, selling fruits and vegetables and farming, is an example of how a career in sports is an uncertain option for the youth of the country. As the article

IDEAS ONLINE

ONLY IN THE EXPRESS

● **BLINDED BY CREDIT:**
SUMEDHA SHUKLA AND
GAURAV ARORA

● **THE RESONANCE OF**
SUSHANT SINGH:
NISHTHA LAMBA

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states, top bureaucrats and ministers expect a lot out of our players. Expectations are good but they should ensure that all the necessary equipment and facilities are provided to our players and athletes. The medal tally in the Olympics will not increase by rosy statements. If the practice of making false promises goes on, the youth of our country will refrain from considering sports as a safe option and would rather go for areas where their potential is dependent only on their own hard work.

Ayushi Singh, Agra

RANKING EDUCATION

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Home and the world' (IE, August 28). University rankings create perception. It is wrong for them to use perception as a criterion. A university like JNU, which offers spectacular PhD courses, is much better than a jack of all trades. The rankings should be replaced by grades, like NAAC, because, truly, ranking universities on such varied and so many criteria is impractical.

Yusuf Ghazali, Patna



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

CORONAVIRUS DASHBOARD

COVID-19 VACCINE TRACKER

US and UK open up possibility of a vaccine this year itself

THE TIMELINE for a novel coronavirus vaccine seems to have got firmly advanced, from early next year to this year-end. On Friday, US President Donald Trump promised to produce a vaccine before the end of this year, "or may be even sooner".

In a separate development, Britain said it would amend its laws to ensure that a novel coronavirus vaccine is given emergency approval as soon as it is declared to be safe in clinical trials. It said it would not wait for the full licensing process to get completed. The new legal provision could kick in as early as October this year, enabling its drug regulator to grant emergency approvals to a vaccine that has been proven safe. The changed law would also protect the pharmaceutical companies from being sued if the vaccines produced any side-effects.

Trump has maintained earlier as well that the possibility of a vaccine being made available this year could not be ruled out. But on Friday, he was more emphatic than ever before. "We will have a safe and effective vaccine this year, and together we will crush the virus," he said while accepting the Republican Party nomination to run for President once again.

However, the plans of both the US

and the UK would depend on at least one of the vaccine clinical trials getting completed and its results declared to be safe and effective. As of now, most of the vaccine developers have been maintaining that their product was likely to be ready by early next year.

Meanwhile, the head of the Centres of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States has said even if the vaccines were ready on time by early next year, the supplies would be limited for some time. "At first, there will likely be a limited supply of one or more of the Covid-19 vaccines, because limited doses will be available," CDC director Robert Redfield was quoted as saying.

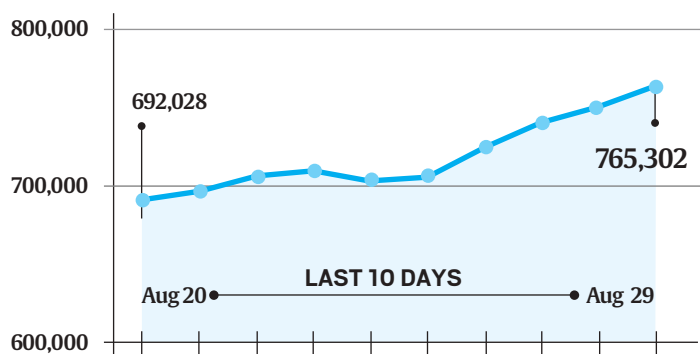
"It is important that the early vaccines are distributed in a fair, ethical and transparent way," he said.

The United States has pre-booked 800 million doses of vaccines from different developers. Assuming each of these vaccine candidates are successful in the trials, and are approved by the drug regulator, it would still take several months to manufacture those many doses. Not all the vaccines are likely to succeed, and that too could result in scarce supplies of the vaccines.



INDIA ACTIVE CASES

765,302



Note: The August 29 figure in this graph is based on government update on August 30

INDIA TOTAL CASES
3,542,733

Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, updated at 11 pm on August 30

WORLD TOTAL CASES
25,039,694

Source: Johns Hopkins University, updated at 11 pm on August 30



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SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What to look for in GDP data

Today, NSO data will provide the first benchmark of the state of the economy after the pandemic disrupted it. In the past week, RBI, Niti Aayog, and McKinsey reports have given pointers to what India needs to do.

UDIT MISRA

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

MONDAY IS a crucial day for the Indian economy. The National Statistical Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will come out with the GDP estimates for the first quarter (April, May, June) of the current financial year.

Observers of the Indian economy keenly await the NSO data because it will provide the first benchmark of the state of the Indian economy after the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted it and forced the country into wide-spread and repeated lockdowns.

What do we know about the current state of economy?

The past week provided several key developments that provide the context to the GDP numbers.

RBI ANNUAL REPORT: The first thing to note is that the RBI's annual year is different from the regular financial year. For India's central bank, the annual report of 2019-20 pertains to the period between July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

This otherwise perfunctory fact is relevant this year because RBI's year included the first quarter (April, May, June) of the current financial year. This is the quarter that saw the maximum disruption of economic activity and as such everyone wanted to know what RBI made of this period.

The RBI, however, refrained from providing a clear number for GDP growth or contraction but it did state that "an assessment of aggregate demand during the year so far suggests that the shock to consumption is severe, and it will take quite some time to mend and regain the pre-COVID-19 momentum".

GST COUNCIL MEETING: Equally ominous were the words of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who, while talking to the Chief Ministers of other non-BJP ruled states, suggested reverting to the pre-GST regime. Thackeray was responding to a GST Council meeting where the Union government expressed its inability to pay the compensation amount — roughly Rs 2.35 lakh crore — that was due to the states under the GST regime.

This suggestion could have wide-ranging ramifications for the economy if it is pursued by some of the biggest states in a serious manner.

As different states try to recover from the impact of Covid-19, they need money, but the current GST regime has robbed the states of the freedom to raise or lower taxes. Being asked to borrow money from the market instead of getting it from the Centre has made Thackeray question the desirability of the current GST regime.

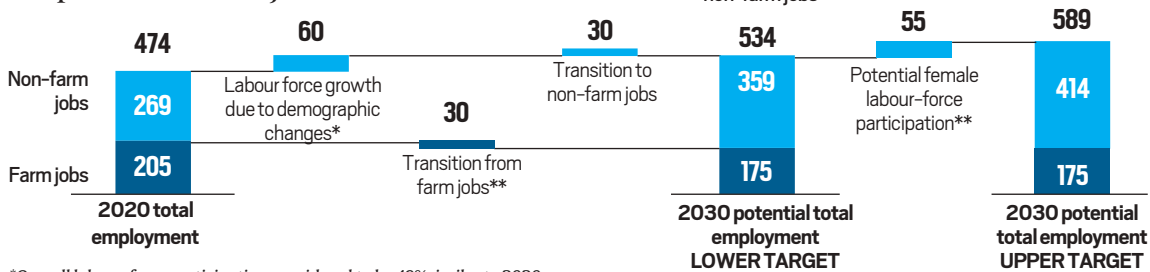
EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX: The index launched by NITI Aayog ranked Indian states and Union Territories in the context of export preparedness in terms of policy environment, infrastructure etc.

The top performers were mostly coastal states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Odisha but there was one landlocked state that managed to sneak into the top 5 list and it was Rajasthan.

At the other end of the spectrum were mostly landlocked and Himalayan states such as Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar and Assam. But West Bengal stood out for being ranked

CHART 1: INDIA NEEDS TO CREATE AT LEAST 90 MILLION MORE NON-FARM JOBS BY 2030

Employment in farm and non-farm occupations, millions of jobs



*Overall labour-force participation considered to be 49% similar to 2020

**Assuming farm-employment reduction is in line with historical trends

*** Female labour-force-participation rate has potential to increase from 19% to 30% in 2030 driven by the prime age group

Source: ILOSTAT; McKinsey Global Institute Analysis

CHART 2: GROWTH, SECTOR BY SECTOR

SECTOR	% GROWTH
1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3.5%
2. Mining and quarrying	-22%
3. Manufacturing	-38%
4. Electricity, gas, water supply & other utility services	-16%
5. Construction	-42%
6. Trade, hotel, transport, communication, and services related to broadcasting	-44%
7. Financial, real estate and professional services	-9%
8. Public administration, defence and other services	9.5%
GVA at basic prices	-19.9%
GDP	-20.2%

Source: CARE Ratings' estimation

CHART 3: GDP & GVA GROWTH FOR Q1 FY21 (Rs CRORE)

Sector	Q1 FY20	Q1 FY21 (lockdown)	Q1 FY21 (% YoY)
1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	7,12,222	7,76,322	9.0%
2. Mining and quarrying	1,04,945	44,916	-57.2%
3. Manufacturing	6,94,993	4,46,186	-35.8%
4. Electricity, gas, water supply & other utility services	1,24,571	1,37,226	10.0%
5. Construction	3,50,920	2,229,502	-34.6%
6. Trade, hotel, transport, communication, and services related to broadcasting	8,06,915	5,22,881	-35.2%
7. Financial, real estate and professional services	10,56,866	10,06,136	-4.8%
8. Public administration, defence and other services	6,37,682	7,33,334	15.0%

Source: SBI

22 out of the 36 states and UTs despite being a big coastal state.

A crucial takeaway from this report was the need for states to work on their unique strategy for boosting exports. This again ties in with Thackeray's demand to have greater leeway.

MCKINSEY EMPLOYMENT REPORT: The McKinsey Global Institute's report on India's employment needs stated that India will have to create at least 90 million non-farm jobs over the next decade — 145 million at the upper end — and for which it would have to grow at 8 to 8.5 per cent every year (Chart 1). This provides an understanding of how job creation may be affected because of GDP contraction or slow growth in the coming years.

REVIEW OF EASE-OF-DOING-BUSINESS RANKINGS: On August 27, the World Bank issued a statement saying that it has ordered a "systematic review" and "internal audit" of its data and methodology used for compiling the Ease of Doing Business rankings that were published in 2017 and 2019.

The move is in response to several allegations that data was tweaked for political reasons and to favour some countries. It is important to note that India's ranking improved from 142 in 2014 to 63 in 2019.

All of the past week's concerns — from plummeting domestic consumption to shrinking exports to massive unemployment to question marks on India's Ease of Doing Business rankings and GST regime — provide a useful bridge to the big event in the coming week.

What can one expect from the GDP data?

The first quarter saw the strictest lockdowns across the country and chances are it will see the sharpest fall in economic activity in a long while.

The composition of growth (or de-growth) — in other words, which sector got hit the most — will set the tone for the rest of the year. The amount and nature of the damage will point to the type and magnitude of fiscal and monetary policy efforts required to revive the Indian economy.

Most analysts expect the economy to contract sharply. But the expected magnitude of contraction differs — sometimes substantially over specific sectors of the economy.

For instance, State Bank of India's Saumya Kanti Ghosh expects the GDP contraction to be 16%, while Madan Sabnavis of CARE Ratings expects it to be around 20% and Aditi Nayar of ICRA Ltd expect an even bigger contraction of 25%.

Beyond the variation in headline growth numbers, if one compares specific sectors (Charts 2 and 3); one can find two broad trends:

■ That manufacturing, construction, and trade and hotels etc. are likely to have been most massively hit (*highlighted in red*);

■ That agriculture and public administration (that is, the government) would have done pretty well (*highlighted in green*);

■ There is less consensus about what is likely to have happened to sectors like mining & quarrying and electricity and other utilities (*highlighted in blue*).

How difficult is it to make these estimates and what is their significance?

It is true that GDP projections over the past year or so have increasingly shortened shelf life. For instance, last year in July, when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the full-year Budget, she pencilled in an 8% real GDP growth. But with each passing month, the projections continued to be scaled back as the underlying economy decelerated faster than expected. Eventually, India ended the year with just 4%.

In this financial year, making these estimates and projections is even more difficult because Covid's spread in India has been much worse than the government's expectation. In the early days, the government had expected that India would have no new Covid cases after May 16. In reality, India not only added around 5,000 new cases on May 16 but also overhauled China's tally of over 80,000 cases.

As India has tried to open up for work, Covid cases have surged. Last week, India registered the highest single-day count of new Covid cases anywhere in the world since the start of the pandemic. It is now the third-most afflicted country on the planet. What is most worrisome is that the rate of spread of Covid in India's rural areas is almost twice the rate of spread in urban areas.

All of this points to uncertainty about the shape of economic recovery. In this context, Monday's data would provide the first benchmark around which future analysis can happen.

Why first reinfection cases do not change much in approach to Covid

Scientists aren't surprised that it can happen. It doesn't mean everyone is equally susceptible to a second infection, or that vaccines won't be useful

AMITABH SINHA

PUNE, AUGUST 30

JUST ABOUT two weeks ago, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States had said that, until then, no case of reinfection with the novel coronavirus had been confirmed in any individual. The CDC did acknowledge that there had been instances in which people had tested positive again after having recovered from the disease once. But that, it said, could be because of what it described as "persistent viral shedding". Recovered patients can have low levels of virus for up to three months after the infection, and though it is no longer enough to make the person sick or transmit the disease to others, it can get detected in diagnostic tests.

Now, it appears, the CDC may have spoken a little too soon. Researchers in Hong Kong recently reported the first known case of reinfection. A 33-year-old Chinese was found carrying the disease four-and-a-half months after recovering from the first infection. The patient had travelled to Spain in between. Just a day later, one similar case of re-infection was reported from Belgium and another from the Netherlands. And last

week, the United States too reported its first case of presumed reinfection.

These first cases of reinfection show that the immunity developed after contracting the disease once may not be long-lasting, and the virus could continue to circulate in the populations even after levels of community-wide immunity, either through natural infection or by vaccination, are reached. It has also triggered concerns about the effectiveness of vaccines being developed for the infection.

But are these reinfections real?

Based on the paper that has been published by the Hong Kong researchers, scientists agree that the case of the 33-year-old Chinese person is indeed one of reinfection, and not of traces of virus from the previous infection getting detected again. In fact, the case for reinfection is not being made on the basis of results of a diagnostic tests. It so happened that the viral specimen from this person was collected both times he got infected, and genome sequences from the two specimen have been extracted, and compared.

The genome sequence analysis shows that the person had been infected with two different variants of the novel coronavirus.



Swab being collected for a coronavirus test in Delhi. Amit Mehra/File photo

Viruses mutate with time, developing small differences in their genetic make-up. This enables researchers to trace the origins of the infection, and the possible routes through which it has been circulating. In this person, the variant of virus extracted the second time resembled closely to those in circulation in Europe in July and August. That could possibly mean that he had been re-infected during his travel to Spain. He had tested positive while being screened at the airport on his return.

In the case of the reinfection in the US too, researchers in Nevada found that the virus associated with each instance of the patient's infection represented genetically different strains.

What are the implications of these findings?

Scientists say the fact that reinfection has been confirmed does not come as a surprise. In fact, many believed that reinfection might have been happening earlier as

well. It was just that it was not getting detected. That is because in none of the cases where a person had tested positive for the second time was a genome sequence from the first infection available. Genome sequences are not obtained from every coronavirus patient. Researchers extract the viral specimens from a few hundred patients for carrying out their studies. In the case of both the Hong Kong and the United States reinfections, researchers were lucky that they had the respective viral specimens collected the first time as well.

But other viruses, including those from the coronavirus family, especially those that cause respiratory illnesses, infect a large number of people every year, and those who have been infected once are not considered immune from them. As the Hong Kong researchers themselves point out, reinfection is common for these other seasonal coronaviruses. There is no reason to believe why SARS-CoV2, the virus that causes Covid-19 disease, would be any different. The difference, of course, is that unlike other viruses, there is no treatment available for Covid-19 right now.

But these first cases of re-infection do not mean that everyone is equally susceptible to reinfection. Who all can get re-infected, and how long an infected person can expect to remain protected from a reinfection, are both open questions right now that need further investigation. The Hong Kong researchers noted that in the Chinese patent, the disease was milder in rein-

fection as compared to the first infection.

Would vaccines be effective?

Shahid Jameel, a virologist, believes these cases of reinfection do not raise any fresh question marks over the effectiveness of the vaccines being developed. That is because a reinfection would happen only from the different variants of the virus that are currently in circulation, and most of the vaccines being developed are meant to provide protection against all the variants of the virus. For blocking the virus, they are targeting regions that are common in all these variants. "Effectiveness of the vaccines because of the possibility of re-infection does not seem to be a concern right now," he said.

"Of course, once these vaccines are in use, it is possible that the virus is forced to mutate in new ways because of natural selection pressures. In that case, the virus may change in a form that cannot be targeted with present vaccines. But that is in the future," he said.

But as in the case of natural immunity, the longevity of protection offered by vaccine remains an open question. The Hong Kong researchers do point out that vaccines may not be able to provide lifelong protection against Covid-19 disease. But there are vaccines for several other diseases as well that need to be repeated periodically because they do not offer permanent protection.

The researchers, however, say that there is now a case for testing the vaccines being developed on recovered patients as well.

IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

HARDEEP SINGH PURI, MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS

By Diwali, we should be getting a bulk of our air traffic back in form

The Union minister explains why despite air bubbles, travel is not happening as freely as was expected, details the measures they are taking to help the troubled aviation sector, and denies any financial crunch for Central Vista project. The session was moderated by National Business Editor Anil Sasi

HARDEEP SINGH PURI: The figure (of domestic passengers) yesterday (August 24) was 98,800, so we have already reached 33 per cent of pre-Covid numbers. We are increasing domestic passengers at the rate of 5,000 a week. With Mumbai hopefully having Covid numbers under control, I'm hoping that after the Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, we will open up Mumbai more; Bengaluru, Kolkata will be a little less sporadic. We will be looking to touch the 50 per cent mark before too long... By Diwali (November 14), we should be getting a bulk of our civil aviation traffic back in form.

ANIL SASI: With the coronavirus spreading in slum pockets in Mumbai and parts of Delhi, is there now a renewed urgency to undertake redevelopment of these parts in cities?

I think the pandemic has renewed our commitment to accelerating the delivery on these projects. This includes the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana under which in situ slum rehabilitation is one of the four verticals. Now, let me answer your question by actually turning it around. Supposing we did not have the interventions of the Prime Minister's flagship programmes — the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation), the Smart City Mission — how would we have fared during the pandemic? The Swachhata campaign has been the most important among these schemes.

When we started, in 2014, the Prime Minister said from the ramparts of the Red Fort that it is his dream that by the time we celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, which was October 2, 2019, India should be open defecation free. And look, apart from some urban local bodies in West Bengal, India is now open defecation free. And, we have not stopped at that. The Swachh Bharat Mission required two things. One is physical targets, that is you had to build a certain number of toilets — 67 lakh individual household toilets, and five to seven lakh community or what are called public toilets. Those physical targets were met long back, but it required something in addition, which was behavioural change. Now that behavioural change has come and that change has in fact manifested in all our programmes.

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana has its origins in the Prime Minister's desire that by the time we celebrate our 75th anniversary as an independent nation, every Indian, no matter where he or she lives, should have a home which they can call their own, and it should be in the name of the lady of the house. We were supposed to build 1.12 crore units, and we have already sanctioned 1.07 crore. Sixty-seven lakh have already been grounded, and about 35-36 lakh units have been handed over. But during Covid we have also realised that it is not just residents who want to own homes. For the migrant working population, we have come up with a new scheme, the Affordable Rental Housing Complexes. This means building dormitories and one- and two-bedroom homes for these workers. Not everyone wants ownership... The Smart City mission, 62-63 per cent of the projects have already been tendered. AMRUT covered 70 per cent of India's urban areas. It's been followed by the Jal Shakti Mission. All the schemes are doing well and our capability to face the challenges of Covid-19 has been helped by these schemes, particularly by the Swachh Bharat scheme.

ANIL SASI: The free travel that was envisaged under the air bubble agreement has not happened in some jurisdictions. As India's Covid-19 caseload continues to rise, do you see restrictions on Indian travellers flying abroad intensifying?

As the Civil Aviation Minister, I have to ensure that we have air services for those who are able to travel. The restrictions are placed by countries individually. Now, for instance, India started with a mandatory 14-day quarantine (in the early days of the pandemic). Now, if you are carrying an RT-PCR test result, and you have taken the test (not more than) 96 hours before travelling, you can go through the green channel. This is the sovereign right of countries. When the air bubbles were introduced it had nothing to do with restrictions at the other end. Many countries such as the United States now don't have restrictions. They had it for



WHY

HARDEEP SINGH PURI

At the helm of two key ministries — Civil Aviation, and Housing and Urban affairs — Puri is responsible for implementing the ambitious Central Vista project in addition to key Central government housing schemes. As the aviation sector struggles to navigate the Covid-19-induced turbulence, the former diplomat has been focusing on resuming operations. He has been instrumental in the Vande Bharat Mission, that brought back 1.3 mn Indians

a while and then they lifted them. The United Kingdom did not have restrictions, but then Spain opened up in the holiday season, there was a spike, and they reintroduced the restrictions... The air bubbles are designed to make sure that passengers can get from Point A to Point B... We have air bubbles operational between India and the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany... You have two flights to London every day by Air India. At times, we have four-five flights between India and various cities in the United States. We are trying to move towards normalcy.

I saw in one place that a number of people (on a flight) were found positive and that country wants to suspend flights... When I heard the news, I told my secretary, civil aviation, that if we are insisting that people coming in show RT-PCR test results, then I would also encourage people going out from India (to get tests done)... If you are carrying 280 passengers in a plane, and six or eight of them turn out to be positive... Let's get a realistic perspective on the number. Many people are asymptomatic. We can go a step further and insist that they also have a test done prior to embarkation and we will do that.

ANIL SASI: The aviation sector has been hit hard by the pandemic. Do you think, perhaps, they could have got some sort of support from the government?

... What are the costs that an airline incurs? Let me give you one example: We rationalised the use of airspace. The flying time between Mumbai and Srinagar was 90 minutes; it was reduced by 16 per cent. So, the fuel consumption also goes down by 16 per cent. What is the highest cost

component for airlines? It is aviation turbine fuel.

We have done this, but we are also not averse to doing everything else. The Finance Ministry has told our banks to lend a helping hand... If somebody has taken loans, and there is some cushion provided, the airline industry also benefits. Many of the airline industry's assets such as planes are in the hands of lessors and lessees. Now with a surplus of planes, and very little activity, those lessor-lessee rates are being renegotiated and that brings costs down. We reduced the GST rates on aircraft MROs (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) from 18 per cent to five per cent. In January this year, the (discontinuation) of fuel throughput charge (FTC), along with the rationalisation of air space, ensured that Rs 230 crore is saved every year by airlines.

Different airlines are in different financial positions. There are some which were under strain even prior to Covid. There are others that are a little more comfortable because they are tied to bigger business establishments. My own firmly held view is that savings by airlines etc will come by as soon as operations resume. Even with Air India, despite the financial strain, with Vande Bharat flights etc, they could make some earnings from

now we are focusing on one specific part of the project, which is an additional new Parliament building. Anyone who is familiar with the Parliament building knows that it is not even a safe building... Very soon there will be a website to explain the contours of the project and people can send their opinions.

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: In the early days of the Vande Bharat mission, Air India was accused of profiteering from a humanitarian crisis. A lot of people wanted to come home and the air fares were very, very high. Could it have been handled any other way?

When the Vande Bharat mission was started, the experience was very difficult. We had to quarantine air crews... The highest fare charged was an economy class fare of Rs 1 lakh in the India-North America sector. Secondly, the fare charged by all the other airlines for a similar journey was at least three times higher. From the Gulf to India, we were charging an average of Rs 13,000, when our own private and chartered carriers were charging Rs 22-23,000. On the Houston sector, our fare was Rs 1,03,000. The US carriers were charging Rs 3,00,000. So our fares were much lower. Air India can be accused of everything but profiteering. It's an airline which in March 2020 had a debt of Rs 60,000 crore, and when we go into privatisation of Air India, that's the debt that the bidder will have to deal with. Total number of passengers carried back (to India on Vande Bharat flights) is close to 1.3 million. These are on Air India. Then there

Kerala said they are against privatisation. If they're against privatisation, they should not have taken part in this. They already run two privatised airports

difficulty, you, me, your newspaper, my government, everybody. But it doesn't mean that you don't know how to get out of it. Some things you solve straight away, some things you negotiate. Of all the metros in the country, Delhi Metro is in the healthiest state. It is the only Metro which was able to pay its loans on time... The fare increase (of 2017) has ensured that Delhi Metro is in the pink of health. With Covid, everybody has been affected. We will take views of all stakeholders. We are in favour of revival of economic activities to the fullest.

RITU SARIN: On the Central Vista project, is there a delinking of the Parliament project, which you have said will be redesigned by 2024, from the other components, maybe because of a financial crunch or Covid?

The Central Vista project contains a number of individual segments and components. There is no financial crunch. Each government department has to provide its own resources. When you are making Parliament, you know where the resources will come from. It's just that each of these are in a different stage. It has

to be done systematically. For instance, I cannot be party to a system where people are moved out of government offices till the next offices are ready... Vayu Bhawan, Sena Bhawan, Nau Sena Bhawan etc will move when the new places are ready. So, all these are timelines. It's not as if anything has been shelved... Each of these taken together will add up to the overall Central Vista.

PRANAV MUKUL: The Kerala government has refused to cooperate in the privatisation of Thiruvananthapuram airport. How will the Airports Authority of India and Civil Aviation Ministry proceed now?

First, they turned around and said they are against privatisation. If they're against privatisation, they should not have participated in this. They are already running two privatised airports (Kochi and Kannur). Some people have suggested that there is an angle, regarding the person who has won the bid. That also does not seem to be right because that economic entity is running a port 20 kilometres from there.

So, my short answer is that they (the Kerala government) have an experience in privatisation, they wanted to participate, they participated, they lost the bid and, therefore, we have proceeded. (In the tender process for the privatisation of Thiruvananthapuram airport, Adani Enterprises outbid Kerala government entity KSIDC by more than 19%, which resulted in the state becoming ineligible to match the winning bid — an option that it could have exercised if its bid was within 10% of the winning bid.)

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN: You were posted in Sri Lanka when the relations with the neighbouring country were not great. Now, we are seeing uneven relationships in the neighbourhood. As the Civil Aviation Minister, do you think more communication in the neighbourhood at this time would be one way to keep the relationships going?

It was an interesting time because something very fundamental was being attempted. We were looking at reconciliation of what was loosely called the ethnic problem. The India-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987 captured the essence of Sri Lanka as a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. It was a far cry from the Sinhala Only Act, 1956... Rajiv Gandhi, who was then the prime minister, extended the good offices of India and an attempt was made and the rest is history. What is the situation today? Again, that is for my colleague S Jaishankar (to answer)...

Will more air connectivity with the countries in the neighbourhood help? It would. We are already looking at air bubbles with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan. And we are in a very advanced stage with many of them. (Air bubble with) Maldives has been established. Kushinagar (in Uttar Pradesh) has been declared as an international airport. We are hoping to bring Buddhist pilgrims in from Sri Lanka so that they can do the circuit — Kushinagar, Varanasi, Gaya, Sarnath, Lumbini etc. This is a long-standing demand and not only from Indian pilgrims but also from people in our neighbouring countries.

are people coming in by charter flights, land routes... This is the largest humanitarian evacuation mission carried out anytime, anywhere in the world, and at the most economical rates.

SOURAV ROY BARMAN: Earlier this year, the Delhi Metro had written to the Centre stating that it is not in a position to repay Rs 1,400 crore to

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs asked them to reach out to the state government for assistance. What is the way forward? Does the Metro need a bailout package? Is there a plan to restart the service?

Mangu Singh (the Managing Director of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation) and Delhi Metro have been ready to start operations for two months now. Mangu Singh says give me two days' notice and we will start. I think everyone agrees now, the Central and state government as well as the Delhi Metro people, that the time has come to resume services...

On financial issues, everybody is in dif-

June onwards. We have taken many meetings; we are navigating our way forward.

SHINY VARGHESE: In a Covid world, where going digital is more sustainable than having more buildings, how are we placed on the Central Vista project?

This is a project which is designed to rationalise space in a comprehensive manner. We have government buildings strewn all over the city. We are spending Rs 1,000 crore a year on rent for government buildings despite the fact that we are the land owners. It is not efficient utilisation of space. So, the idea is to redesign the Central Vista in a manner to ensure efficient use of space with more public space, more greenery. Earlier, there was a lot of misconception around it, that we were changing the historical nature etc. None of that is being done. All the iconic buildings will remain exactly where they are. Right

Different airlines are in different financial positions. Some were under strain even prior to Covid... Savings will come by as soon as operations resume

Illustration: Suvajit Dey

TOP OF THE WORLD



Arjuna Ranatunga

SRI LANKA

Ex-cricketer Ranatunga enters race for UNP top post

ARJUNA RANATUNGA, the captain of Sri Lanka's 1996 Cricket World Cup winning team, on Sunday joined the race to lead the Opposition United National Party (UNP) after former PM Ranil Wickremesinghe decided to resign from the party leadership after 26 years at the helm following its crushing defeat in the parliamentary elections. UNP general secretary and Wickremesinghe's cousin Ruwan Wijewardena and former Speaker Karu Jayasuriya have also offered to lead and revive the party after its humiliating defeat in the parliamentary elections. **PTI**

VIOLENCE IN PORTLAND: 1 MAN SHOT DEAD

Deadly shooting after Trump supporters, protesters clash

Pro-Trump rally with hundreds of trucks passes through city amid BLM protests

MIKE BAKER

PORTLAND, AUGUST 30

A MAN was shot and killed Saturday as a large group of supporters of US President Donald Trump travelled in a caravan through downtown Portland, Oregon, which has seen nightly protests for three consecutive months.

The pro-Trump rally drew hundreds of trucks full of supporters into the city. At times, Trump supporters and counter-protesters clashed on the streets, with people shooting paintball guns from the beds of pickup trucks and protesters throwing objects back at them.

It was not immediately clear how the shooting transpired, but two witnesses who asked not to be named said that a small group of people got into an argument with other people in a vehicle and someone opened fire.

The man who was shot and killed was wearing a hat with the insignia of Patriot Prayer, a far-right group based in Portland that has clashed with protesters in the past.

The Portland Police Bureau said that officers heard reports of gunfire shortly before 9 p.m. and

A man is treated by medics after being shot in Portland, Oregon, on Saturday. **AP**

found a victim with a gunshot wound to the chest. It was determined that the victim had died. They did not release any information about a possible shooter.

At the scene, police officers blocked off the road, and medics attended to a person who appeared to have a chest wound.

Portland has seen nightly demonstrations since the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis in May. In recent days, right-wing demonstrations have also sprung up in the city, and Trump has repeatedly highlighted the unrest in Portland as evidence

of the need for a tougher law-and-order response to the chaotic protests over police violence and racial injustice that have swept through many American cities.

The Trump supporters gathered earlier Saturday in the suburbs and plotted a route that would have kept them on the highways around Portland. But some of the ralliers headed directly downtown, where counterprotesters confronted some of the vehicles. Some of the conflicts led to fistfights. In one encounter, a vehicle ran over a bike. **NYT**

'7 bullets, 7 days': Protesters march in Kenosha

STEPHEN GROVES & AMY FORLITI

KENOSHA, AUGUST 30

WITH CHANTS of "One person, one vote!" and "No justice, no peace!" a crowd of about 1,000 demonstrators gathered outside a Wisconsin courthouse Saturday to denounce police violence and share messages of change, a week after an officer shot Jacob Blake in the back and left the 29-year-old Black man paralysed.

The diverse group of protesters also chanted "Seven bullets, seven days!" — a reference to the number of times Blake was shot last Sunday — as they marched toward the courthouse in Kenosha. There, Blake's father, Jacob Blake Sr, gave an impassioned call for changing a system he described as fostering police brutality and racial inequities.

Several of Saturday's speakers urged the crowd to vote for change in November, and to push for changing laws in Wisconsin. **AP**

Statue of John A Macdonald is seen on the ground after it was pulled down during a protest in Montreal. **Reuters**

Anti-racism protesters pull down statue of Canada's 1st PM

REUTERS
AUGUST 30

A STATUE of Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John Macdonald was toppled in downtown Montreal by protesters marching in support of defunding police, government officials said.

The incident occurred at the end of a peaceful march on Saturday when a group of people climbed the monument and pulled down the statue, causing the head to fly off, according to video posted on social media.

In June, a video showing a forceful arrest of a Canadian indigenous leader by police raised questions about the use of force by the police.

The statue of Macdonald has been the site of repeated acts of graffiti in recent years.

Saturday's incident drew quick condemnation from political leaders. "Whatever one might think of John A. Macdonald, destroying a monument in this way is unacceptable," Quebec Premier François Legault said in a tweet.

John Ratcliffe, the director of national intelligence, told Congress it would only get written written briefings. **NYT**

EXPLAINED Why in-person briefings matter

LAWMAKERS, ESPECIALLY Democrats, are fuming at the decision to scrap in-person intelligence briefings about election security so close to Nov 3 because this means they will not be able to ask more questions and seek clarifications on an issue of serious concern amid reports of multiple foreign threats to the vote. Democrats fear that Trump-appointed officials will truncate written briefings that benefit the President politically, and that lawmakers will be denied the chance to question them.

Trump admin says it will stop in-person election security briefings for Congress

Shocking abdication, betrayal, say Dems

BRAD HEATH & TIMOTHY GARDNER
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 30

THE UNITED STATES' top intelligence office told lawmakers it will end in-person briefings on election security because there had been leaks from congressional committees, officials said on Saturday.

The move drew heated rejoinders from Democrats who have focused on foreign efforts to sway the presidential election in 2016 and again this year.

US President Donald Trump's new director of national intelligence, John Ratcliffe, notified the House and Senate intelligence panels on Friday that the office would send written reports instead, giving lawmakers less opportunity to press for details as the November 3 election approaches. An official in Ratcliffe's office, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said it was "concerned about unauthorised disclosures of sensitive information following recent briefings."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff decried the move. "This is a shocking abdication of its lawful responsibility to keep the Congress currently informed, and a betrayal of the public's right to know how foreign powers are trying to subvert our democracy," they said in a statement. **REUTERS**

CHINA

Restaurant collapse in Shanxi kills 29

TWENTY-NINE PEOPLE were killed and seven seriously injured when a restaurant collapsed in northern China's Shanxi province, the country's emergencies ministry media said on Sunday. The building collapsed at 9.40 am on Saturday in Xiangfen county in the southwest of Shanxi, the Ministry of Emergency Management said in a statement. The accident in the two-storey structure occurred as villagers and relatives gathered for a birthday party, and the rescue operation ended early on Sunday, state media said. **REUTERS**

MAURITIUS

Fishermen battle to save dozens of dolphins

FISHERMEN BATTLED on Sunday to save dozens of injured dolphins washed ashore in Mauritius where in recent days at least 40 of the animals were found dead in a lagoon near the site of an oil spill from a Japanese bulk carrier which struck a coral reef. On Sunday, fishermen took their boats out, making loud noise by hitting together metal bars in an attempt to drive the animals away from the coral reef towards the open sea. "If they stay inside the lagoon they will die like the others..." a fisherman said. **REUTERS**

TAIWAN

3-YR-OLD SAFE AFTER BEING LOFTED ON KITE

A three-year-old girl in Taiwan was reported safe after having been caught in the strings of a kite and lifted several metres into the air. The incident took place during a kite festival Sunday in the seaside town of Nanliao. Video shot at the scene showed her twisting several times above a crowd of adults who eventually managed to pull the kite back to earth.



US officials: Taliban violated deal with shelling of bases

Militants deny role in attacks that took place in recent weeks

THOMAS GIBBONS-NEFF
KABUL, AUGUST 30

ROCKETS LAUNCHED at a US military base and a joint US-Afghan airfield in southern Afghanistan in recent weeks are believed to have been fired by the Taliban, according to three American military officials, in what would amount to a clear breach of the peace agreement between the US and the insurgent group.

Roughly a dozen rockets struck in late July around Camp Bastion, a sprawling air base used by Afghan and American forces in the south-eastern province of Helmand. And several rockets were fired within the last week or so at Camp Dwyer, a large US military base about 50 miles south of Bastion.

A Taliban commander familiar with the region denied that the group had carried out any strikes on American bases in Helmand and said that the group would investigate. The rocket strikes may also have been carried out by a Taliban faction that is against the agreement, according to one military official who was briefed on the matter.

There were no US casualties in either attack, nor a public response from Washington during a stretch in which American officials have struggled to keep an already shaky peace process on track.

The US-led mission in Afghanistan declined to comment.

US negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad (left) and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a founding leader of the Taliban, signed the February 29 peace agreement in Doha. **AP**

Ghani names council for peace deal

Kabul: Afghanistan's President has appointed a council for national reconciliation, which will have final say on whether the government will sign a peace deal with the Taliban after what are expected to be protracted and uncertain negotiations with the insurgents.

Ashraf Ghani issued a decree late Saturday establishing

the 46-member council, led by his former rival in last year's presidential election, Abdullah Abdullah, who is now in the government. The council is separate from a 21-member negotiating team. The council will have the final say and will ultimately decide on the points that the negotiating team takes up with the Taliban. **AP**

The February peace deal signed in Doha, the capital of Qatar, stipulates that the Taliban would refrain from striking American or NATO forces as they gradually withdrew from the country. And the US military would attack the Taliban only to defend Afghan forces.

The Taliban, long thought to be a conglomerate of various factions

with differing agendas, seem to have largely stayed true to the agreement as a unified front, at least publicly, when it comes to not attacking American or coalition forces. But as the Taliban have continued to mount heavy assaults against the Afghan military forces, the United States has carried out dozens of airstrikes to help the Afghans, officials said. **NYT**

Hong Kong health workers, activists urge boycott of mass Covid-19 testing

REUTERS
HONG KONG, AUGUST 30

A HONG Kong pro-democracy union of healthcare workers and several activists, including Joshua Wong, called on Sunday for a boycott of the government's universal coronavirus testing plan, in which medical staff from mainland China are set to assist.

From Tuesday, a 60-strong mainland team is due to conduct tests in the first direct help from China's health officials for the semi-autonomous city as it battles the pandemic.

But the effort comes at a sensitive time for the former British colony, as anxiety runs high over what many of its 7.5 million residents see as Beijing's efforts to rein in their freedoms.

The Hospital Authority Employees Alliance, formed during last year's pro-democracy protests with 20,000 members, said universal testing was not an efficient use of resources and urged focused tests instead.

"It is clear to see that the government has one and only one goal ... to use the pandemic to achieve their own political aims," its leader Winnie Yiu told a joint news conference with activists.

Seoul enforces limits on diners, orders gyms shut

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL, AUGUST 30

SOUTH KOREA has reported 299 new cases of the coronavirus as officials placed limits on dining at restaurants and closed fitness centres and after-school academies in the greater capital area to slow the spread of the virus.

The 17th consecutive day of triple-digit increases brought the national caseload to 19,699, including 323 deaths.

The Korea Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said 209 of the new cases came from capital Seoul, nearby Gyeonggi province and Incheon, a region that had been at the centre of a viral resurgence this month.

Thirty cases were also reported in the southeastern city of Daegu, the epicentre of the previous major outbreak in late February and March. Churches have emerged as a major source of infections in Seoul and elsewhere. Clusters have also popped up from restaurants, schools, nursing homes and apartment buildings.

DESPITE THE SUCCESSFUL MANNED FLIGHT, EXPERTS SAY THE TECHNOLOGY STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO

Humans take a step closer to 'flying cars' after Japanese test flight

DERRICK BRYSON TAYLOR
AUGUST 30

IN THE 1880s, the first automobile was developed, and about two decades later, the Wright brothers in North Carolina invented the first successful airplane. Today, the world is closer to combining those two concepts as a Japanese tech company said it completed a flight test using "the world's first manned testing machine," its SD-03 model, an electrical vertical takeoff and

landing (eVTOL) vehicle. The flight time was four minutes, the company said.

The aircraft has one seat and operates with eight motors and two propellers on each corner. It lifted about 10 feet into the air and was operated by a pilot, the company said.

Tomohiro Fukuzawa, SkyDrive's chief executive, said Saturday that five years ago there were various prototypes of flying cars, usually with fixed wings. SkyDrive's product, he said, was one of the most compact in size and was lighter compared with other designs.

SkyDrive was started in 2012 by members of a volunteer or-

The Japanese company SkyDrive conducted a four-minute test flight of its flying car prototype this month. **AP**

ganisation called Cartivator, and the company began developing a "flying car" in 2014, according

to its website.

This year, SkyDrive received funding from the Development

Bank of Japan and other investors, the company said.

Several companies are developing similar technology, including Boeing and Airbus, as well as automakers Toyota and Porsche. In January, Hyundai and Uber announced they were collaborating on an all-electric air taxi.

Analysts with Morgan Stanley have said they expect urban air taxis to be common by 2040, with the global market projected to be \$1.4 trillion to \$2.9 trillion by then.

Safety is one of two challenges preventing the technology from becoming widely used, said Derya Aksaray, an assistant professor of aerospace engineer-

ing and mechanics at the University of Minnesota. Safe autonomous technology for eVTOL aircraft is still being developed, Aksaray said.

"These vehicles need to look at their environment, assess the situation and act accordingly," she said. "They cannot wait for a pilot or an operator to say, 'Now do this, now do that.' We cannot wait for that kind of micromanagement of the vehicle."

The other challenge is design: The vehicles should be powerful enough to carry any necessary weight, yet quiet enough to fly at undetermined low altitudes, she said.

Ella Atkins, a professor of

aerospace engineering at the University of Michigan, expressed mixed views on the practicality of eVTOL machines.

"They are going to be more energy efficient than helicopters that use a lot of fuel but they will be less energy efficient than cars because they have to lift themselves," she said. "From a cost perspective, they won't be practical to go to the grocery store."

Atkins said these machines may be better suited for satellite communities of cities or countries with difficult terrain.

Fukuzawa said SkyDrive plans to begin selling a two-seat version of its eVTOL by 2023 for about \$300,000 to \$500,000. **NYT**

13 ECONOMY

RBI HAD SAID IT IS READY TO TAKE STEPS TO MAINTAIN FINANCIAL STABILITY

Wary of market correction, govt working on bolstering settlement & clearing systems

SUNNY VERMA & SANDEEP SINGH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

THE GOVERNMENT and the financial sector regulatory agencies are examining and strengthening the settlement and clearing systems in various segments of the markets to ensure orderly functioning during stress times. The sharp surge in equity and currency markets in recent period has also given rise to 'caution' among the regulators regarding the challenges that could surface in case of sudden flight of capital.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das, on August 21, warned that there is a clear disconnect between sharp surge in stock markets and the state of real economy, as surplus global liquidity is driving up asset prices across the world. He forecast that there will "definitely be

EXPLAINED
Margin rules being worked on

AMID SHARP surge in equity and currency markets, led by global liquidity, regulators are strengthening the margin rules for trading and short selling regulations to ensure that sudden correction in markets does not lead to financial stability. The focus is to ensure enough liquidity so that markets and operations run smoothly in the event of second-order effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the financial sector.

a correction" in stock markets and the central bank is prepared to

take all steps that are required to maintain financial stability.

While some regulatory and government officials, and market participants did not welcome Das's direct comment anticipating correction in markets, sources said stress testing of the settlement and clearing systems are being undertaken to ensure that adequate liquidity is maintained in the markets and operations run smoothly in the event of 'second order effects' the Covid-19 pandemic on the financial sector.

"We are strengthening the margin rules for trading and short selling regulations, while at the same time keeping a watch on currency market developments," a senior official said. Sudden spike in foreign portfolio investment (FPI) flows into equity market has led to expansion in foreign exchange reserves, leading to sharp appreciation in rupee in recent weeks.

In March, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had announced measures to control volatility in stocks such as curbs on short selling, increase in margins and reduction in market wide position limit for F&O stocks among others. While the measures were announced for a month on March 20, they have been extended by the markets regulator five times. On August 26, Sebi further extended the same and said the measures introduced on March 20, will continue to remain in force till September 24, 2020.

Earlier this month, the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI in its meeting noted, "While markets and fundamentals seldom do a tango, a disconnect between the two carry the risks of disruptive market corrections". The RBI Governor's comment, however, failed to dent investor sentiment and enthusiasm and the bench-

mark Sensex at BSE rose by over 1,000 points or 2.7 per cent since Das cautioned about a correction in the market.

Market participants say that regulators should avoid making direct statement on market levels. The head of a leading mutual fund said, "Generally, central bankers make slightly ambiguous statements where people have to read between the lines, but this comes as a hammer."

The CEO of a leading financial services firm also said that the RBI Governor's comment on market level is not consistent with the practice adopted by governors in the past. "The RBI governor could have avoided making that statement on market levels. He could have made a comment at a level which was at the top, but if the RBI Governor starts making a public comment on market levels, that is not a good precedent," he said.

Govt should not be running airports and airlines: Puri

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

THE GOVERNMENT should not be running airports and airlines, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Sunday, adding that he hopes to privatise Air India during 2020. His remarks come at a time when the Kerala government has opposed the Union Cabinet's nod to to lease out the Thiruvananthapuram airport to Adani Enterprises.

Addressing a virtual meet on Namo app, Puri said, "I can tell you from my heart the government should not be running airports and the government should not be running airlines. On Air India's privatisation, he said, "As a going concern, one that is attractive to potential bidders, we should privatise it... I am hopeful that we will be able to complete that privatisation process during this year."

Refund charges collected since Jan 1 on electronic payment modes to customers: I-T Dept tells banks

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

TAKING A note of banks levying charges for digital payment modes such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and others, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has asked lenders to refund such fees collected from customers since January 1. "... based on Section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007, any charge including the MDR (merchant discount rate) shall not be applicable on or after 1st January, 2020 on payment made through prescribed electronic modes," CBDT said in a circular.

"... representations have been received that some banks are imposing and collecting charges on transactions carried out through UPI. A certain number of transactions are allowed free of charge beyond which every transaction bears a charge. Such practice on part of banks is a breach of sec-

3 KEY POINTS

1 Finance Ministry sources said that action will be taken against those banks, which will collect any charges on payments made via electronic mode

2 To encourage digital transactions and move towards a less-cash economy, the government inserted a new provision, Section 269SU, in the Finance Act, 2019

3 Amid the pandemic and lockdowns, modes of digital payment witnessed a boost as people moved away from cash payments to prevent physical contact

tion 10A of the PSS Act (Payment and Settlement Systems Act

2007) as well as section 269SU of the IT Act. Such breach attracts penal provisions ... banks are, therefore advised to immediately refund the charges collected, if any, on or after 1st January 2020 on transactions carried out using the electronic modes ...," the CBDT circular said.

Finance Ministry sources said that action will be taken against those banks, which will collect any charges on payments made through electronic mode.

To encourage digital transactions and move towards a less-cash economy, the government inserted a new provision, Section 269SU, in the Finance Act, 2019.

The prevalent laws require a person carrying on business and having sales/turnover/gross receipts from business of more than Rs 50 crore in the immediately preceding previous year to mandatorily provide facilities for accepting payments through prescribed electronic modes. Subsequently, in December 2019, debit card powered by RuPay,

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) (BHIM-UPI), and Unified Payments Interface Quick Response Code (UPI QR Code) were notified as prescribed electronic modes.

A technical report by IIT-Bombay published earlier this month showed that major private banks including HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank had been levying charges on UPI payments in excess of 20 transactions every month.

With the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, modes of digital payment witnessed a boost as people moved away from cash payments to prevent physical contact.

According to data published by the National Payments Corporation of India, which is the umbrella body for most cashless modes of payments, UPI-based payments clocked an all-time high of 149 crore transactions in July, with the value of transactions reaching Rs 2.91 lakh crore.

COVID-19 IMPACT

‘Fiscal deficit to touch 7% of GDP in FY21’

With revenue collections hit amid disruptions due to lockdowns, the fiscal deficit is likely to touch 7% of GDP in FY21 as against budget estimate of 3.5%, Brickwork Ratings said

VITAL DATA RELEASED BY CONTROLLER GENERAL OF ACCOUNTS (CGA):

■ **30.5%** Fall in revenue from income taxes (personal income tax and corporate income taxes) in Q1 (April-June) of fiscal 2020-21

■ **34%**: Fall in revenue from GST during first quarter of the ongoing financial year

■ **13.1%**: Rise in expenditure due to additional spending incurred to save lives and livelihoods

■ **83.2%** of budgeted target: Widening of fiscal deficit seen in the first quarter itself



Economic pickup likely in Q3: Given early signs of resumption in business activity, revenue collections are expected to reach pre-Covid levels towards the end of the third quarter

Fund shortage if situation prolongs: However, if the current situation prolongs further, the Centre may face acute burden of fund shortage to fulfil the budgeted expenditure

Why this is important: Borrowings may further rise if contraction in economy is more severe than early estimates. As states too have been allowed additional borrowings amounting to 2% of GDP, the fiscal deficit could reach 12% of GDP

Source: Brickwork Ratings/PTI

China's new tech export controls could give Beijing a say in TikTok sale

REUTERS
BEIJING/SHANGHAI, AUG 30

CHINA'S NEW rules around tech exports mean ByteDance's sale of TikTok's US operations could need Beijing's approval, a Chinese trade expert told state media, a requirement that would complicate the forced and politically charged divestment. ByteDance has been ordered by President Donald Trump to divest short video app TikTok in the United States amid security concerns over the personal data it handles.

Microsoft Corp and Oracle Corp are among the suitors for the assets, which also includes TikTok's Canada, New Zealand and Australia operations.

However, China late on Friday revised a list of technologies that are banned or restricted for export for the first time in 12 years. Cui

Microsoft and Oracle are among the suitors for TikTok's assets, but China late on Friday revised a list of technologies that are banned or restricted for export for the first time in 12 years

Fan, a professor of international trade at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the changes would apply to TikTok.

"If ByteDance plans to export related technologies, it should go through the licensing procedures," Cui said in an interview with Xinhua published Saturday. China's Ministry of Commerce added 23 items — including technologies such as personal information push services based on data analysis and artificial intelligence interactive interface technology — to the restricted list. It can take up to 30 days to ob-

tain preliminary approval to export the technology.

"We are studying the new regulations that were released Friday. As with any cross-border transaction, we will follow the applicable laws, which in this case include those of the United States and China," ByteDance general counsel Erich Andersen said. TikTok's secret weapon is believed to be its recommendation engine that keeps users glued to their screens. This engine, or algorithm, powers TikTok's "For You" page, which recommends the next video to watch based on an analysis of your behaviour.

Loan restructuring: FM to meet top executives of banks, NBFCs on Sept 3

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

FINANCE MINISTER Nirmala Sitharaman will meet top executives of banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) on September 3 to review the implementation of the resolution framework for stress in bank loans, caused by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

The meeting comes ahead of the expected announcement of the KV Kamath-led panel's recommendations on eligibility parameters for the restructuring of loans to soften the blow to both borrowers and the lenders in the wake of the pandemic.

"The review will focus on enabling businesses and households to avail of the revival framework on the basis of viability, necessary

MARKET WATCH

FPIs INVEST ₹47.3K CR IN AUG SO FAR

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) remained net buyers in Indian capital markets in August so far, pumping in a massive Rs 47,334 crore on net basis as excess liquidity in the global markets and low interest rates drove money to emerging markets. **PTI**

INTERVIEW WITH MD, LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION

‘Our market share has increased substantially ... renewal premium is showing increasing trend’

VIPIN ANAND, Managing Director of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), India's largest financial institution with total assets of Rs 31.96 lakh crore, spoke to GEORGE MATTHEW about business during the Covid period, investments, listing and stock market profits. Edited excerpts:



Vipin Anand

LIC's new business premium income has fallen in the Q1 of FY2021 and in July. When do you see a recovery?

There were serious difficulties in April and May due to severe lockdown but from June, things have started picking up. In fact, for the month of July, there was 34.77 per cent growth in premium year-on-year basis. LIC's market share in FYPI (first year premium income) has increased substantially. During the last FY2019-20, our market share as on March 31 was 68.92 per cent and as on July 31, 2020, the market share in FYPI is 71.49 per cent, which shows an increase of 257 basis points. As of July 2020, overall growth under individual FYPI is 2.77 per cent and we are confident that it will go upwards every month.

Under policies, we are in the negative but the volume is increasing month to month and we will be in a comfortable position soon on this count also.

Do you think the expected contraction in GDP growth and financial problems being faced by customers will affect LIC's business?

Certainly, all the sectors have linkage with GDP directly or indirectly. But being a marketing organisation, we have to find out opportunities all the times. On the one side, Covid has disrupted many sectors and economy to some extent, still few sectors are shining like anything ... for example, pharma, chemical etc.

For life insurance and health insurance sectors, Covid-19 has created huge awareness. We are experiencing that our renewal premium in numbers and amount is showing increasing trend. Individual new business premium is also increasing. Hence, we do not foresee any impact on our new business or renewal premium income. Instead,

we are hopeful that we will achieve growth on all the counts once again as in last year.

Will the decline in premium income affect LIC's investment in the capital market and G-Sec this year?

Our premium income has started increasing now ... hence, it will not impact our investments in the capital market as well as government securities (G-Secs). Already we have made huge investments in both the segments.

What was LIC's profit from sale of shares in the stock market in fiscal 2019-20 and till July end? Has it declined in the wake of the stock market crash? Are you a net buyer or seller in the equities?

Last year's profit was more than Rs 25,000 crore and in the current year it has already crossed Rs 10,000 crore. Whatever and wherever we invest, it is for long term. We always try to find out available best opportunities in the market whether for selling or purchasing. We don't calculate profits on a daily or monthly basis. For a layman, there may be crash in stock market, whereas it is an opportunity for us.

Do you think listing of LIC shares on the stock exchanges will happen in fiscal 2020-21? How is your preparation for this? Is there any kind of restructuring plan for LIC?

All the decisions regarding listing of LIC shares are taken by DIPAM, Ministry of Finance, Government of India. However, from our end, we are supplying all necessary information as and when required and there is lot of activity from the government end also.

Are you planning any new

product in the current year? Are you looking at the health insurance segment including Covid-19?

Yes, in the month of March, we have launched two new ULIP product — NIVESH PLUS and LIC's SIIP. Recently, on August 25, we launched Jeevan Akshay VII. Some other products are in the pipeline.

What are the overall restructuring and customer friendly measures in terms of digital facilities you have put in place to grow your business post-Covid? Has your online business gone up due to lockdown? How are customers managing things?

Many initiatives have been introduced in these Covid times. Now you can pay your premium by visiting our customer portal or directly on our website without any extra charges through your credit card and debit card. One can pay premium through various banks viz. any branch of IDBI Bank, Axis Bank, City Union Bank, any of 360,000 common service centres and online portals like AP online, MP online, Suvidha and through popular digital modes like Amazon Pay, Google Pay etc. You can also pay your premium through electronic debit using BILLPAY or NACH. You can pay it through our merchants (premium points, Life Plus offices) spread all across the country. Our own branches and SOs are also there to serve customers.

As far as collection of premium through digital mode is concerned, total number of transactions during current FY (till July 31, 2020) is a whopping Rs 5.81 crore, showing a growth of 65.44 per cent. In collection of amount, the growth is nearly 105 per cent. There is considerable growth under total renewal premium also.

Premium growth in our online new business is 130.93 per cent. Under online policies also, growth is 98.37 per cent as on July 31.

Have you seen more surrenders and defaults in premium payment?

In fact, it is the other way round ... with the rise in insurance awareness due to Covid-19, surrenders have substantially fallen.

PFRDA weighing minimum assured return-based pension scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

THE PENSION Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is working on a minimum assured return-based pension scheme, its Chairman Supratim Bandopadhyay said.

The pension authority is in talks with pension funds and actuarial firms to work out the modalities of the proposed scheme, he said. "Under the PFRDA Act, we have the mandate to launch a minimum assured return scheme. Under pension fund (PF) schemes, the funds that are managed are mark-to-market. So obviously there is some volatility and the valuation is according to the market movement.



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman File

non-performing, provided that they set aside 10 per cent provisions on such advances.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has said a resolution framework for Covid-19-related stressed accounts will be finalised by September 6.

Already, banks have started internal processes to gauge the extent of the likely loan restructuring exercise. For instance, Punjab National Bank saw about 5-6 per cent of its loan book, or between ₹36,000 crore and ₹43,000 crore, getting recast in FY21, its managing director SS Mallikarjuna Rao said last week.

Of course, a clearer picture will emerge after the Kamath panel prescribes the contours of the recast scheme, Rao added. The current repayment moratorium will expire on Monday after six months. **FE**

‘Massive data breach’ reported at Paytm Mall; claims absolutely false, says company

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

ALIBABA GROUP-FUNDED Paytm Mall has allegedly suffered a "massive data breach", global cybersecurity firm Cyble reported, with a known cybercrime group 'John Wick' gaining unrestricted access to the e-commerce firm's entire databases. The report also alleges that the hack "happened due to an insider at Paytm Mall". The company, however, denied any such hack or data breach.

"We would like to assure that all user, as well as company data, is completely safe and secure. We have noted and investigated the claims of a possible hack and data breach, and these are absolutely false. We invest heavily in our data security, as you would expect. We also have a Bug Bounty program, under which we reward respon-

“Our sources also forwarded us the messages where the perpetrator also claimed they are receiving the ransom payment from the Paytm Mall as well ... At this stage, we are unaware that the ransom was paid.”

CYBLE
GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY FIRM

sible disclosure of any security risks. We extensively work with the security research community and safely resolve security anomalies," a Paytm Mall spokesperson told *The Indian Express*.

Even as the volume of compromised data is unknown, Cyble claimed that attackers have demanded 10 ETH, or cryptocur-

rency ethereum, equivalent to \$4,000.

"Our sources also forwarded us the messages where the perpetrator also claimed they are receiving the ransom payment from the Paytm Mall as well. Leaking data when failing to meet hackers demands is a known technique deployed by various cybercrime groups, including ransomware operators. At this stage, we are unaware that the ransom was paid," Cyble said in its report.

"The actor (John Wick) seems to have a keen interest in the Indian companies, and this is likely due to the high degree of his success rate in receiving ransom payments. Based on their attack patterns, one thing which stands out is that the group targets tech-based companies the most — and demand ransom by sending them emails on their support channels etc," Cyble added.

14 SPORT

CHESS OLYMPIAD

India, Russia share honours after tech failure

Server crash reaffirms that online chess is only a practical alternative, not a foolproof solution

SANDIP G & SHASHANK NAIR
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 30

A SERVER outage resulted in India and Russia sharing the trophy in the FIDE online Chess Olympiad on Sunday. Nihal Sarin and Divya Deshmukh were initially deemed to have lost their matches on the basis of time running out, after the internet connection faltered. Both Indians were holding good positions in their contests. However, a little while later, the International Chess Federation decreed that the two teams be declared joint winners.

The eventual decision came as a relief to the Indians, because when the server crashed and the screens went still, panic had set in amidst the contingent, scattered across different parts of the country. "I did not know what was happening. No one knew how to deal with the situation," non-playing skipper Narayanan Srinath told official website chessbase.com in the post-match interview before the final verdict had been announced.

When the internet connection went haywire, there was a sense of shock and disbelief. For they were on the brink of a historic victory. After a deadlocked first round, Sarin and Deshmukh, both in the junior category, were enjoying the ascendancy over their Russian opponents, Andrei Espenko and Polina Shuvalova. Deshmukh had laid a difficult trap for Shuvalova while Sarin was assured of at least a draw against Espenko. Koneru Humpy, who had lost 18 seconds of her match, had just earned a precious win. Their world was suddenly falling apart. Srinath, though, had the presence of mind to consult the arbiter, who told him to wait for 15 minutes. "How could I? I was impatient and my head was spinning. But in that time, we had a brief one paragraph ready so that we could lodge the complaint at the earliest."

The next 30-odd minutes might have felt like 30 hours. R Pragganandhaa, sitting in his house in a Chennai suburb, felt his heart sink. His sister R Vaishali was at a loss of words. Miles away, in Thrissur, Sarin twitched and twirled restlessly on his chair, unable to grasp the situation, the usually sanguine Viswanathan Anand said he could feel sweat dripping on his brow.

"There was so much tension around that I didn't know how to react," said Pragganandhaa, who had drawn his match against Alexey Sarana, a contest he felt he should have won.

The Indians nursed little hope, as FIDE had been stern with the implementation of the internet-outage rule, which states that it's players' prerogative to ensure stable internet connectivity. A few days ago, in the quarterfinal against Armenia, India had an internet disruption working in their favour, though in their group game against Mongolia, they had to settle for a draw after the connection went kaput.

So, the strain of pessimism was not unfounded. "I was not hopeful (that FIDE would overturn the decision)," admitted Srinath.

The eventual result came as a pleasant surprise for the Indian team. Anand's tweet summed up the bitter-sweetness of the feeling aptly: "We are the champions. Congrats Russia!" Humpy felt it was strange. "Well, it is a bit strange that we lost due to server failure and our appeal was accepted. Well I can say, we fought till the end," she tweeted.

Meanwhile, the Twitter world frenziedly celebrated India's triumph, especially the contribution of youngsters. "The silver lining is how the youngsters have performed under pressure. It's a great sign for the country," said Grandmaster RB Ramesh, who felt the internet outage was unfortunate but sharing gold was a sensible way of dealing with the setback.

It was a deliberate play to field back-up and younger players in the Indian team. For instance, Anand let Vidit Gujrathi open the first round against Ian Nepomniachtchi. He also let Pentala Harikrishna a game in the first because he had a match in the Polish league lined up later in the day. "We always ensured that it was not just the top four who always got the game. We were keen to use the bench and provide them with good exposure. Sometimes, we overlook the juniors," Anand said in an interview to *chess-base.com*. Looking at the bigger picture, the server blackout was a reminder that online chess is only a practical alternative in difficult times, not a failsafe solution for the future. The popularity of the sport has boomed online due to the pandemic-enforced standstill, but the online platform can't be the future of the game.

SANDIP G
AUGUST 30

INDIA'S FIRST-EVER entry into the final of the Chess Olympiad is surely an attestation to its rising stature at international level. But caveats accompany the glory. The feat is surely historic, but India is still far from matching the performance of the chess super powers such as Russia, China, or the USA.

What's the relevance of Chess Olympiad?

The biennial Chess Olympiad, the world's pre-eminent team tournament, is to the game what Davis Cup is to tennis, a celebration of team spirit. But like its tennis equivalent, the Chess Olympiad isn't considered the pinnacle of greatness in the game. Rather, it's an attestation of a country's depth in talent — it's an irony that Norway is barely a force despite boasting world champion Magnus Carlsen. World No. 5 Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France or Anish Giri of the Netherlands did not reach the knockouts. Also missing were the American pair of Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura, ranked No. 2 and No. 18 respectively in the world.

In the past, Viswanathan Anand has skipped the Olympiad to focus on the World Championship. For these reasons — chess, like tennis, is primarily an individual pursuit — the Olympiad doesn't carry the same lustre as a World Championship or the Candidates. In the past, chess greats have prioritised Linares and Tata Steel to the Chess Olympiad.

With 163 teams in the fray, it's the largest chess tournament in the world, but not the biggest. The game itself has intrinsically celebrated individual glory more than team triumphs. The only time when the chess Olympiad was keenly followed was during the peak of the Cold War. Not surprisingly, the USSR have won it the most frequently (18 times), and even after its splintering, Russia have claimed the gold medal on six instances. Erstwhile Soviet states like Armenia and Ukraine have managed to breach Russia's monopoly in the last few years.

What is the format of the Olympiad?

The sheer number of participants in an



R Pragganandhaa overwhelmed China's Yan Liu in the junior segment. *Express*

Olympiad makes only the rapid-format viable. The classical format will be too long drawn out, while the blitz feels inadequate for a tournament labelled as "Olympiad". The format has further reduced this term due to the online mode of participation — it is played over 15 minutes, and with a five-second increment per move, as opposed to 25 plus 10 in the earlier editions.

It has also made structural changes — such as norms that at least half of the team should comprise female and junior players. Until this year, it was usually the four best players plus a reserve. FIDE's rationale is that it brought more diversity, although it irked several teams which had a disproportionate gender ratio like the USA and Iran. So in effect, the Olympiad has juxtaposed the usual Olympiad, a women's Olympiad, and a youth Olympiad, which the chess world feels has diluted the competence level of the tournament.

The addition of the junior segment benefited India when they encountered China. The ultra-tough contests between the senior men and women ended in draws. But India's juniors proved they are better than China's, as R Pragganandhaa overwhelmed Yan Liu and

MORGAN, MALAN SEAL ENGLAND'S CHASE

Eoin Morgan and Dawid Malan struck half-centuries as England chased down 196 against Pakistan at Old Trafford to register a 5-wicket win in the second match of the T20 series.

BRIEF SCORES: England 199-5 (19.1 overs) Eoin Morgan 66(33), David Malan 54*(36), Shadab Khan 3-34 beat Pakistan 195-4 (20 overs) by 5 wickets.

'Messi can only leave Barcelona if \$833m release clause is paid'

REUTERS
AUGUST 30

LA LIGA ON Sunday released a statement saying Lionel Messi's Barcelona contract was still valid, days after his shock announcement that he wants to leave the club and hours after he failed to attend a pre-season medical.

Messi's failure to show for his medical underlined the 33-year-old's determination to leave the club he has been with throughout his career. The six-times world player of the year insists he has a clause in his contract that allows him to leave on a free transfer — a claim disputed by Barcelona and now by La Liga.

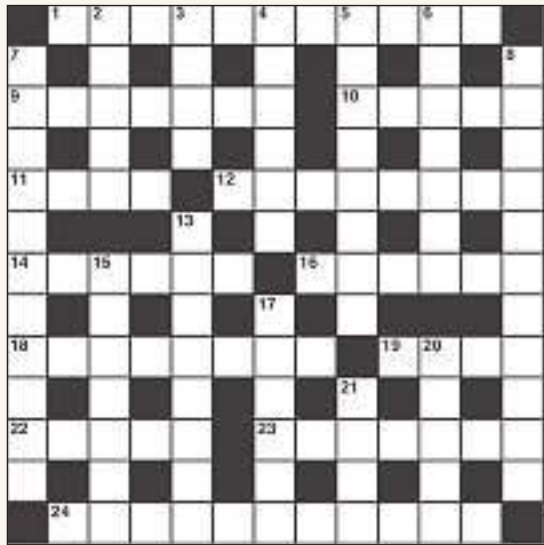
The ruling body said the only way a club can sign the Argentine forward is if he triggers a release clause of 700-million euros (\$833 million). "In compliance with the applicable rule, La Liga will not approve a request to be de-registered as a player with the Spanish football federation, unless the amount in the release clause has been paid," La Liga said.

Reuters footage showed players arriving for coronavirus tests on Sunday morning and Messi did not appear. He had been due at Barcelona's training ground at 10.15am local time but a club source confirmed to Reuters he had not arrived. La Liga's stance is a blow to Messi's hopes of a quick departure and to those clubs wishing to sign him. Premier League Manchester City are the favourites which would allow Messi to link up with his former Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola but even the Abu Dhabi-owned club might find a 700 million-euro fee, plus Messi's huge salary, a deal-breaker.

Messi, who has won more than 30 major trophies with the Spanish club and scored more than 600 goals, earns around one million euros per week.

He informed Barca on Tuesday he wished to leave immediately, plunging the club into new turmoil less than two weeks after their humiliating 8-2 Champions League quarter-final defeat by Bayern Munich. Messi's lawyers plan to invoke a clause in his four-year contract, signed in 2017, which would have allowed the forward to leave the club for free if he had requested it by June 10.

CROSSWORD 4211



ACROSS

- Concerning demeanour, inclined to be imperious (11)
- Contemporary gift (7)
- About time to go out - OK? (5)
- After all, a cobbler needs one (4)
- Offer for money (8)
- Its members show appreciation for money (6)
- Undiscovered talent developed (6)
- Youth with no head for multiplication (8)
- Satisfied with a quarter measure (4)
- Go round the globe on it (5)
- When free, retire to a foreign country (7)
- Well, it shouldn't be high (11)

DOWN

- The prospects for battered wives (5)
- Knotty marine hazard (4)
- All there when I enter in some agitation (6)
- Return to harvest fruit (8)
- Foster may run true to form (7)
- Diligence with which one may seek a job (11)
- A style we had remodelled acts as a guide (5,3,3)
- Period added to the end of a sentence (4,4)
- Can I provide a friendly solution? (7)
- Charm, finish and musical ability (6)
- Go astray or slip (5)
- Brand new money making concern (4)

Solutions Crossword 4210 Across: 1 Superb, 4 Chessman, 9 Icicle, 10 War dance, 12 East, 13 Wants, 14 Nail, 17 Ugly customer, 20 Counterclaim, 23 Anon, 24 Spare, 25 Peri, 28 Pedestal, 29 Mozart, 30 Departed, 31 Victor. **Down:** 1 Spiteful, 2 Plimsoll, 3 Rule, 5 Heart-to-heart, 6 Side, 7 Menial, 8 Needle, 11 Passing phase, 15 Scoop, 16 Fence, 18 Take part, 19 Embitter, 21 Tapped, 22 Hold up, 26 User, 27 Gobi.

JUMBLD WORDS

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

The basic rule of free enterprise: you must ___ in order to ___. - Scott Alexander (4...3)

BGIEE



TIGON



AINRGG



AELOS



Answer: The basic rule of free enterprise: you must give in order to get. - Scott Alexander
SOLUTION: BEIGE, INCOIT, RACING, LOWERS

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4217

Difficulty Level 5s

Instructions

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

Difficulty Level

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



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4216



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

This is not an astounding day from the planetary point of view, which means that you may set your own course. One word of advice is to allow yourself as much time as you need for the occasional quiet day-dream. And soon, of course, you'll spring into action, surprising everyone.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

This is not an astounding day from the planetary point of view, which means that you may set your own course. One word of advice is to allow yourself as much time as you need for the occasional quiet day-dream. And soon, of course, you'll spring into action, surprising everyone.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

The social dimension is important, indicating that, even in matters in which you've previously done quite well by yourself, you should now consider asking for help. In the final analysis, you might need no more than moral support. You may be able to achieve everything else by yourself.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

You may give first place to worldly ambitions, but make sure they're mixed with a healthy portion of idealism. The plain fact is that, for some reason, self-interest is often served best if you do what's best for others. But, then, life's strange like that sometimes.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Pleasant emotional influences should help you chill out. In plain English this means that you may relax and count your blessings. On a purely superficial level, you can sort out legal affairs and travel plans, and make sure that the relevant instructions are absolutely clear.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)

You may pay a little extra attention to joint finances, especially if domestic duties are spiralling out of control. However, there are few indications of worldly stress today, and many powerful suggestions that you can sail off into a private dream world.

LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)

You may make social plans and celebrations a priority, and listen carefully to whatever close partners say, as even if their words are apparently nonsense, there is a deeper meaning which could do you a great deal of good. You also stand to benefit from chance events, so keep alert to the ebb and flow of fate.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)

One very interesting and rare planetary aspect reveals the possibility of great generosity. It is, however, unclear as to whether you will be parting with your money or receiving someone else's support. The first option would seem more likely.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 22)

There are ways and means in which friends can be of great help. In fact, there is one person who could be more helpful than you ever thought possible. It may be time to ask others to tell you the truth, no matter how uncomfortable. You will know what to do when you get the message.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

For some of you it will be pleasant to stay at home, safe within the domestic womb. For others, it will be money that's important and, if you're in the housing market or otherwise dealing with property, events could move in a highly satisfactory direction.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Sometimes your life is just not your own! Partners will demand your attention even more than in the past. However, if you can manage to make a subtle shift in your perceptions, you should start to pay less attention to loved ones' words — and more to their actions.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Money can buy your dreams, but only to a certain extent. This is why it will help if you continue to be as practical as you have learnt to be so far this year. You are living in this world of the here-and-now, not in some other mysterious dimension.