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HC issues notice to police on Zubair's plea challenging his remand

page 2



DRDO successfully carries out maiden test flight of new UAV

page 9



Stop interfering in Afghanistan, says Taliban supreme leader

page 12



Deepti's all-round show helps India take 1-0 lead in ODI series

page 15

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**IN BRIEF**



Students to be assessed on Deshbhakti curricula

**NEW DELHI**  
 The Delhi government launched new assessment guidelines on Friday under which students of Classes III to VIII will be assessed for Happiness and Deshbhakti curricula, while students of Classes IX and XI will be assessed for Deshbhakti and Entrepreneurship Mindset curricula.

CITY • PAGE 2

Two more arrested in tailor murder case

**NEW DELHI/UDAIPUR**  
 Two more persons, who were arrested by the Rajasthan police in connection with the murder of a tailor in Udaipur on June 28, were sent to judicial custody for 14 days by a local court on Friday. Mohsin and Asif were arrested for providing logistical support to the two prime accused, Mohammed Riyaz Attari and Ghous Mohammed, in the killing of Kanhaiya Lal.

NEWS • PAGE 8

**BRAHMASTRA 2023**  
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## Uddhav questions rationale for BJP's alliance with Sena faction

'Why didn't BJP accept a similar proposal in 2019?'

**ALOK DESHPANDE**  
 MUMBAI

A day after Shiv Sena rebel Eknath Shinde was sworn in as Maharashtra's Chief Minister, his predecessor and party chief Uddhav Thackeray said this was the exact proposal his party and the then Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Amit Shah had agreed upon in 2019.

Countering the BJP's claim that it elevated a Sena worker to the top post, Mr. Thackeray said Mr. Shinde was not the Sena's Chief Minister. "What has happened yesterday was our exact proposal in 2019 to Amit Shah and the BJP. Why didn't the BJP honour the agreement then? And why have they done this now? Had the BJP respected our agreement, the experiment of Maha Vikas Aghadi would never have happened," said Mr. Thackeray at a press conference. He did not take any questions.

**Removed from post**  
 He later removed Mr. Shinde from the post of 'Shiv Sena leader'. In a letter to Mr. Shinde, Mr. Thackeray accused him of "indulging in anti-party activities". Mr. Shinde was sworn in as the Chief Minister and BJP



**Hitting back:** Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray arriving for a press meet at Shiv Sena Bhavan in Mumbai on Friday. • PTI

leader and former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis took oath as Deputy Chief Minister, amid high drama on Thursday. Mr. Thackeray quit on June 29, after the Supreme Court refused to stay a floor test called by Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari.

**'Not Sena's CM'**  
 At the press conference at the party headquarters, Sena Bhavan, Mr. Thackeray said: "You [BJP] are saying that you made a Sena worker the Chief Minister. But let me tell you, this CM is not of the Sena. You cannot have Sena's CM by sidelining the party," Mr. Thackeray said.

He was referring to the BJP's claim that it ensured that a Sena worker like Mr.

Shinde who worked on the Hindutva principles of Sena founder the late Bal Thackeray was made the CM.

"The duo that was sworn in yesterday would have been in power in 2019 itself. That was the agreement between me and Amit Shah. Had they followed this, BJP would have had its CM for at least two and half years. Now, BJP will not have its CM for the total of five years. I don't know what that party has achieved," he said.

Mr. Thackeray also objected to the new government's first decision to push for the Metro car shed at Aarey forest, a decision cancelled by the previous government.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8  
 RELATED REPORTS • PAGE 8

## Floor test on Monday

The day-old Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra will face the floor test on July 4, an official said. BJP MLA Rahul Narvekar filed the nomination on Friday for the post of Assembly Speaker, the official said.

Election for the post, if needed, will be held on July 3, when the special two-day session of the House begins. The position has been vacant since Nana Patole of the Congress resigned from the post in February last year. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will table a motion of confidence on July 4, the official said. • PTI

## Cong opposes Speaker election

The new Maharashtra government under the leadership of rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde is unlikely to get a smooth start as the scheduled election of the Speaker is being opposed by the Opposition Congress on the basis of Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's letter. He had said the election was not possible due to a pending case in court. • PAGE 8

## Nupur should have apologised, says SC

Court pulls up ex-BJP spokesperson

**LEGAL CORRESPONDENT**  
 NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday came down heavily on former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, who allegedly made remarks against Prophet Muhammad in a televised debate, saying she was single-handedly responsible for the ensuing protests and should have apologised to the nation.

Ms. Sharma's remarks led to a spate of violence, unrest, demolitions and arrests across several States.

"The way she has ignited emotions across the country... This lady is single handedly responsible for what is happening in the country," Justice Surya Kant, leading a Vacation Bench also including Justice J.B. Pardiwala, observed orally.

Ms. Sharma had approached the Supreme Court to club the multiple First Information Reports (FIRs) registered across the country. The court refused to entertain her plea, saying that the "conscience of the court is not satisfied", following which Ms. Sharma withdrew her petition. The court said Ms. Sharma's comments were "disturbing". "What is her business to make these remarks?" the Bench asked her lawyer, advocate Maninder Singh.



The top court held Nupur Sharma responsible for the violence in the country.

## Withdraw SC remarks: letter

A letter petition was filed on Friday before Chief Justice N.V. Ramana seeking withdrawal of the adverse remarks made by the Supreme Court Bench against Nupur Sharma. The letter said that it be treated as a PIL and the adverse remarks made at the hearing be declared "uncalled for". • PTI

When Mr. Singh said his client had apologised, the apex court lashed out, saying she should have gone back on air and apologised to the nation.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8  
 CONGRESS REACTION • PAGE 8

## GST revenues surpass ₹1.44 lakh crore

**VIKAS DHOOT**  
 NEW DELHI

India recorded its second highest monthly gross GST revenues in June at ₹1,44,616 crore, 56% more than a year earlier when the second COVID wave had hit economic activity. Revenues from import of goods rose 55%, while domestic transactions and import of services were 56% higher in the month.

Gross GST Compensation Cess collections hit ₹11,018 crore, including ₹1,197 crore on import of goods, the highest since the introduction of GST five years ago. This is the fourth successive month since March that monthly GST revenues have crossed the ₹1.4 lakh crore mark.

**'Enhanced GST'**  
 "The average monthly gross GST collection for the first quarter of 2022-23 was ₹1.51 lakh crore against the average monthly collection of ₹1.1 lakh crore in the same period last year. Coupled with economic recovery, anti-evasion activities, especially action against fake billers, contributed to the enhanced GST," the Finance Ministry said.

Rating agency ICRA said it expects the monthly average GST collections in 2022-23 to be about June's revenue level.

CONTINUED ON • PAGE 8

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CM YK M ND NDE

# Students to be assessed on Deshbhakti curricula

They will not be evaluated on their curricular knowledge, but on their ability to apply them in real-life situations: Sisodia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Delhi government launched new assessment guidelines on Friday under which students of Class III-VI will be assessed for Happiness and Deshbhakti curricula, while students of Class IX and Class XI will be assessed for Deshbhakti and Entrepreneurship Mindset curricula.

The new guidelines introduce a major change in the flagship offering of the Delhi government schools, given how at the launch of these curricula the government had said that it would not conduct any evaluation or examination for these programmes.

## Impact on behaviour

On Friday the government said students will now be assessed, along with other scholastic subjects, for the impact that these curricula have had on their behaviour.

"This will be a supplement to the evaluation norms that already exist and are based on the student's co-curricular and academic activity,"

## NEW ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

The new guidelines will apply to all government, government-aided, government-recognised, and unaided schools in Delhi

- In the academic session 2022-23, the mid-term examination will be conducted in September/October and Common Annual School Examination (CASE) will be conducted in February/March
- A greater number of competency-based questions, which assess the application of concepts in real-life/unfamiliar situations, will be part of the question paper in mid-term, pre-board and annual exams
- Difficult topics/chapters in different subjects will



Students queuing up to attend the first day of school after summer vacation, on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

be identified and remedial programmes will be conducted for the same

- Examinations will be conducted in a manner that reduces the chances of cheating
- An analysis of class-wise and subject-wise results will be prepared and used for enrichment programmes

**New process of assessment will further strengthen critical thinking and analytical abilities of students; it will help them get rid of rote learning, which puts unnecessary stress on the students during examination**

MANISH SISODIA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

the government said.

In a statement announcing the new assessment guidelines, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said with the introduction of the new

assessment guidelines, students will not be evaluated on the basis of their curricular knowledge, rather on their ability to apply their understanding in a variety of

real-life situations.

"The new assessment standards will also motivate students to contribute to society's advancement. In order to prepare students for

real-world challenges, in a world driven by information and technology, and to maximise their innate potential, schools must prioritise competency-based learning," Mr. Sisodia said.

## Holistic education

Introduced in July 2018, the Happiness curriculum attempts to build emotional resilience in children in a holistic manner.

Its main objective is to develop the skills of critical thinking and enquiry in children while also empowering them to express themselves independently and creatively.

The Deshbhakti curriculum launched in September 2021 seeks to inculcate among students a sense of love and pride for the country. The curriculum is designed to ensure that students are made aware of their responsibilities and duties towards the nation.

The Entrepreneurship Mindset curriculum was launched in July 2019 to equip students to take charge

of their career paths and become job providers instead of job seekers.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who also holds the Education portfolio, said that as the curricula have been in use for some time, it is appropriate to include them in the assessment process now.

He added that no weightage of marks obtained will be calculated for the promotion of a student to the next higher class.

## No rote-learning

Giving details of the assessment, Mr. Sisodia said that question papers will be set in a manner that allows the students to answer questions based on the application of these concepts in real-life/unfamiliar situations.

"This new process of assessment will further strengthen critical thinking and analytical abilities of the students. It will also help them get rid of the need for rote learning, which places excessive stress on the students during their examinations," Mr. Sisodia said.

# Satyendar Jain case: ED arrests two more accused

ED seized 133 gold coins, ₹2.85 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested two businessmen in connection with the money laundering case against former Delhi Minister Satyendar Jain and others.

The accused, identified as Vaibhav Jain and Ankush Jain, were produced before a special court on Friday, which gave ED their custody for six days.

On May 30, the agency had arrested the then Minister under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act following several rounds of questioning. Subsequently, it conducted searches on the premises of the accused persons and seized 133 gold coins weighing 1.80 kg and ₹2.85 crore in cash.

The ED probe is based on an FIR registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in August 2017. The CBI had alleged that the accused had amassed assets disproportionate to their known sources of income



ED's Delhi zonal office ■ FILE PHOTO

during 2015-17.

**Family members named**  
The CBI also named Mr. Satyendar Jain's wife Poonam Jain, along with other members of their family – Ajit Prasad Jain, Vaibhav Jain, Sunil Kumar Jain and Ankush Jain – in the case.

In December 2018, the probe agency had filed a chargesheet in which it had estimated the value of the assets obtained allegedly through illegal means to be worth ₹1.47 crore.

The agency alleged that the funds in question were used to acquire land or repay the loans taken for buying agricultural land in and around Delhi.

# Govt. announces projects to clean Yamuna

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Friday said it will upgrade six sewage treatment plants (STP) in the city and lay sewer lines in four villages, including 39 unauthorised colonies, to reduce pollution in the Yamuna river.

The sewer lines will be laid in parts of Burari, Najaf-

garh, Shikarpur, Deoli, Sangam Vihar and Bijwasan, and are expected to benefit close to three lakh residents.

The projects worth ₹1,855 crore were at a meeting of the Delhi Jal Board chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday.

The six STPs currently installed in Kondli, Coronation, Rohini, Pappan Kala,

Narela and Nilothi have a total capacity of 160 million gallons a day (MGD). Their capacity will be enhanced to 205 MGD, as part of the upgrade that has been approved at a cost of ₹1,367.5 crore, officials said.

Mr. Sisodia said a connecting pipeline will be laid to carry water from the Okhla STP to the Yamuna river.

# Plastic ban violators to face penalties, jail term: Gopal Rai

The MCD seized 689 kg of the banned SUP items on Friday

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday said violating the ban on single-use plastic (SUP) items in the city will result in a jail term of up to five years or a fine of up to ₹1 lakh, or both, under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

Mr. Rai added that warning notices will be issued to violators till July 10, after which, action will be taken against repeat offenders. The use of 19 SUP items – including plastic cups, cutlery, straws and plates, among other things – has been prohibited under the ban that came into effect on Friday.

Speaking at a three-day fair to promote alternatives to SUP items, Mr. Rai said the government's primary focus was to create awareness against the use of the banned items and to promote alternatives that people can use.

In August, last year, the Union Environment Ministry had issued the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021, which prohibits the identified SUP commodities.

"On one side we will have



Visitors at 'Plastic Vikalp Mela' at Thyagaraja Stadium in New Delhi on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

awareness programmes, while the enforcement programme will run simultaneously. However, our top priority lies in creating awareness and promoting alternatives," the Minister said.

## Monitoring teams

To ensure effective enforcement of the ban, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPPC) has formed 15 teams and the Revenue Department has formed 33 teams. A senior official at the Municipal Corporation of Delhi said the civic body has constituted a total of 125 teams to monitor and take action against violators in areas under its jurisdiction.

The MCD said on Friday, it had seized 689 kg of the

banned SUP items while it issued 368 challans.

To spread awareness on the SUP ban, a roundtable conference will be held on July 3 with all the stakeholders, Mr. Rai said, adding that in the three-day fair, the government is planning to launch a new "green start-up policy" for those involved in the production of SUP. This will enable such businessmen to take up businesses in alternatives to SUP.

Delhi BJP Chief Adesh Gupta, however, said that the Arvind Kejriwal-led government did not launch any awareness campaigns prior to the implementation of the ban, adding that the latter provided no alternatives to SUPs.

# Zubair case: HC issues notice to Delhi Police

Court gives police 2 weeks to respond

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday granted two weeks to the Delhi police to respond to a plea by Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair challenging his police remand in a case related to an "objectionable" tweet he had posted in 2018.

Mr. Zubair's plea in the High Court challenged the propriety of the trial court's June 28 order granting his custody to the police for four days. The four-day remand of Mr. Zubair ends on Saturday.

Justice Sanjeev Narula clarified that the proceedings before the trial court will continue without being influenced by the High Court proceedings.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Delhi Police, said that an FIR is only an "initiation of proceedings". He added that the police would investigate whether any serious offence is made out against the accused.

Mr. Mehta said that the police is not acting in a partisan manner as it has already given a clean chit to Mr. Zubair in another case.

During the hearing, advocate Vrinda Grover, repre-

sending Mr. Zubair, argued that the remand order was not only passed "mechanically" but also invaded his privacy.

Ms. Grover contended that the remand order has allowed the investigating agency to seize his laptop whereas the tweet was issued from his phone. The police cannot hold a fishing and roving inquiry, advocate Ms. Grover said.

She also argued that the investigating agency had called Mr. Zubair for questioning in some other case but he was arrested in the present case.

Justice Sanjeev Narula posted Mr. Zubair's petition for further hearing on July 27.

**Case so far**  
Mr. Zubair was arrested by the Delhi police on June 27 over a four-year-old tweet that allegedly made a derogatory reference to a Hindu deity. He was sent to one-day police custody by the trial court on the same day.

After being produced on the expiry of his one-day custodial interrogation, Mr. Zubair's custody was extended by four days by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Snigdha Sarvaria.

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03. 2022_IPGCL_224436_1 Annual maintenance contract for General civil works, Water supply and Sanitary works at PPS-1	25,00,000
04. 2022_IPGCL_224438_1 Annual contract for upkeep and maintenance of Water supply, Drainage, Sanitary installation and General civil works at PPS-III, Bawana	45,34,201
05. 2022_IPGCL_224440_1 Providing and Fixing the Grating at walkway at Clarifiers and Thickeners at PPS-III, Bawana	9,93,600
06. 2022_IPGCL_224708_1 Desludging/cleaning of Clarifier sludge pits, Thickened sludge pit, SSF backwash pit, Cooling Towers 1 & 2 and Auxiliary Cooling tower at PPS-III, Bawana	24,20,421
07. 2022_IPGCL_224735_1 AMC for civil repairs of Cooling Tower cells and Hot water ducts at PPS-III, Bawana	32,01,366
08. 2022_IPGCL_224756_1 Annual Rate contract for maintenance of LT Switchgear, LTIHT Motors, DC Motors & Actuators and associated equipments at PPS-III, Bawana	38,53,028
09. 2022_IPGCL_224798_1 Annual Rate contract for C&I maintenance at PPS-1 for a period of one year	39,35,447
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DIP/Shabdath/0178/22-23

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male **Name**: Tenzing, **S/o**: Unknown, **R/o**: Unknown, **Age**: about 40 year, **Height**: 5'6", **Complexion**: Fair, **Built**: Strong, **Face**: Round, **Wearing**: White colour Shirt and Black Jeans, who was found in Rain Basera Barat Ghar F-Block, Aruna Nagar Majnu Ka Tilla Civil Lines, Delhi. In this regard a case **DD No. 8A dated 28.06.2022 has been registered at PS: Civil Lines, Delhi**

Any person having any information or clue about the above deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

**Sd/- SHO**  
**DP/2512/N/2022(UIDB) P. S: Civil Lines, Delhi**  
**Ph No. 011-23810633, 9711874595**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED**

General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Soni D/o Muralilal R/o** H.No. 35, Harijan Basti, Suptanpur Mazra, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 21.05.2022 from the area of P.S. Raj Park, Delhi. In this regard a case vides **DD No. 34-A dated 22.05.2022** has been registered at PS, Raj Park, Delhi.

The description of missing/kidnapped girl is as under : **Name** : Soni **Father's Name** : Muralilal, **Age** : 23 years, **Height** : 4'9", **Face** : Long, **Complexion** : Fair, **Wearing** : Black Color Suit & Badami color Salwar. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.

**SHO P.S., Raj Park, Delhi**  
**Ph.: 011-27910070 27910071**

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>  
e-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)  
Fax : 011-24368639  
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641

DP/1936/OD/2022

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**

**Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system**

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S. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1	82222975A	Set of Total Knee prosthesis, Cruciate Retaining High Flex Knee with Highly Polished Co-Cr Tibia and Cross linked poly with Bone Cement with Saw Blade	55 Sets.	28.07.2022

**NOTE :- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained. Tender Notice No. Inj. Medicines Date: 01.07.2022 1614/2022**

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**DELHI**

SATURDAY, JUL. 02		
RISE	05:28	SET 19:24
RISE	07:59	SET 21:59
SUNDAY, JUL. 03		
RISE	05:28	SET 19:24
RISE	08:55	SET 22:33
MONDAY, JUL. 04		
RISE	05:29	SET 19:24
RISE	09:51	SET 23:04

**Delhi Weather**

	max	min
Delhi City	32	23
Safdarjang	32	23
Palam	32	25

**Delhi Palam Today**  
34°C The weather will be warm and humid. Night will be comfortable. Short spell of light rain and thundershower may occur at few places.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
35°C A comfortable morning and warm day with mainly cloudy sky. Light rain and thundershower may occur.

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# Plea for FIR against Masjid panel junked

Petitioner could not produce any specific evidence that pointed to any cognizable offences, says court

ABHINAV LAKSHMAN  
NEW DELHI

As the next hearing in the Gyanvapi Mosque-Kashi Vishwanath Temple dispute draws near, a district court in Varanasi has now dismissed a plea seeking an FIR against the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee and its members for allegedly trying to erase purported "symbols of Hinduism" within the mosque premises in the Gyanvapi case.

District Judge A.K. Vishvesha said that the petitioner - Jitender Singh Visen - could not produce any specific evidence that pointed to any cognizable offences committed by the masjid panel.

Mr. Singh, who holds the power of attorney to legally represent Rakhi Singh, one of the plaintiffs in the original civil suit, had approached the Court with a revision petition seeking an FIR after a lower court had refused to admit the same. Mr. Singh is also the chief of the Vishwa Vedic Sanatan Sangh.

On June 27, Mr. Vishvesha



Muslims come out after offering Friday prayers at Gyanvapi Masjid in Varanasi. • FILE PHOTO: PTI

held that the lower court's observations on the petition were correct and that it had made no error in dismissing it.

## Main civil suit

The District Court is now set to take up the matter in the main civil suit on July 4, when the Masjid panel is expected to continue its sub-

missions on the maintainability of the Hindu plaintiffs' suit. Ms. Singh and four other women had approached the court with a suit seeking permission to pray at a Hindu temple adjacent to the mosque premises.

The suit was initially being heard by a civil court, which had ordered a video survey of the mosque premises. The

survey report was then leaked in the public domain multiple times in violation of court orders, prompting the plaintiffs to claim the discovery of a "shivling" inside the mosque.

The Masjid panel had disputed this saying the structure in question was part of the fountain in the mosque's wuzu khana.

The Masjid panel had then approached the Supreme Court, challenging the civil court's order directing the survey, following which the top court had assigned the matter to the District Court.

The District Court, after taking up the case, had ordered that it would first hear the Masjid panel's application challenging the maintainability of the suit and then it would consider the findings of the video survey ordered by the civil court. Accordingly, the District Court had ordered all parties to file their objections to the survey report, which will be heard after the Masjid panel's application is heard

## Mathura case

Meanwhile, In the Shahi Idgah Mosque-Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi case, a civil court on Friday adjourned the hearing in all related suits, owing to a condolence for a lawyer who had passed away. The case has been listed for next hearing on July 5 and all similar suits for July 15.

# Violence during M.P. polls: miscreants told to pay fine

Warned of bulldozer action for default

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
RAJGARH/BHIND (M.P.)

The administrations in Rajgarh and Bhind districts of Madhya Pradesh have imposed heavy fines on those who indulged in violence during the ongoing panchayat elections and warned of bulldozers' action against their illegal properties if they failed to pay the penalty, an official said on Friday.

## Repolling held

The authorities in Bhind district have issued notices to four persons involved in snatching ballots, forcibly putting seals on ballot papers and putting them in the ballot boxes to disrupt the polling process during the first phase of the panchayat elections held on June 25, he said.

Due to these acts, repolling was held in these booths and the government had to spend ₹5.02 lakh on the salaries of the polling staff, arranging for food, tents, elec-

tricity, diesel, coolers, fans, drinking water and videography of the entire process, the notice issued by the Lahar Sub-Divisional Magistrate stated.

The notice was issued against Ajay Singh, Dharmendra Singh, Sourabh Chouhan and Rampratap Singh by the SDM on June 27.

They were directed to pay the fine soon and were warned that illegal constructions in their houses will be demolished to recover the cost that the government spent on repolling, SDM Lahar R.A. Prajapati said.

## Ballot boxes looted

Similarly, the district administration in Rajgarh has imposed a total fine of over ₹1 crore on 16 persons for disrupting the polling process by looting ballot boxes, an official said.

A fine of ₹6.52 lakh each was imposed on them, he said.

## Cool waters



Beating the heat: Boys cool themselves by taking a dip in the waters of the Dal lake on a hot and humid day in Srinagar on Friday. • NISSAR AHMAD

# HC directs Maharashtra to pay ₹10 lakh to widows of firemen

They had succumbed to toxic gases in a well in 2018

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has recently directed the Maharashtra government to pay insurance cover of ₹10 lakh to widows of two firemen who died in November 2018 while trying to rescue three persons from a well.

A division Bench of Justices Revati Mohitedere and Madhav Jadhav was hearing a petition filed by two women Deepa Wagchaude and Anjali Shelar challenging the order of the State government denying insurance and *ex-gratia* to their husbands.

The petitioner's husbands were firemen with the Kalyan Dombivli Municipal Corporation and had died while trying to rescue three people who had fainted while cleaning the well. The firemen were also ren-



dered unconscious due to toxic gas and were later declared dead by the hospital.

The men had an insurance cover of ₹11 lakh under the Group Personal Accident Insurance Policy of the government insurance fund, taken out by the deputy chief fire officer of the corporation.

The court noted that the State government and the Directorate of Insurance had not considered all fac-

tors before rejecting insurance and *ex-gratia* payment and said that would have a cascading effect on others performing their duties.

The court said, "It is pertinent to note that the ethyl alcohol was also seen in the viscera report of even the persons who had fallen unconscious due to poisonous gases in the well and had succumbed. The contents of alcohol were almost similar in each of the five reports, which are highly improbable."

The Bench order read, "It is clearly evident that the petitioner's husbands succumbed to the toxic gases and fluids found in the well and as such, there was no justification for the State to reject the petitioner's claim under the Group Personal Accident Insurance Policy."

# HC relief for man charged under NSA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
INDORE

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has quashed a May 2 order of the Indore district administration to invoke the stringent National Security Act against a 28-year-old man allegedly involved in a pub brawl stating that it was "unsustainable".

## 'Pay ₹10,000'

A Division Bench of Justice Vivek Rusia and Justice Amarnath Kesharwani, which annulled the NSA order against Ranvir Nekia on Thursday, also directed that ₹10,000 be paid to the petitioner.

The order of detention dated 02.05.2022 is unsustainable and is accordingly quashed, and the writ petition is allowed with the cost of ₹10,000.00 payable to the petitioner, the division Bench's order said.

# Lockout in Assam tea estate for 'imaginary' airport

30 lakh tea bushes uprooted to clear space; 2,500 plantation workers left jobless

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

A lockout has been declared in a southern Assam tea estate that was partially cleared by the local authorities for a greenfield airport that the Civil Aviation Ministry was unaware of.

A notice issued by Supriya Sikdar, the deputy manager of the Daloo Tea Estate, said all operations of the tea estate have been closed with effect from June 28 as plantation workers were disobeying the 'kamjari' or daily deployment order.

Exempted from the lockout order were emergency

services including hospital, security, water supply and electricity.

"Due to complete lawlessness and delay in reporting at workplace by workers, plucking round could not be maintained and the management of the Daloo Tea Estate has suffered an irreparable loss in terms of quantity and quality of tea produced," the notice read.

## No wages or ration

During the period of lockout, the employees will not be entitled to any wages, ration and other related facilities, the notice said.

Legal claim for any financial loss due to such illegal acts of workers and the consequent lockout may also be filed on the Garden Panchayat without any prejudice, the order warned. The lockout has left about 1,500 permanent and 1,000 temporary plantation workers jobless.

The tea estate had come under the spotlight on May 12 when the Cachar district administration began a process of acquiring 5,733 acres of the estate for a proposed civilian airport. Scores of security personnel were deployed and Section 144 of the CrPC was clamped to pre-empt any pos-

sible backlash from the tea plantation workers.

The local authorities subsequently uprooted some 30 lakh tea bushes to clear space for the airport, triggering protests from the plantation workers and trade union activists in the district.

But on May 31, the Civil Aviation Ministry said Silchar was not among the 21 greenfield airports it had approved for establishment. The Ministry also said it did not receive any proposal for an airport near Silchar from the State government, as mandated by Greenfield Airports Policy of 2008.

# Punjab govt. waives pending power arrears till last December

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said his government is fulfilling a guarantee made to people of the State as from Friday each household will be getting 300 units of free electricity every month.

Mr. Mann said the government has also waived arrears of electricity bills pending till December 31, 2021 of all households.

He said there was some confusion among people that arrears of up to 2 KW were waived but it is being

clarified that pending electricity bills of all connections till December 31, 2021 have been waived by his government.

The AAP government had earlier announced giving 300 units of free power to every household from July 1.

## 'A new example'

"Previous governments used to make promises during elections, five years would pass by the time promises were fulfilled but our government has set a new example in Punjab's history," he said in a tweet.

"Today, we are going to fulfill another guarantee given to Punjabis. From today, each family in Punjab will get 300 units of free electricity per month," Mr. Mann said.

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Friday congratulated the people of Punjab on the rollout of a free electricity scheme of the Bhagwant Mann government. "Lakhs of families will now have zero electricity bills every month," Mr. Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi with the roll out of the scheme.

# First copy of Tamil Bible stolen from Saraswathi Mahal traced to London

The Idol Wing-CID says the Bible, lost in 2005, will be brought back soon

R. SIVARAMAN  
CHENNAI

The copy of what is considered the first Tamil translation of the Bible, which was reportedly stolen from Saraswathi Mahal Library, Thanjavur, has been traced by Idol Wing-CID to London. The theft was first reported in 2005 and then the case was closed without any progress. It was reopened and reinvestigated by the Idol Wing-CID officers, led by Director-General of Police K. Jayanth Murali.

The first Tamil translation of the New Testament was printed in 1715 by Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, a Danish

missionary. It was presented to Tulaji Rajah Serfoji by Schwartz, another missionary and a close friend of the king. After the library was taken over by the government, the antiquarian book became an exhibit at the library museum for public viewing.

On October 10, 2005, the Deputy Administrator of the Serfoji Palace lodged a complaint with the Tanjore West police that the antique Bible was stolen. But the case was closed on the ground it was not traceable. However, in 2017, the Idol Wing-CID received a complaint from Elephant G. Rajendran on the disappearance of an anti-

quarian Bible from Saraswathi Mahal Library. This led to the registration of a case of theft, which the Idol Wing-CID took up.

Mr. Jayanth Murali said, "We reviewed the case since there was no headway in the earlier investigation. We intensified the investigation and made headway after a special team was constituted to trace the Bible. A perusal of the visitors' register revealed that there had been some foreign visitors to the museum on October 7, 2005, the day the book went missing. Further inquiries revealed that these visitors had come to India to attend a function to commemorate Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg. So, when the needle of suspicion pointed to the foreign



The first copy of the Tamil translation of the New Testament. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

visitors, we launched a search on the websites of various museums in the world, as also the websites of collectors and organisations connected with Bartholomäus

Ziegenbalg.

"After several days of browsing the websites of museums abroad, our officers stumbled on the collection of George III, which included thousands of printed books, manuscripts and pamphlets, most of which are rare. Hidden among the thousands of books was the stolen Bible, the first translated antiquarian Bible in Tamil that was printed at Tharangambadi in the 17th Century with the signature of Rajah Serfoji himself. The antiquarian Bible that was available on the website of the king's collection matched with the picture of the stolen book. Further inquiries confirmed our findings," he said.

R. Dhinakaran, Inspector-General of Police, Idol Wing-

CID, said, "We have taken steps to retrieve the Bible from the collector and restore it to the Saraswathi Mahal under the UNESCO treaty. We have written to the authorities in London and we will bring it back soon."

Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg was born in Saxony in 1682. He studied at the University of Halle, then the centre for Pietistic Lutheranism. Responding to an appeal from the King of Denmark for missionaries, he and Heinrich Plütschau arrived in Tranquebar (Tharangambadi), a tiny Danish colony on the east coast, close to Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu, in September 1706, as the first Protestant missionaries in that country.

He soon set up a printing

press and published studies of the Tamil language and Indian religion and culture. His translation of the New Testament into Tamil in 1715 and the church building he and his associates constructed in 1718 are still in use. He died on February 23, 1719, at the age of 37. He left behind a Tamil translation of the New Testament and Genesis through Ruth, many brief writings in Tamil, two church buildings, a seminary, and 250 baptised Christians. Schwartz, became a close friend of Tulaji Rajah Serfoji. There is speculation that Schwartz, in commemoration of their friendship, handed over the first copy of the New Testament that Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg printed to Tulaji Rajah Serfoji.

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**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE**

**DEATH**

**K.M.SHANMUGAM** (82), Retired Foreman (Composing), The Hindu, Chennai passed away on 01-07-2022. Address: New No: 40, Old No: 32/1A, Ponnappan Street, Vyasarpadi, Chennai-600039. Ph:9444848754



**Mrs Maragatham Krishnan** 71 yrs  
W/O Krishnan Ramaiah  
Attained Sivakala prarthi on 30.06.22  
Cremation on 05.07.22 at Karsangal  
Mourning by:  
Krishnan, Kritam, Meera, Nandini,  
Adithya, Dhruva & family  
Ph: 9840350666 / 8695872499

We regret to inform the sudden demise of our mother  
**Mrs.Sampoornam Kuppuswamy**  
(87 Years)  
on Saturday, 25.06.2022, at 8.45p.m. The 10th day rituals will be held on Monday, 4th July, 2022, at our home (5, Pillayar Koil First Street, Lakshimpuram, Chromepet, Chennai 600044) from 8 a.m. onwards.  
Contact no. 95666 39136  
Balaji Kuppuswamy  
Murari Kuppuswamy  
Lakshmi Sambasivan  
Brinda Kumarakrishnan

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3	Annual Maintenance of Storm Water Drains in Shanti Nagar Constituency of East Zone (For 3 Years)	4.20	1,70,000/-

Calendar of Event: (1) Date of Pre-bid Meeting: 05.07.2022 at 4.00 p.m. (2) Last date for Submission of Bid Document: 08.07.2022 at 4.00 p.m. (3) Opening of Technical Bid: 11.07.2022 at 4.30 p.m. (4) Opening of Financial Bid: will be intimated to the bidders. Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or from website: <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>  
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# 6 identified for breach causing Silchar flood

More than 230 people have died in floods and landslips across the four northeastern States so far

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said six people have been identified as culprits behind the breaching of an embankment that led to a devastating flood in Silchar town.

**Case filed**  
On May 24, the Water Resources Department had registered a police complaint against unknown miscreants for cutting through the embankment at Bethukandi, 3 km from the centre of the town, to let the rain-accumulated water of a wetland drain into the Barak river. "A case has now been registered by the CID in Guwahati. The Additional



An aerial view of the flooded areas in Silchar in Assam. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Director-General of Police of CID will head the investigation and a special task force will monitor the probe," Mr. Sarma said in Silchar.

"I can assure the people that strict action will be taken against those who are behind damaging the embankment. Six people have

already been identified as culprits," he said after inspecting the embankment repairing work at Bethukandi during his third visit to Silchar since June 22.

**Distributes cheques**  
The Chief Minister also distributed cheques for ₹4 lakh each to the kin of 10 people killed in the Silchar flood. The process of granting relief to the kin of other people who died would be completed soon.

"The district authorities have been asked to submit the damage and loss reports by July 15 to the government for ensuring quick disbursement of compensation," Mr. Sarma said.

On Thursday, Minister for Public Health Engineering

and Tourism Jayanta Malla Baruah said the unprecedented flood had inflicted a damage of at least ₹1,000 crore on the people of Silchar.

Floods and landslips have killed more than 230 people across four northeastern States since April.

Assam leads the table with 159 killed followed by Meghalaya with 34 while at least 18 have died in Arunachal Pradesh.

Nineteen people, including Territorial Army and Railways officials, have died in a massive landslide in Manipur's Noney district.

The death toll is expected to increase with efforts on to pull 55 more people, mostly labourers from Assam, out of the debris.

## Elgar case: NIA gets a week to file reply on Hany Babu's bail plea

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MUMBAI**

The Bombay High Court on Friday granted a week's time to the National Investigating Agency (NIA) to file its reply to a bail plea filed by Delhi University associate professor and Elgar Parishad case accused Hany Babu.

A Bench of Justices Nitin Jamdar and N.R. Borkar said it was granting time till July 8 to the NIA as a "last chance" to file its reply.

On June 8, the NIA had told another Bench of Bombay HC that it will file its reply to Prof. Babu's plea within two weeks.

On Friday, however, NIA counsel Sandesh Patil told the Bench led by Justice Jamdar that the agency's reply was "ready" but it hadn't been filed in the court yet since it has been "sent to Delhi (the NIA office in Delhi) for approval". Mr. Patil then asked for another week for the same.



Hany Babu has challenged the NIA court order.

Agreeing to the request, the Bench said, "We will give you one more week by way of last chance." The Bench then posted the matter for further hearing on July 8.

Prof. Babu had approached the HC last month challenging an order of the Special NIA Court rejecting his bail plea earlier this year.

Prof. Babu in his plea said Special NIA Judge D.E. Kothalikar had "erred" in holding there existed prima facie incriminating material against him.

## Shinde reprimands rebel MLAs over their dance at Goa hotel

He asks them to ensure that such things do not happen again

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA PANAJI**

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has expressed his displeasure over the way a section of MLAs from his group danced in Goa following the announcement of his name for the top post.

On Thursday, the rebel Shiv Sena MLAs broke into a dance in the lobby of a luxury hotel in Goa, where they are currently staying, when they heard that Mr. Shinde was going to be the next CM of Maharashtra.

**Video goes viral**  
A video showing the rebel MLAs dancing to the tune of Marathi songs went viral. However, several netizens slammed them for the way they danced, terming the act 'indecent'.

While Mr. Shinde took oath as the Chief Minister, senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis was sworn-in as his deputy. After the swearing-in ceremony held in Mum-



Rebel Shiv Sena MLAs celebrating after the announcement of Eknath Shinde's name as the next CM of Maharashtra. \*PTI

bai, Mr. Shinde returned to the hotel at Dona Paula near here on early Friday morning.

On his return, Mr. Shinde expressed his displeasure over the MLAs' dance and objected to it.

Talking to reporters, rebel Sena MLA Deepak Kesarkar, who is the spokesperson of the Shinde camp, said, "With a large heart, we admit that it was a mistake to dance that way. It does not look good for the MLAs who have been elected by the people and who are aiming to

work for the betterment of Maharashtra."

During his address to the MLAs at the hotel, Mr. Shinde took a strong objection to their dance and asked them to ensure that such things do not happen in future, he added.

Mr. Kesarkar said, "Such mistakes do happen in the moments of happiness, but ideally they should not happen."

He said the rebel MLAs have joined hands with the BJP for the betterment of Maharashtra.

## Maharashtra releases water for Telangana

Every year, gates are opened for four months as per the Supreme Court order

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD**

The Godavari water started flowing towards Sriramsagar project in Nizamabad district of Telangana from the upstream Babli Barrage in Maharashtra as the gates of the reservoir were lifted by the authorities of the Maharashtra Water Resources Department in the presence of Irrigation Department engineers of Telangana and the Central Water Commission.

Gates of the Babli Barrage are kept open from July 1 to October 28 every year as per a Supreme Court order issued in February 2013. The gates would also be lifted for a day on March 1 every year to let 0.6 tmc ft water downstream for drinking needs. Combined Andhra Pra-



In full flow: Water gushing out of Babli Barrage in Maharashtra as its gates were lifted on Friday. \*ARRANGEMENT

desh moved the Supreme Court in 2006 opposing construction of the barrage, located 30 km from the inter-State border, that commenced in 2004, contending that it would impact flows into Sriramsagar project and over 7.28 lakh hectares ayacud in Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Nal-

gonda, Khammam and Medak as also drinking needs. The Supreme Court, while allowing Maharashtra to construct the barrage, had also directed that its utilisation of water from the barrage shall not exceed 2.74 tmc ft, the storage capacity of the barrage, during the period from October 29 to June 30 every

year. Maharashtra Water Resources authorities led by Executive Engineer of the barrage A.S. Chougale operated the motors to lift the gates. Executive Engineers M. Chakrapani (SRSP) and Srinivas Rao (CWC), AEE of Babli Kanad Khedekar, K. Ravi and M. Vamsi (SRSP) were also present while the barrage gates were being lifted at 8 am on Friday. The barrage has one tmc ft of water storage at the time of lifting gates. Meanwhile, flows from Godavari to Sriramsagar are likely to improve with the gates of Babli barrage remaining opened. About 5 tmc ft water reached Sriramsagar project in June, the first month of this water year, from the catchment areas.

## Accounts of 3 Chinese nationals frozen for fraud

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA RAIPUR**

Cryptocurrency trading wallet accounts registered in the name of three Chinese nationals, containing ₹4 crore, were frozen by cryptocurrency exchange Binance, following a request by the police in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon district in connection with a fraud, an officer said on Friday.

The action was taken based on a complaint lodged by Dr. Abhishek Pal, of Rajnandgaon, who alleged that he had lost ₹81 lakh after a Chinese woman lured him into investing in a cryptocurrency scheme by promising him three-fold returns, the official said.

The probe revealed that the complainant had fallen prey to Chinese origin 'Sha Zhu Pan', which translates to a pig butchering scam aka romance scam, said Santosh Singh, Rajnandgaon SP.

"Dr. Pal had got acquainted with Ana Li from Hong Kong on a social networking site and invested \$35,000 in a trading app. Later the money grew to \$107,825. He could not withdraw the money even after depositing taxes as told by the fraudster," the officer said. Further probe revealed that Ana Li's social media handle was a bogus account, he said. Probe led the police to three wallet addresses linked to Binance, he said.

IN BRIEF



**Brahmotsavams at Tirumala from Sept. 27**  
TIRUMALA  
The annual Brahmotsavams of Lord Venkateswara this year will be organised from September 27 to October 5. The privileged darshan facility would be temporarily discontinued. There will be no online booking of cottages between September 30 and October 2.

**Mild tremors felt again in Karnataka districts**

MANGALURU  
A mild earthquake of 2.1 magnitude on the Richter scale was reported in the areas bordering Dakshina Kannada-Kodagu districts of Karnataka on Friday morning. Earlier, in the wee hours of the day, an earthquake of 1.8 magnitude was also reported. People need not panic as the intensity is low, Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre said.

# BJP gears up for Hyderabad mega meet

Senior leaders have fanned out to all 119 Assembly seats

NISTULA HEBBAR  
HYDERABAD

BJP is going into its National Executive in Hyderabad, with a very aggressive stance against the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) with elections due in the State in 2023.

The party launched a countdown clock to the next polls, quite in the same manner that the YSRCP did in the run up to the 2019 Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh. "522 days are left for the corrupt, dynastic KCR government in Telangana. Then people of this State will say 'bye bye KCR' and welcome the BJP," said party general secretary Tarun Chugh addressing a press meet.

Preceding the two-day national executive in the State,



All set: Police personnel keeping a vigil at the Parade Grounds, the venue for BJP's meeting, on Friday. \*G. RAMAKRISHNA

senior leaders of the party had been fanned out to all 119 Assembly seats in the State for a period of two days to get feedback and boost the morale of the party cadre.

The event will start on Saturday around 4 p.m. with an address by party president J.P. Nadda, and will conclude on Sunday around 4 p.m. with an address by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Mr.

Modi will address a public rally after 5 p.m. in the city. Mr. Chugh said workers from over 35,000 booths across the State will attend the rally by Prime Minister Modi.

**Elaborate exhibition**

At the venue of the meet, the party has put up an elaborate exhibition of the BJP's engagement with the demand for a separate State of

## Nadda holds roadshow

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

BJP national president J.P. Nadda's roadshow after landing at the Hyderabad international airport started a good three hours late but this did not stop the party cadre to put up a grand show with drum beats and slogans on Friday evening at the Shamshabad town.

Mr. Nadda inaugurated the exhibition put up by the

host unit about Telangana culture, Armed Struggle, party growth over the years, Modi government's welfare and development programmes, etc., by lighting the lamp in the presence of organising secretary B.L. Santosh, general secretary Tarun Chugh, and others.

Earlier, he was received with a ceremonial welcome at the airport.



BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh with other party leaders inspecting the venue of the party national executive meeting in Hyderabad. \*NAGARA GOPAL

## 'Modi will sound KCR govt.'s countdown'

Leaders interacting with people: BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will be in the twin cities on Saturday and Sunday when he arrives for the national executive meeting and public meeting on Sunday afternoon, will sound the bugle for the 522-day countdown of the supposed "downfall of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government of K. Chandrasekhar Rao and the BJP coming to power", said BJP national general secretary and TS in-charge Tarun Chugh on Friday.

"We have put up the clocks on our party offices and Telangana people themselves have set the time in their hearts for the next election to get rid of this corrupt, dictatorial and dynastic regime which has neglected the promises made when the separate State was formed," he claimed, at a press conference at the HICC-Novotel on the eve of the meeting.

Mr. Chugh pointed out that three-day party meeting is the biggest held down South and Mr. Modi will sit through the entire national executive meeting to be attended by senior ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman, Jaishankar, CMs, deputy CMs and others, interact with

the 340 delegates on July 2 and 3, before he gives his concluding speech on the road ahead for the party.

**Telangana culture**

The meeting will start with national office bearers meeting at 9.30 a.m. and post lunch the Prime Minister will begin the national executive meeting which will go on till July 3 afternoon, he said.

"We are going to showcase Telangana arts, crafts, culture and food during the meetings so that delegates can take back fond memories. People of Telangana have always shown special love and affection to Mr. Modi and our party," he said.

The party senses the growing support among the people and is confident of keeping up the victorious spirit of the bypoll victories in Dubbak and Huzurabad.

The 71-day walkathon by Telangana party president Bandi Sanjay Kumar went a long way in connecting with the people and the KCR government is already feeling the heat of our programmes, he claimed.

Mr. Chugh accused the TRS government of being run by CM's daughter Kavitha, son K.T. Rama Rao and nephew Harish Rao.

## BJP, CPI(M) believe in violence, says Rahul

STAFF REPORTER  
KALPETTA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that both the Bharatiya Janata Party and Communist Party of India (Marxist) believe in violence.

Addressing a rally organised by the United Democratic Front district committee at Sulthan Bathery in Kerala on Friday in protest against the Supreme Court order prescribing 1 km around protected forests as Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ), Mr. Gandhi said, his party would prevent the implementation of ESZ around inhabited areas in Wayanad at any cost.

Mr. Gandhi said he had written to the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister seeking their urgent intervention to solve the issue amicably, but they were yet to respond.

Speaking to mediapersons after visiting his regional office here, which was vandalised allegedly by a group of Student Federation of India activists a few days ago, Mr. Gandhi said the incident was quite unfortunate but he did not have anger or hostility towards the protesters. "Everywhere in the country you see the idea that violence will resolve problems but violence never resolves problems."

## Political tensions escalate in Kerala

Bomb attack on CPI(M) head office sets off protests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala on Friday witnessed a day of rising political tensions after a yet-to-be-identified person travelling on a two-wheeler detonated a throw-down type incendiary device against the boundary wall of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] State headquarters at the AKG Centre here late Thursday.

The repercussions of the attack manifested in violence against Congress offices and symbols in at least two districts. Unidentified persons vandalised Indira



Huge rally: A protest march taken out by the CPI(M) against the attack on AKG Centre in Thiruvananthapuram. \*S. MAHINSHA

Gandhi's statue in Alappuzha. They threw stones at the District Congress Committee (DCC) office in Kottayam.

Angry CPI(M) activists demonstrated across Kerala. In Alappuzha, marchers purportedly raised threatening slogans against Congress

workers in the area.

Investigators were pursuing several leads to identify the AKG centre "bomb thrower" to determine the motive behind the attack.

The explosion exacerbated political stresses, with the CPI(M) squarely blaming the

Congress for the aggression. The Congress has termed the incident a CPI(M)-orchestrated diversionary tactic to deflect public attention from the scandals dogging the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president K. Sudhakaran linked LDF convenor E.P. Jayarajan to the "stage-managed" episode. He called the incident a ludicrous face-saving bid.

Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan said the groundswell of Opposition to the current disposition had alarmed the LDF. It had sought an escape route in the charade. BJP State president K. Surendran termed the attack a "policing failure".

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## Taming the tiger

BJP deflected attention from the defection by allowing Shinde retain Sena identity

The formation of a new government in Maharashtra on Thursday, led by Eknath Shinde, followed a nail-biting and unique script. The BJP conceded the CM's post to Mr. Shinde who led a revolt in the Shiv Sena to unseat Uddhav Thackeray. Former CM Devendra Fadnis has settled for the post of Deputy CM. The political churn in Maharashtra is unlikely to settle with this, however. When the Shiv Sena, the Congress and the NCP formed an unlikely alliance, the MVA, to form the government in 2019, it was seen as a new possibility of politics by some and crass opportunism by many. As it turned out, Mr. Thackeray, son of Sena founder Bal Thackeray, could not manage the turmoil that his daring to experiment triggered within the party. Initially, it had appeared that the provincialism represented by the Sena might act as a counter to the totalising politics of Hindutva. The MVA's unravelling shows that the BJP's ideology, backed with instruments of state power, and the capacity to mobilise resources, could railroad regional politics when the situation is favourable. This is one sabotage of a government that has a credible ideological defence – Mr. Shinde, and his BJP backers have argued that the Sena-BJP alliance had fought together in 2019, with Hindutva as their bonding ideology. That Mr. Shinde unseated Mr. Thackeray to uphold the people's will and fidelity to the ideology is a strong argument. For all his mild demeanour and inclusive image, Mr. Thackeray could not command sufficient chutzpah to remake the Sena. The assumption that the Sena could be re-engineered into a benign political outfit seems to have been misplaced. And he failed to notice the resentment that was bubbling up right under his nose.

The Maharashtra episode proves yet again the BJP's capacity to play the long game. Soon after the patriarch Thackeray's passing in 2012, the BJP's plans to gain an upper hand in its relations with the Sena began to roll out; by 2014 the party was ahead of the Sena. By winning a consecutive election in 2019, in alliance with the Sena, it reinforced its position. All this should have tempered the ambitions of the Thackerays – which by then included a third-generation scion, Aaditya. When they claimed power by forming the MVA, the BJP harnessed the resentment among Sena MLAs, finally toppling the Thackerays. But the BJP and the Shinde-led Sena faction have been careful not to bruise the sentiments of the Sena cadre that still holds the founder's family in high esteem. Which faction will win the legal battle to own the party name and symbol and which one will win the hearts of the party workers are two different questions. It is not impossible that the Sena could dissipate and its cadres dissolve into the BJP. The concession of the CM's post to Mr. Shinde is not an act of political altruism, but cold strategy. Having deflected the potential hurt and anger of the Sainiks for now, the BJP will now wait for the best time for its next move. The next episode of the Maharashtra saga will then play out.

## Reset mode

GST's metamorphosis into a truly Good and Simple Tax needs more Centre-States dialogue

The GST Council met over two days this week – its first 'regular' meeting after a nine-month break – with much on its plate, stemming from four ministerial groups' recommendations to fix various aspects of the indirect tax regime that remains a work in progress five years on. It ratified three of the four reports, put off one for further deliberations based on concerns flagged by a State, with a commitment to reassemble and resolve the impasse holistically in little over a month. A new ministerial panel is being tasked with figuring out the long-pending constitution of an appellate tribunal for GST disputes, to move ahead. Based on an 'interim' report of a panel to rationalise tax rates, exemptions have been scrapped on several items and rates altered for others to correct inverted duty structures. This may translate into higher prices on many goods and services (and reductions for a few) from July 18, although their impact on inflation is difficult to ascertain. However, a larger restructuring of the GST's multiple rates' structure, with an increase in levies to bolster revenues that have fallen short of expectations, partly due to rate cuts earlier effected as electoral tools, has been put off. With inflation expected to remain buoyant, that exercise may have to wait longer.

Apart from the fine print of the Council's decisions, which include tighter norms on the horizon for registering new firms and closing of tax evasion loopholes, there is a more critical takeaway. That the deliberations were constructive and not combative, especially amid the brewing trust deficit between the Centre and States in the past few meetings and the prolonged pause since it last met, bodes well for the necessary next steps to make GST deliver on its original hopes. Not a single member raised the recent Supreme Court order that some States believed had upheld their rights against 'arbitrary imposition' of the Centre's decisions in the Council. Moreover, over a dozen States brought up an 'extra agenda item' – their anxieties about the sunset of assured revenue growth from July 1, on which even Ministers from BJP-ruled States spoke up to seek the continuance of GST Compensation for some years. That States are no longer driven by party whips in this critical forum, should enrich the quality of dialogue and outcomes. That the Centre 'heard them out' and left the issue open, unlike the last Council meet when its response was akin to an outright 'No', is most refreshing. Taking a clear call, one way or the other, on continuing this support, will be ideal for the Centre and States to plan their fiscal math better. Just as sustaining and nurturing this fledgling federal compact is critical to make the GST work better for all, sooner rather than later.

# Clear signals the 'fringe' ought to read

With three of the most visible faces in the country highlighting India's inclusivity and tolerance, the message is clear



VINAY KAURA

In a period of just one week, we have had three important public statements being made by three of the most important government functionaries in India that have emphasised India's stronger credentials as a secular democratic polity. The context is the reactions to the controversial remarks on the Prophet made by a (now former) spokesperson of the ruling party. In the first instance, the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, stated that the negative reactions of many Muslim countries over the controversial remarks on the Prophet "... was an issue where the sensibilities and the sensitivities of people were impacted". Next was the National Security Adviser (NSA), Ajit Doval, who candidly accepted that the controversy has damaged India's global reputation, but also arguing that "India has been projected or some disinformation has been spread against India – which is far from the reality. Probably there is a need for us to engage them [Muslim world] and talk to them and convince them".

### An 'inclusive upbringing'

Most importantly, we had the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, mentioning in his blog his childhood friend, one Mr. Abbas Ramasada, to highlight his (the Prime Minister's) mother's selfless nature. Reminiscing their childhood, the Prime Minister mentioned Mr. Abbas having stayed with Mr. Modi's family "after the untimely death of my father's close friend who stayed in a nearby village" (i.e., Mr. Abbas's father). Though the Prime Minister did not directly address the controversy over the derogatory remarks made about the Prophet, the very reference to Mr. Abbas is an indirect acknowledgement that more damage should not be done to India's image as a country that celebrates its diversity and plurality. That Mr. Abbas was a part of his (the Prime Minister's) household, that Mr. Modi's mother took care of Mr. Abbas just like her own children, and that she also prepared favourite dishes during the festival of Eid

must be seen as emphasising Mr. Modi's inclusive upbringing and the level of societal integration between Hindus and Muslims in India. And, finally, it was the Supreme Court of India that held the discredited former spokesperson "single-handedly responsible" for igniting emotions while asking her to "apologise to the country".

Then there was the timing of the diplomatic firestorm over the remarks: India's Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu was to reach Qatar on the last leg of a three-nation tour, and Iran's Foreign Minister was to arrive on his first official visit to India. The Modi government has also taken remarkable initiatives to improve ties with many West Asian/Gulf countries, in part to ensure energy security and to attract investment from there in the infrastructure sector. But there is another dimension that should not be forgotten.

Whether Mr. Jaishankar was hinting at global jihadist organisations or Pakistan's security establishment is not known, but he did acknowledge that there are elements desperate to "fish in troubled waters". It needs to be mentioned that immediately after the controversy erupted, the Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) issued a letter that has warned of suicide bombings in many Indian cities to protect the honour of the Prophet. The language it has used to denigrate the Indian government illustrates its efforts that are aimed at a transnationalisation of local political tensions and conflicts.

### Then and now

Even before and after Independence, communal riots have occurred across India with disturbing regularity. But here, the Indian government did not have to apologise to the Muslim world as the issues triggering the riots were seen to be local. While it has been relatively easier for sympathisers from the Hindu religious right wing to brand Indian Muslims as anti-nationals and to exhort them to become more nationalist in their world view, it is now quite difficult to move away after indecorous remarks were made against the most respected figure in Islam. The Prophet unites all Muslims, irrespective of their political, ideological, sectarian, ethnic and linguistic differences. The mobilising potential of this issue is truly 'transnational'.



We never forget to mention that Muslims are closely integrated in Indian society, and have never empathised with jihadist organisations and their transnational aims. Even in these organisations, foreign fighters from India are disproportionately outnumbered by their American, French or British counterparts or by people from countries where there is a sizeable Muslim population. While Indian Muslims may have taken to streets protesting the persecution of their co-religionists in many conflict zones across the world, they have also done so against terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam.

While the social, political and economic concerns of India's Muslims have been too local to have any reverberations outside India, their religious anxieties have also been too Indian to have any resonance in any transnational organisation, be it Islamist or jihadist. And it must remain so because the transnationalisation of issues pertaining to Indian Islam will always be challenging for the Government, while also making Indian Muslims extremely vulnerable to the political use of Islam, known as Islamism.

### Islamism, jihadist landscape

Various scholars have convincingly held that Islamism is not about Islam or Islamic faith, but it is about a remaking of the political order. Islamism thrives on a transnationalisation of issues pertaining to the Islamic faith and practices, which are not a monolith. 'Religionisation of politics' and 'politicisation of religion' is the root of Islamism, the same perilous politics that led to the creation of Pakistan. And, most disturbingly, what unites Islamists and Jihadists is their vision of a Sharia-based Islamic state as a desired political order. Muslims have always found the charm and the influence of India's constitutional order premised on secular nationalism more powerful than the fatal attraction of radical Islamism. Many experts will still underplay the threat posed by the global jihadist movement, arguing that neither

AQIS nor the Islamic State (ISIS) has gained any traction in India. Fortunately, that is true since there has been no noticeable increase in the number of radicalised recruits despite the growing sense of political alienation among Indian Muslims. Can this make us complacent? The ISIS is also severely damaged, its various Indian franchises and offshoots do not pose any significant threat, and its capacity to draw recruits in India has also become questionable. But the AQIS would like to capitalise on the ideological vacuum in the regional jihadist landscape, particularly after the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan.

### Conflict ecosystem

The Taliban's relationship with al Qaeda has often been marked by mutual suspicion. But despite many complexities, they have often adopted successful ways to cooperate for mutual strategic and tactical benefits. Even when the Taliban entered the Doha talks with the United States for America's eventual exit from Afghanistan, the two groups continued to coordinate till the end. After the Taliban's takeover, al Qaeda's jubilation has been understandable. Notwithstanding the fact that their relationship will remain fraught, they will still do their best to cooperate and coordinate.

Though it is unclear how the Taliban will stop al Qaeda from using Afghan territory for transnational jihadist operations, Kabul's new 'Islamist' rulers are nonetheless unlikely to restrain al Qaeda's regional ambitions, due to their inability or unwillingness. This makes the Taliban a highly suspect or unreliable partner in regional or global efforts to counter al Qaeda – we all know that the Afghanistan-Pakistan region has been the birthplace of many jihadist organisations including al Qaeda. The Pakistan factor too comes into play as Pakistan's security establishment has been a long-time patron of the Afghan Taliban. There is also the kind of role Islamabad is expected to play by Washington in post-exit Afghanistan. While the Pakistan state itself seems to be bearing the brunt of the Afghan Taliban's success in Afghanistan with the reorganisation and reinvigoration of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the temptation will never dissipate in Rawalpindi to manipulate the complex jihadist landscape of the Afghanistan-Pa-

kistan region to meet its own geopolitical needs.

The Taliban, al Qaeda and the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) are three of the most important Islamist groups operating in Afghanistan's conflict ecosystem. Though the Taliban have consolidated their hold over the Afghan state since coming to power, their continued relationship with al Qaeda makes strategic sense for them because of the all-important dimension of collective effort. Both can effectively band together to combat their common foe, ISIS or the IS-K. Thus, despite growing international pressure, the Taliban regime does not have any incentive to undermine its own limited capabilities to counter the IS-K threat by either expelling or immobilising al Qaeda who have been its partners.

Al Qaeda's ability to navigate Afghanistan's jihadist landscape may or may not be of major interest to the Afghan Taliban or other western countries, but it is very important for India. Opinion remains divided as to whether India can be a direct target of al Qaeda or an indirect one, with most opinion tending toward the second view, i.e., India is secondary to their real struggle. Nevertheless, it is the possibility of the Taliban and al Qaeda jointly waging a fight against the IS-K in the same operational battlespace that should alarm Indian authorities. This also explains India's recent diplomatic efforts to engage the Afghan Taliban and maintain its presence in Afghanistan.

The transnationalisation of local tensions and the Islamisation of local politics have always exacerbated deadly conflicts. At a time when three of the most visible faces of the Indian government and the highest judicial institution of the country have directly and indirectly highlighted India's civilisational heritage of inclusivity and tolerance, as well as the non-discriminatory nature of the current political regime, it must be hoped that the 'fringe' elements in the ruling party will be forced to abandon their Islamophobic vocabulary and religious jingoism.

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# Recommended, a dose of humour and democracy

As the virus of totalitarianism begins to infect India, the immune system of the Republic needs to be reinvigorated



FAISAL C.K.

Humour is ubiquitous; it bursts out even in the face of death. Niccolò Machiavelli, Italian political mastermind, cracked a joke before his last breath: "I desire to go to Hell and not to Heaven. In the former I shall enjoy the company of popes, kings and princes, while in the latter are only beggars, monks and apostles!" As a double-edged sword, humour is capable of inducing light-hearted moments and heavy thoughts. It is a mighty weapon in political and social discourse, an example being Socrates and his subtle and scorching critiques of decaying Athenian society and politics.

### The danger today

Like the glory that was Greece fell apart, the wonder that is India is in danger of imploding. India's constitutional cornerstone, which is the Rock of Gibraltar of the Republic, is being shaken. The darkness of totalitarianism seems to be falling upon the edifice of our Republic. We can either cry over the evidence of the downfall of the beloved country or crack jokes to detonate the darkness.

Arvind Narain, in his book, *In-*

dia's Undeclared Emergency: Constitutionalism and the Politics of Resistance, is of the opinion that India is slouching towards a totalitarian future. He observes: "the ambitions of a totalitarian government are far wider and its abilities far deeper than those of an authoritarian one. A totalitarian rule goes beyond retaining total control over the State to trying to 'politicize the masses' and shaping individuals in accordance with its ideology. It draws its strength and support not just from its control over the levers of the State but also from organizational fronts which work at the societal level, aiming to transform society in terms of its ideology. A combination of these factors – of having an ideology as well as many organizational fronts – results in totalitarianism having an 'appeal', compared with the 'generally passive acceptance of authoritarian regimes'." India experienced an authoritarian regime during the Emergency. But the Republic's metamorphosis into a totalitarian political system is a dark novelty that demands innovative paraphernalia for the politics of resistance.

In her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt discerned two contradictory popular responses towards totalitarianism – a mood of 'reckless optimism' and a belief in 'unavoidable doom'. Arvind Narain points out that in "India today, where the dominant mood in progressive circles is hardly one of 'reckless optimism',



what one is left with is 'reckless despair'. To find hope in the midst of this despair is difficult." Here lies the weightiness of humour. Humour can inspire hope, as hope is a powerful thing. It inspires us to do the impossible and helps us carry on during difficult times.

Three days after the Emergency, there was this obituary published among the classified advertisements in *The Times of India*, on June 28, 1975. It read: "O'Cracy, D.E.M., beloved husband of T. Ruth, loving father of L.I. Bertie, brother of Faith, Hope and Justice, expired on June 26." Journalist Ashok Mahadevan, then 26, punched the authoritarian regime with an obituary of 22 words that mourned the sad demise of democracy, along with its allied ideals of truth, liberty, faith, hope and justice. The death of democracy was duly dated in 1975.

In our times, constitutional democracy is inching towards a persistent vegetative state, a death without a date of demise, an obituary, mourning, and a funeral. 'Operation Lotus', a machination to

torpedo elected governments in States, has become a quotidian affair and elections and democratic civility, in danger of becoming a black comedy. The citizenry cannot laugh at the Gallowes speech of constitutional democracy; nor can it be a silent spectator.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "If I had no sense of humour, I would long ago have committed suicide." He exposed the vanity and the pomp of the British Empire at the cost of India's destitution by explaining why he had so little clothes on. In this example attributed to an event around the Round Table Conference in London, he said: "The king had enough [clothes] on for both of us".

### The ingredients needed

Anarchism and democracy are the anti-theses and antidotes for totalitarianism. Anarchism conceives the state to be unnecessary and any form of government undesirable. It presumes that man is basically a rational, honest and just animal. Therefore, if society is organised properly, then there will be no room for any kind of coercion. It is a utopian ideology indeed but it has some practical relevance.

An anarchic vision of society is non-violent, self-managed and non-hierarchical. Anarchist thinkers hold dear to the ideal of democracy – rule by the people. "The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as

the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence," said Mahatma Gandhi, who was a blissful anarchist. Democracy would be perfected by imbuing some idyllic dreams from anarchism.

Anarchism and democracy espouse humour; whereas totalitarianism demands the silence of the grave. Works like *The Good Soldier Švejk*, by the Czech anarchist author, Jaroslav Hašek, which is a hilarious satire of military life, ridicules war and the state. So is *Ivan the Fool* by Leo Tolstoy who was a Christian anarchist, a pacifist who renounced the state as violent and deceitful. Charlie Chaplin's film, *The Great Dictator*, and Sacha Baron Cohen's film, *The Dictator* (2012), are black comedy films that underscore that humour can mercilessly humiliate totalitarian and authoritarian despots and debunk their larger-than-life image.

The virus of totalitarianism which is highly fatal has almost infected India. The immune system of the Republic, the constitutional ideals and structure, has to fight off the virus. The antiviral medicines, a few souring pills of Gandhian anarchism at a minimal dose, and the sweet syrup of humour and democracy at maximum dose, would be an advisable course of medication.

Faisal C.K. is an independent researcher interested in constitutional law and political philosophy

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Manipulative politics

The political drama in Maharashtra has been termed a masterstroke by the top leadership of the BJP, but in reality this is a kind of manipulative politics so well perfected by the party over the years to destabilise State governments ruled by the

Opposition parties. People must ensure that authoritarianism does not take root.

V. PADMANABHAN,  
Bengaluru

### Tragedy at San Antonio

The tragic case in the United States – of the Texan migrant deaths – is an

emphatic reminder of the dangers migrants face; the risks have only got higher as law enforcement and smugglers use increasingly sophisticated methods to outwit each other. The Malta boat tragedy and a case of an Indian family freezing while attempting to cross the Canada-U.S.

border are hard to forget. Justice, stability and more equitable distribution of global wealth could solve this vexed problem.

GREGORY FERNANDES,  
Mumbai

### Leprosy fight

Multidrug therapy is vital for the control of leprosy,

from multi-bacillary cases that are carriers of the disease. Clofazimine is one of the combinations of multidrug therapy. So, the lack of the drug may increase the prevalence of leprosy from endemic zones. Silent manifestations of the disease will spell a setback for public health

activities, surveillance, and treatment. There is good manpower but what affects the leprosy eradication programme is often a failure to deliver MDT to field-level staff.

D. E. SUBBARAYAN,  
Sakkarakuram, Gingee, Tamil Nadu

# Keeping head above water in Silchar

Since the sudden flooding that began on June 19, residents have been scrambling for dry land, food and clean water. **Rahul Karmakar** reports on the ferocity of the floods in Assam, the blame game on what caused them, and the palpable anxiety in Barak Valley about the days ahead

On June 20, as the water level rose, Dipankar Dhar waded past a refrigerator, an LPG cylinder and scores of vintage books – all floating around his waist – after descending from the first floor of his three-storey house on College Road. A rescue boat was ready. Dhar and his family exited the house with a few clothes and basic necessities, climbed onto the boat, and sailed to the edge of Park Road. This was the nearest “island” in Silchar, a town where only about 10% of the land had been spared the sudden flooding close to midnight of June 19.

The Dhars were among the first to check into a hotel on Park Road. “We could have stayed on the first floor like many others marooned in our locality. But our kitchen on the ground floor went 6 ft under water and there was no way we could cook or organise our food,” said Dhar, a contractor based in Kolkata who had come home recently to settle a property dispute.

Shyamsundar Roy, a businessman, and Moushumi checked into the same hotel with their eight-month-old baby three days later. They had been banking on the water receding, as has often been the case with Silchar, within a day or two from the ground floor of their four-storey building on Bibekananda Road. “We shifted the ground floor tenants to the second floor and hoped for the best,” said Roy. “But it was becoming unbearable. After the inverter battery drained out, for three nights we had no power. We hired a boat to a point near the hotel, a 10-minute drive from our house on normal days. And here we are, on a forced staycation.”

Unlike most Silchar residents who were taken by surprise, Hemanta Bora said he was used to floods back home in a northern Assam village. The family of this former soldier, who handles security at an Oil and Natural Gas Corporation facility near Silchar, decided not to move from their rented, third-floor house. “We kept saving the inverter battery to charge our mobile phones and I waded chest deep occasionally to get provisions. My office had my family shifted to a hotel after nine days because my service was needed at the facility,” said Bora.

Never before had the hotels around Gandhi Bagh been booked for 10 days at a stretch by locals. “All our 21 rooms are booked but we are managing with less than 50% staff, many of whom are marooned. But we are only providing a few items on the menu because there is no one to prepare the fancy dishes,” said Amit Patoa, the manager of a starred hotel. “It would be wrong to say we are making the most of people’s misery. We have provided discounts on room rent and we have not charged extra for food despite having to buy fish, vegetables and everything else at 200%-300% more than the usual prices.”

Silchar, the headquarters of Cachar district, is the hub of the landlocked Barak Valley comprising three districts in Assam. Silchar got hit after landslides damaged the arterial railway line through Dima Hasao at 56 points in mid-May. A highway through Dima Hasao was similarly affected. The only other highway through Meghalaya connecting Barak Valley to the rest of the country was cut off less than a month later. It was made usable in about a week, but perishable items landed in Silchar rotten because the trucks had been stranded in Meghalaya. To make matters worse, 30%-70% of goods of most shops and warehouses in the town had been submerged way too long to be of use. As of July 1, 173 people had died due to the floods and landslides in Assam. Of Silchar’s 28 wards, 26 were badly flooded. More than 1,00,000 vehicles had been damaged. Property damage was estimated to be over ₹1,000 crore, said the Assam Assam Minister for Public Health Engineering, Entrepreneurship and Tourism, Jayanta Malla Baruah.

## Thirsty people in flood-hit areas

No one in schoolteacher Bipul Sinha’s family had any appetite to eat on the first-floor house in Bhagatpur locality. They were barely 1.5 m above the water level. In just five days, the ochre coloured water that the overflowing Barak River had brought had turned a dull black and was stinking. Bathing was a luxury as there was no electricity to draw water from the underground tank. The family’s stock of drinking water had run out three days after the floods. “You can survive without electricity and even food, but not water,” Sinha said. “On the fifth day, I bought a dozen one-litre bottles of water at a premium, but it was peanuts compared to the ₹1,000 I had to pay the boatman one way to fetch it.”

Barely 900 metres from his house, on College Road, a ‘boat stand’ replaced the local taxi and rickshaw stand soon after the area turned, as Sinha put it, into “a sea”. Boatmen Rahamatullah and Gopal Das justified the charge – ₹100 per 100 m – to make up for their inability to fish or ferry people across the Barak River for a living.



Young boys who were helping transport flood-affected people in Silchar town take a break to eat lunch at College Road in Silchar, Cachar district of Assam on June 30. (Below): Flood-affected people desperately try to get drinking water in Silchar town. • RITU RAJ KONWAR



transport food grains (from the Food Corporation of India warehouse near Silchar), was kind enough to let us stay in the truck, but we are disappointed that the government could not provide any kind of relief to us. Had it not been for the Army, we would have died of thirst,” he said. The Army camp at Masimpur near Silchar remained inundated for more than a week as did parts of the Assam Rifles camp in the town.

“Whatever relief is being provided is by the locals themselves,” said Trinamol Congress MP Sushmita Dev, whose house on Station Road was inundated for a few days. “There has been total mismanagement of the situation. We have seen floods since childhood, but there was never any party politics during disasters until now. The BJP (local MP and MLAs belong to the Bharatiya Janata Party) has taken control of the operations and made a mess of it. They have to let the district administration work.” Neither Silchar MP Rajdeep Roy nor Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty took calls, but local BJP leader Anita Choudhury denied that the party was “branding” relief material provided by the district authorities.

Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli admitted the district machinery took time to respond, but said that was because most officials and employees were themselves marooned. “We lost no time in requisitioning dumpers and excavators, the only vehicles that could be used in most areas, to transport relief, move doctors and help the police patrol vulnerable areas,” she said.

Much of the patrolling on dumpers at night was to assure the townspeople that the law-and-order situation was being taken care of, said Cachar’s Superintendent of Police, Ramandeep Kaur Dhillion. “We have received SOS calls about burglaries in shops and houses closed for days. But there has not been a single case reported. People have panicked because the nights are pitch black without electricity.”

More than 4,000 transformers in Silchar and the district beyond were under water for about a week, leading to extensive power cuts.

## Blaming Mahisha Beel

With a population of more than 2 lakh,



the 27 sq. km Silchar town is protected by a long embankment on the Barak River, the lifeline of Barak Valley. At about 7 p.m. on June 19, the district authority issued a statement warning residents that the town could be flooded because some miscreants had cut a channel on the embankment at Bethukandi about 3 km from the heart of the town.

Ajit Das had been tipped off earlier by Ashis Das, a resident of one of the villages in the Bethukandi area and the mason who had built his optical shop at Rangirkhari. “I stacked most of the spectacles on higher shelves and placed the inverter and battery on a stack of chairs. I warned the shops in the area but none took it seriously,” Ajit Das said.

Tapu Pal, who runs a pharmacy near Rangirkhari, wished he had heeded the warning. Floodwaters destroyed the medicines on the lower shelves but the loss he suffered was much less than what the maternity hospital opposite his store faced. It is closed indefinitely. The flood, which struck at a force, killed 16 people in the town while three remained untraced. The scale of devastation struck the people when a couple of bodies wrapped in polythene were found floating, possibly disposed of as the town’s cremation and burial grounds were submerged. Struck by this, Kumar Kanti Das, a popular doctor, temporarily allowed his Charitable Hospital ground to be used for cremation.

By the time the people realised what had hit them, a narrative had been built that the residents of Mahisha Beel had cut the embankment at Bethukandi to drain out excess water into the Barak River that flows down from Manipur and meanders into Bangladesh. The embankment topped by a partly metal-roofed road is a barrier between the river and the beel (wetland). The belief became stronger when Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who visited the town thrice in a week, said the Silchar disaster was man-made. Bethukandi is a largely Muslim-inhabited area with a few Hindu pockets.

Arijit Aditya, the editor of Silchar-published Bengali daily *Bartalipi*, found something amiss in the district authority’s June 19 warning. While accusing some miscreants of causing the breach, it said the river water could inundate

low-lying areas of the town despite efforts to repair the damaged stretch of the embankment. “For years, the people of Mahisha Beel have been under water for nine months. Why should they suddenly cut the embankment? There could be a case of incompetent officials shifting the blame on the villagers,” he said.

“How can anyone say the locals cut the embankment? Water was flowing out of Mahisha Beel towards the river through a drain near the point of the embankment where a sluice gate has been lying half-constructed for months,” said Gopal Das, the president of the Bagardor Borjurai Gram Panchayat, in May when the water level of Mahisha Beel was higher than that of the Barak River. The locals, he said, informed the authorities concerned about the ‘cut’ on the embankment. On May 23, Debabrata Pal, the executive engineer of the Water Resources Department, lodged an FIR against unknown miscreants under Section 427 (mischief causing damage) of the Indian Penal Code read with Section 3 of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

“Mahisha Beel was a small wetland. The excess water from Mahisha Beel used to drain out through Rangirkhal, Singirkhal and Longaikhal on the other side of the town. But encroachment constricted these *khals* (canals) and kept inundating our farmlands,” said Shaheen Hussain Laskar, a former farmer living under a makeshift tent on the embankment. “To say we breached the embankment to teach the townspeople a lesson for making us suffer all these years is a bit much. The strong current of the river washed away the weakened embankment around the under-construction sluice gate.”

He is not off the mark. ‘Barak River-science: Ecological status and Trends’, a document of the Wildlife Institute of India under a project of the National River Conservation Directorate, found the Barak River system fragmented by the construction of four dams, six medium irrigation projects, three hydroelectric projects and barrages. The report says the 900-km river provides several ecosystem services but is “threatened due to developmental activities in its basin, increased water abstraction, sand mining, heavy metal pollution, increase in invasive species and climate change”.

The basin has undergone considerable land-use changes in the last three decades. Between 1988 and 2018, the water area decreased by 23.48% while the urban area increased by 73.76%, and the riverbed increased by 134.62% although a dredging project was undertaken in 2018.

“Without going into the details, it would suffice to say that the need to construct the Bethukandi sluice gate to let the excess water of Mahisha Beel drain out into the Barak was felt long ago,” Aditya said. “The beel became a milch cow during the Congress regime through invisible schemes until former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi sanctioned the sluice gate. The work on that stag-

nated after the BJP won the elections in 2016 and Silchar has now paid for that.”

## The way forward

S.R. Swami, a retired chief engineer of the Water Resources Department, said Silchar needs many sluice gates with proper maintenance, regular upkeep of the embankments and better risk assessment besides overhauling of the drainage system. “Even if Barak Valley does not experience rain, heavy showers in the hills around make it vulnerable. And the planning has to be long term if such a disaster has to be avoided,” he said. The Bethukandi breach could not have been the only cause of the unprecedented flooding, he added.

The mindset of officials and the political class needs to change too, said Mantu Das, a Silchar-origin engineering designer now working with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development. In 2016, he had proposed a project under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation to bail the town out of its waterlogging and sewage issues. He had even organised a workshop for the town planners. “What they wanted was stop-gap arrangements, not elaborate projects to separate the sewage system from the rainwater drainage system,” said Das. “They failed to understand that one has to study the hydrology of the valley as well as the hills around and analyse rainfall and flood patterns in these areas over more than a century besides factoring in climate change to come up with a set-up that can last for at least 100 years.”

Such studies could be facilitated if the Assam University in Silchar has a centre for disaster management, noted Parthankar Choudhury, who teaches ecology and environmental science at the university. “This centre, the proposal for which was submitted to the University Grants Commission, should be a top priority in view of the unprecedented floods in Silchar,” he said.

For the time being, the focus is on preventing post-flood water-borne diseases, with medical teams fanning out to check the health of relief camp inmates and those marooned in their homes. Help is also pouring in from organisations such as Dharmanagar and Kanchanpur Chemist and Druggist Association in adjoining Tripura.

For those who were forced to leave home, a bigger worry is how soon they can go back with the Barak River starting to rise again: on July 1, the gauge at the town’s Annapurna Ghat recorded 19.87 m after dipping to 19.85 m (0.02 m above the danger level) on June 30. The fear that the gaping hole in the embankment at Bethukandi could cause another flood is palpable, although the district authorities have sought to assure people that the repair work would be completed fast.

“Finding labourers who are charging ₹1,000 per day instead of the normal ₹300-400 to clean the house is tough. Tougher still is to get clean water to wash the muck and filth left behind by the floodwaters,” Dipankar Dhar said.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Uddhav questions BJP's alliance with Sena faction

Mr. Thackeray said: "You backstabbed me, but I request you to not vent that anger on the people by giving Aarey land to Metro. This is hazardous for the environment and poses threat of encroachment."

Since both the State and Central governments were now run by the BJP, the Kanjur Marg land allotted for the project by the previous government could be utilised without court proceedings, he said.

Commenting on party MLAs deserting him to join rebels, Mr. Thackeray said people vote for an MLA who belonged to a particular party.

"Balasaheb [Sena founder] used to say that the people should have the choice to recall their representative. Looking at the recent developments, it is time to bring the Act giving the people that right," he said.

## Nupur should have apologised, says SC

"She was too late to withdraw... and that too, she withdrew her comments conditionally, saying 'if sentiments hurt,'" the court said. The court said these statements were intended to provoke.

"The petition [to club the FIRs] smacks of her arro-

gance, that the Magistrates of the country are too small for her... If you are a spokesperson of a party, it is not a licence to say things like this. If there is a misuse of the debate, the first thing she should have done was to file an FIR against the anchor", the court said.

## June's GST revenues surpass ₹1.44 lakh crore

This would imply a 'substantive upside of about ₹1.2 lakh crore' for the Government of India relative to its Budget Estimates for Central GST of ₹6.6 lakh crore.

"The sharp 56% headline growth in June benefits from the economic recovery, and has also been boosted by the low base of the second wave of COVID-19 and the transmission of elevated commodity prices into output inflation," said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

Central GST collections in June were ₹25,306 crore, State GST at ₹32,406 crore, while Integrated GST accounted for ₹75,887 crore, including ₹40,102 crore collected on import of goods. GST revenues had hit a high of ₹1,67,540 crore in April this year, before dropping to about ₹1.41 lakh crore in May. "These consistent high collections indicate recovery from the pandemic hit and can also be attributed to inflation and tight check and balances implemented by the government," said Abhishek Jain, partner (indirect tax) at KPMG India.

Most States and Union Territories recorded a sharp uptick in revenues, led by Kerala where collections jumped 116% year-on-year and Ladakh (118%), while

negative growth was witnessed only in the Union Territory of Daman and Diu (-13%) and areas under Central jurisdiction (-12%).

**Over 50% growth**  
Several States recorded over 50% growth in collections. Tamil Nadu recorded an 83% growth in June's GST collections, followed by Uttarakhanda (82%), Haryana (77%), Karnataka (73%), Maharashtra (63%), West Bengal (58%), Rajasthan (56%), Punjab (51%) and Gujarat (50%).

Revenues in Uttar Pradesh grew by 49%, while the growth was 46% and 37% for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, respectively.

"The increase in States' collections in excess of 40% comes in the backdrop of the guaranteed revenue to States. This would assuage many States who were worried about their revenue mobilisation ability going forward," said M.S. Mani, partner at Deloitte India.

"If GST collections grow at the pace of 17% in this year, some States with a relatively higher dependence on GST compensation within their revenue sources, may find it to be a particularly challenging year," Ms. Nayar pointed out.

## GST is a pro-people reform: T.N. Governor

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Calling the Goods and Services Tax (GST) a pro-people reform, Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has said that by increasing the tax base and reducing the average tax rates, the Centre has ensured buoyancy in tax collections and reduced taxes on essentials.

Speaking at an event to mark the five years of the tax regime, he said the GST had helped to realise the goal of 'One Nation, One Market' by bringing most in-

direct taxes under one umbrella.

The uniformity of tax on supplies of goods and services; uniform processes across the country; simpler registrations and refunds; minimal physical interface; information technology-driven systems; and the free flow of goods were some benefits of the GST, he said.

The Governor told tax officials to aim for ease of doing business; facilitate domestic trade; and further reduce the burden on account of compliance.

## Two more arrested in tailor murder case

Udaipur gets new IG and SP after mass transfer

DEVESH K. PANDEY  
NEW DELHI/UDAIPUR

Two more persons, who were arrested by the Rajasthan police in connection with the brutal murder of a tailor in Udaipur on June 28, were sent to judicial custody by a local court on Friday.

Mohsin and Asif were arrested for providing logistical support to the two prime accused, Mohammed Riyaz Attari and Ghous Mohammed, in the killing of

Kanhaiya Lal. The murder was allegedly in retaliation to his social media post supporting suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma.

The prime accused were sent to 14-day judicial custody on Thursday. The local lawyers had refused to represent them in the court and staged a massive protest. The police also seized the getaway motorcycle said to be owned by Attari.

It is learnt that several others are being quizzed to zero in on all the conspirators and facilitators. Among them is one Nazim, who earlier ran a tailoring shop in

# Cong. opposes election of new Maharashtra Assembly Speaker

Party cites Governor's letter saying it was not possible due to a pending court case

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

The new Maharashtra government under the leadership of rebel Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde is unlikely to get a smooth start as the scheduled election of the Speaker is being opposed by the Opposition Congress on the basis of Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari's letter where he had said the election was not possible due to a pending case in court.



Get-together: Congress leaders and MLAs meet Uddhav Thackeray at his residence in Mumbai on Thursday. •PTI

**Old example**  
"We do not understand the urgency to call a special session of the Assembly on Sunday. Moreover, a case regarding the Speaker's election is pending in the Supreme Court and when we were in the government, the Governor was telling us for months that since the matter is sub-judice, he cannot call the

election of the Speaker. In that case, how can he allow the election now for the new government?" asked senior Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat.

**Narvekar is candidate**  
Meanwhile, a special session of the Legislature would be held on July 3 and 4 where the Speaker's election will be held on the first day. The rul-

ing BJP and rebel Sena alliance has already announced young BJP MLA Rahul Narvekar as the candidate for the Speaker's post. Mr. Narvekar on Friday submitted his nomination for the post. The Opposition group is yet to announce the name.

The tripartite MVA had appointed the Congress' Nana Patole as the Speaker af-

ter coming to power in 2019. A year later, Mr. Patole resigned in February 2021 to become the president of the State Congress unit. Since then, the MVA had been demanding to announce the election date for the Speaker's post to which Mr. Koshyari responded negatively.

In due course, the State government amended the rules to elect the new Speaker through voice vote and show of hands instead of secret vote. The then Opposition BJP opposed the move and its MLA Girish Mahajan approached the Supreme Court claiming that the amendment to the rules was brought illegally and arbitrarily.

Mr. Koshyari had referred to the petition denying permission to hold the election saying the matter is sub-judice.

## Maharashtra Cabinet to move Metro car shed

Project is to be shifted back to Aarey

SONAM SAIGAL  
MUMBAI

In the first Cabinet meeting of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday, the Advocate General of Maharashtra was told to make an application to the Bombay High Court on Friday stating that the government would move the Metro car shed back to Aarey from Kanjurmarg.

On October 4, 2019, the High Court paved the way for the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Limited (MMRCL) to construct a car shed for Mumbai Metro Line 3 by upholding the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Tree Authority's move to cut 2,646 trees from Aarey milk colony, which led to protests by thousands of Mumbaikaars.

A Division Bench then had said, "The Greens fail in

the instant petition because they have lost touch with the procedure to be followed as per law." The decision had come in a bunch of petitions challenging a resolution passed by the BMC's Tree Authority to cut 2,646 trees at Aarey colony to make way for the Metro car shed.

The Bench also rejected the contention stating that MMRCL had scaled down the project with respect to the number of trees to be cut and that in itself was proof of the decision being fair, transparent and based on reason. The court had noted, the Tree Authority's decision to axe almost 3,000 trees was "without application of mind".

Shifting of the Metro car shed from Aarey to Kanjurmarg was the first decision that MVA govt. had taken in 2019.

## Making me CM is masterstroke of Fadnavis: Eknath Shinde

He thanks Modi, Shah and BJP president for giving chance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has said his elevation to the top post is due to the masterstroke by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Devendra Fadnavis.

"People thought that the Bharatiya Janata Party was desperate for power. But truly, this is a masterstroke by Devendra-ji. To hand over power to another person despite having larger numbers (of MLAs) requires a big heart."

"With his decision, people of the State and the country got to see a new example of this large heartedness," Mr. Shinde said after he and Mr. Fadnavis were sworn in as CM and Deputy CM respectively at Raj Bhavan Thursday evening.

"The party with the most



With open arms: Goa CM Pramod Sawant welcomes Eknath Shinde at a resort in Panaji on Thursday. •PTI

numbers has the claim to the Chief Minister's post. But in this case, I would like to thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, J.P. Nadda and specially Devendra Fadnavis, who showed a big heart and gave this chance to a Shiv Sainik," Mr. Shinde told a TV channel.

Mr. Shinde said the pre-

## 'Shiv Sena is where Thackerays are'

Splitting won't weaken party, says Raut

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Friday said a new government in Maharashtra under Eknath Shinde has been formed by the BJP with a group of MLAs that split the party, and asserted that the Sena is where the Thackerays are.

Taking a dig at Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Mr. Raut said had the BJP stuck to its word in 2019, it could have had the CM's post for two-and-a-half years and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) experiment involving his party, the NCP and the Congress would not have taken place.

He was responding to a question whether the new government is a Shiv Sena-BJP government.

Mr. Raut stressed that Mr. Shinde's move will not weaken the party. "Shiv Sena is where the Thackerays are,"



Sanjay Raut

Mr. Raut asserted.

On Mr. Shinde's comment that Fadnavis has shown a big heart by making him the Chief Minister despite the BJP having more numbers than the rebel group, Mr. Raut said, the newly-appointed CM's definition of a big heart may be different.

He said Mr. Shinde and Mr. Fadnavis should together address the problems related to agriculture, unemployment.

IN BRIEF



Fadnavis missing at BJP's celebration event

MUMBAI  
Maharashtra Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis was conspicuously absent during a celebration held at the State BJP headquarters here on Friday. The programme at the party office in south Mumbai was meant to celebrate its return to power in the State after the collapse of MVA government. •PTI

SC to hear plea of Sena chief whip on July 11

NEW DELHI  
The Supreme Court has agreed to hear on July 11 the plea of Shiv Sena chief whip Sunil Prabhu seeking suspension of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and 15 rebel MLAs from the Assembly. Their main plea against the Deputy Speaker's disqualification notices will also be heard that day. •PTI

## SC held a mirror to Modi govt.: Rahul

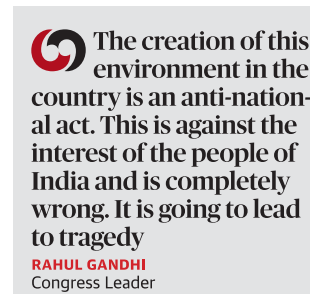
Congress says BJP should hang its head in shame after the court's observations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI/WAYANAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) are responsible for creating an environment of hatred and anger, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Friday in response to the Supreme Court's observation that suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma was "single-handedly responsible for igniting emotions across the country".

Separately, the Congress, in a statement, said the BJP should "hang its head in shame" after the top court's remarks on Ms. Sharma.

"Yes, of course, the Supreme Court has said this [about Ms. Sharma] but the atmosphere in the country has been created by the rul-



The creation of this environment in the country is an anti-national act. This is against the interest of the people of India and is completely wrong. It is going to lead to tragedy.

ing dispensation. It is not the person who has made the comment, it is the Prime Minister, Home Minister, BJP and the RSS that has created this environment of anger and hatred," Mr. Gandhi told reporters at Wayanad on the first day of his three-day tour to Kerala.

"The creation of this environment in the country is an anti-national act. This is against the interest of the people of India and is com-



pletely wrong. It is going to lead to tragedy," he said.

The former Congress chief said his party built bridges between different sections and violence was antithetical to its philosophy.

On behalf of the party, the general secretary in-charge of communication, Jairam Ramesh, said the top court had strengthened the party's resolve to fight "destructively divisive ideologies". "These remarks by the Su-

preme Court, which resonate with the entire country, should make the party in power hang its head in shame. The Supreme Court held a mirror to this government and called out the base ugliness of its actions," Mr. Ramesh said.

"It is no secret that the Bharatiya Janata Party seeks to profit from inflaming communal passions. Today, the Supreme Court has strengthened the resolve in every single one of us who are fighting these destructively divisive ideologies," he added.

Mr. Ramesh also pointed to the top court's observations about deferential treatment being given to the suspended BJP spokesperson by the Delhi Police and asking them [the Delhi Police] "if a red carpet was being rolled out for her".

## Sanjay Raut questioned for 10 hours by ED

We gave full co-operation, he tweets

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday in an alleged case of money laundering and was questioned for 10 hours.

After getting out of the office, he tweeted, "It is our duty to go in front of the central agencies if they have any doubt in their minds so that people do not have any doubt in their minds about us. We were questioned for 10 hours and we gave full co-operation."

Before going to ED office, the MP tweeted, "I will be appearing before the ED today at 12 noon. I respect the Summons issued to me and it's my duty to co-operate with the Investigation agencies. I appeal Shivsena work-

ers not to gather at the ED office. Don't worry!"

He appeared at the ED office after the second summons issued on June 27.

**'Political developments'**  
He said, "I just came to know that the ED has summoned me. Good! There are big political developments in Maharashtra. We, Balasaheb's Shiv Sainiks are fighting a big battle. This is a conspiracy to stop me. Even if you behead me, I won't take the Guwahati route. Arrest me! Jai Hind!"

He had also said he will be in Alibab for meetings and will not be able to appear before the central agency before July 7 in a case relating to the irregularities in the redevelopment of Patra Chawl project at Goregaon.

## Udaipur killing un-Islamic: Muslim bodies

At Friday sermon, Imams condemn 'dastardly act'

ZIYA US SALAM  
NEW DELHI

Prominent Muslim organisations and clerics have denounced the brutal killing of Kanhaiya Lal by two Muslim men in Udaipur earlier this week. The Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board besides the imam of Jama Masjid in Old Delhi have condemned the killing, calling it "brutal, unpardonable and against the

tenets of Islam". Imams in major mosques in Delhi, including the New Delhi Jama Masjid and those run by Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat used the Friday sermon to denounce "the dastardly act".

The Jamiat spokesperson called the Udaipur killing "against the law of the land and against the religion of Islam". "Whosoever has perpetrated the incident cannot be justified in any way." The Jamiat's president Arshad Madani, on a tour to Malaysia, condemned the incident. "The Udaipur incident is tragic, un-Islamic and an

inhuman act. We condemn this instance and ask the law to take its own course."

Almost on the same lines came the reaction from Jamaat-e-Islami's Vice President Salim Engineer. "We condemn the barbaric murder of Kanhaiya Lal. There is no justification for such violence in Islam."

In his Friday sermon, Mohibullah Nadwi, imam of New Delhi Jama Masjid, condemned the Udaipur incident unequivocally and asked the faithful to take a leaf out of the Prophet's life in case of provocation. "The Prophet did not kill anybody

for not accepting Islam."

Earlier, Imam Ahmed Bukhari of the historic Jama Masjid in Old Delhi called the murder "an act of cowardice" and "an act against Islam". This Friday too, the faithful were asked to maintain law and order, and make sure that the killers find no support from the community. Also, the body of Muslim religious intellectuals, AIMPLB stated, "Taking the law into one's own hands and killing a person by declaring him a criminal is a condemnable act. It is against the principles of Islam."

# Akali Dal bats for NDA's Presidential candidate

## Party's real face exposed, says Cong.

VIKAS VASUDEVA CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday announced support for NDA's Presidential candidate Droupadi Murmu. The Congress reacted by saying that the SAD now stands completely "exposed".

In a statement, the party said it accepted Ms. Murmu's appeal for support in the upcoming election "as she symbolised the cause of minorities, the exploited and backward classes as well as the dignity of women. She has emerged as a symbol of the poor and tribal segments".

The Akali Dal had quit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in 2020 over the three controversial farm laws (repealed later).

"While our reservations with the BJP over key issues like removing a sense of se-

curity from the minds of minorities, and justice for Punjab, especially the Sikhs, still remain, the SAD is eventually inspired and guided by the ideals of the great Guru Sahiban. Ms. Murmu not only symbolises the dignity of womenfolk but also belongs to the very downtrodden and the minority classes for whose cause the great Guru Sahiban made supreme sacrifices," said a resolution passed by the party's core committee here.

Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira said: "The real face of Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal and his party is exposed as they support BJP candidate. It means his decision to break the alliance with the BJP was a farce and under the pressure of farmers' agitation. He could have abstained if he didn't want to support the Opposition candidate."

# Sedition law should go: Sinha

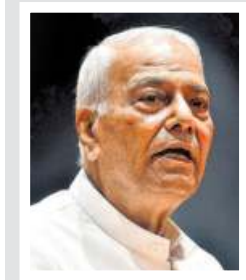
## Opposition Presidential nominee seeks support in Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh

SHUBHOMOY SIKDAR RAIPUR

Opposition Presidential candidate Yashwant Sinha on Friday batted for repealing the colonial-era sedition law. Mr. Sinha, who was in the Chhattisgarh capital to campaign for the July 18 election, said that such a law had no place in the country.

He was replying to a question on the misuse of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code [that defines sedition as bringing or attempting to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government and criminalises it, even attracting a life imprisonment for the violation].

"124A should go and I believe that most people would agree with me that it should no longer be a part of our legal system. This is a colonial-era law that should be repealed. However, a Presi-



**[The provision] 124A should go and I believe that most people would agree with me that it should no longer be a part of our legal system. This is a colonial-era law that should be repealed.**

YASHWANT SINHA Opposition Presidential candidate

dent can only advise the government and can't repeal the law himself/herself," he said to a question on the remedial measures he would take if he got elected.

### Numbers favourable

The numbers look favourable for Mr. Sinha in Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh. The party has two Lok Sabha and four Rajya Sabha MPs, apart from 71 MLAs in the Assembly, giving the Opposition candidate a clear edge over NDA's Droupadi Murmu. Ms. Murmu has the sup-

port of the BJP's nine Lok Sabha MPs, one Rajya Sabha MP, apart from 14 MLAs. The Janta Congress Chhattisgarh and the Bahujan Samaj Party, which have five MLAs between them, have also pledged support to Ms. Murmu.

Asked if Ms. Murmu's tribal identity would hamper her chances in a predominantly tribal State like Chhattisgarh, Mr. Sinha said that for him it was a battle of ideology rather than identity. To another question on the outgoing President Ram

Nath Kovind, Mr. Sinha said the latter's appointment did not necessarily benefit the Dalits.

The former Union Minister also reminded the gathering of his association with Chhattisgarh as he got married in Bhillai six decades ago. He made light of his wife Neelima Sinha's earlier remark that the NDA candidate was a good choice. "It's gracious of her [Ms. Sinha] to call the NDA candidate good and I also agree that she is good. But the question here is who is a better candidate," he said, evoking laughter.

Mr. Sinha came down heavily on the Centre for misusing the probe agencies, mainly the Enforcement Directorate, for vendetta against political opponents. He expressed fears that those parties who earlier endorsed his candidature and later made a U-turn, did so under pressure from the ED.

# Celebrated diplomat Satinder Lambah passes away at 81

## He worked to normalise ties between India and Pakistan

SUHASINI HAIDAR NEW DELHI

Throughout his career as a diplomat both before and after retirement from government, Satinder K. Lambah ("Sati" to most), who passed away on Thursday in New Delhi at the age of 81, carried a legacy of special relationships with each country he served in, but it was his engagement with Pakistan that lasted the longest, and saw the biggest breakthroughs, when he was Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's special envoy (2005-2014). In a message, Mr. Singh called Mr. Lambah "one of the most outstanding members of the Indian Foreign Service," who had worked with "utmost devotion to normalise India-Pakistan relations."

"Grieved at the passing away of Ambassador Sati Lambah. He was one of our most distinguished diplomats and a real mentor to the generations that came after him," External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar wrote on Twitter.

Mr. Lambah was born in Peshawar in 1941, and like his wife Nina, who hailed



Satinder Lambah

from Lahore, held links to his birthplace dear. During his time in the Indian Foreign Service, Mr. Lambah had served as India's Deputy High Commissioner (1978-81) and High Commissioner (1992-95) to Pakistan as well as the Joint Secretary (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran).

Those years, and the friendships he made across the border served as the base for his work on the India-Pakistan backchannel for Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf and PM Singh, which worked on a draft of the "Four Step Formula" that could have led to a resolution on Jammu and Kashmir.

While the draft never

came to fruition, especially after the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks and Pakistan's refusal to bring the perpetrators to justice, derailed the process, many other initiatives between India and Pakistan: the trans-Kashmir LoC bus, trade, liberalisation of visas, holding of cricket matches marked the most successful period in ties between the two countries in recent decades.

Mr. Lambah was also part of the team that opened India's Embassy in Dhaka after Bangladesh's liberation. As PM Atal Behari Vajpayee's special envoy on Afghanistan (2001-2002), he flew aboard the first Indian Airforce plane into Kabul along with then Charge d'Affaires Gautam Mukhopadhyaya to reopen the Indian mission after Taliban rule ended. "The quickness and agility with which we reopened our embassy in Kabul and responded to requests for support from the Northern Alliance government that was still to be put in place was really due to Mr. Lambah's sharp political instincts," Mr. Mukhopadhyaya said.

# Congress wants flawed GST to be replaced

## 'Complex scheme has wrecked the economy'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Asserting that the present Goods and Services Tax (GST) structure has "wrecked the economy," former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram said on Friday that it needs to be scrapped and replaced with a simplified GST 2.0.

Addressing a joint press conference with Congress communications chief Jai Ram Ramesh on the fifth anniversary of the GST's launch, Mr. Chidambaram said the indirect tax, in its present form, had led to a complete breakdown of trust between the Centre and the States and destroyed the micro, medium and small enterprises sector that provides 90 per cent of the jobs. Its complexities had forced the government to "change the rules every two days".

The Congress also demanded consultations with all stakeholders and an all-party meeting to work out a new simple law. "You have to have a single low rate. The low over, that is GST," Mr. Chidambaram said.

"It has to be a single low rate, that is a starting point.

If you make an error at the starting point, your entire travel on the path will be wrong. So let us scrap this GST, let's go back to the drawing board and start with a single low rate. Then let's work out the further steps," he added.

Noting that there were serious problems about the tax levied by two authorities - the Centre and States - the former Finance Minister said his party completely rejected the current GST regime.

"The GST had serious birth defects. In the last five years, these defects have only become worse and all those touched by GST have been seriously injured," Mr. Chidambaram said, adding, "the skewed formula on voting rights of the Centre and the States has been used by the Centre to push through decisions that are bitterly opposed by the States including, privately, by BJP-ruled States".

Mr. Ramesh added, "The GST Council is functioning like an extension of the Prime Minister's Office. There is bulldozer politics outside and there is bulldozer inside the Council."

# DRDO carries out test flight of autonomous UAV

## It was developed in Bengaluru unit

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Friday successfully carried out the maiden test flight of a new Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), an autonomous Flying Wing Technology Demonstrator, from the Aeronautical Test Range, Chitradurga, Karnataka.

"Operating in a fully autonomous mode, the aircraft exhibited a perfect flight, including take-off, way point navigation and a smooth touchdown," DRDO said. "This flight marks a major milestone in terms of proving critical technologies towards the development of future unmanned aircraft and is significant step towards self-reliance in strategic defence technologies."

It is a reduced sized autonomous aircraft and is proving various technologies for autonomous aircraft to be built in future, a DRDO official explained. The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) is powered by a small turbofan engine.

The engine is Russian TRDD-50MT originally designed for cruise missiles. "A

# Mamata softens stand on Presidential election

## BJP could have talked to us, she says

SHIV SAHAY SINGH KOLKATA

Observing that Droupadi Murmu has a higher chance of winning the Presidential election, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday said that the consensus candidate is always better for the high office of President of India.

"If we had an idea about their (Bharatiya Janata Party's) candidate, we could have discussed at the all-party meeting.... Though the contest is on, Droupadi Murmu's chances are better... They have more numbers because of the developments in Maharashtra," Ms. Banerjee said during an interaction with journalists.

She said that she has "sentiments" for women but does not judge people on the basis of their gender.

Asked whether there was any scope of reconsidera-



Mamata Banerjee

tion, the CM said that whatever Opposition parties decide, she has to abide by it. Ms. Banerjee said that when the BJP leadership approached, they only asked about our suggestion and did not inform us of their choice.

The election will be held on July 18 and the counting of votes, if required, will be held on July 21, ahead of the end of President Ram Nath Kovind's term on July 24.

# 'India's nuclear policy reflects past ideology'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) chairperson Justice Arun Kumar Mishra (retd.) on Friday said India's policy on nuclear weapons was a manifestation of its past ideology.

He was addressing the last day of the conference 'Human Rights in Indian Culture and Philosophy'.

Justice Mishra said Indian civilisational ethos was

"blessed with the power of assimilation of different streams of ideas and faiths, as we want to improve and not impose our culture upon others, which may amount to violation of human rights," an NHRC statement said.

He said the world was today facing the threat of destructive weapons, the use of which only benefitted the manufacturers of the weapons.

# India asks Pakistan to release 536 fishermen held in its custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

India on Friday called on Pakistan to release and repatriate 536 Indian fishermen and three civilian prisoners who have completed their jail-term and whose nationality has been confirmed. Pakistan has been asked to provide immediate consular access to 105 fishermen and 20 civilian prisoners who have been in Pakistan's custody and are believed to be Indians, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

India made the request in the context of the exchange of the lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen by the two countries as part of a practice to do so on January 1 and July 1 every calendar year under the framework of a 2008 agreement. The MEA said India handed over a list of 309 Pakistani civilian prisoners and 95 fishermen in India's custody to Pakistan. Pakistan has shared lists of 49 civilian prisoners and 633 fishermen in its custody, the ministry said.

Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited. Notice Inviting Tender. Tender No. 222313/02025. Scope of Work: Transport & Customs Clearance (CHA) of Paper/Board in containers for export through Chennai/Kattupalli/Ernoor/Tuticorin/Cochin Ports from TNPL Unit-1 at Kagitapuram and Unit-2, Mondipatti.

The Kerala State Women's Development Corporation Ltd. Pre Bid Meeting and Extension of E tender dated 13.06.2022. KSWDC/P5/SHE PAD/General/2019-2022. Dated 30.06.2022.

Bureau of Investment Promotion. Notice Inviting Bid. Bids for Procurement of Services of PR Partner for Industries Department, Government of Rajasthan are invited from interested bidders upto 2.30 PM of 08.07.2022.

Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Prasaran Nigam Limited. Notice Inviting e-Bids. Proc-III/IB-02/2022-23/BN-9015002211 to BN-9015002212 and Proc-III/IB-03/2022-23 BN-9016002212.

Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited. Notice Inviting Tender. Tender No. 222313/01856. Material Description: Procurement of Pigment Dyes for Paper Machine #1, 2 & 3. a) Violet Dye b) Blue Dye.

Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram. Tender Notice. Competitive E-Tenders are invited LED street lighting system in highways, main roads, and selected minor roads.

Government of Tamil Nadu. Namakkal Municipality. Tender Notice. Form of contract: Item rate (Two Cover System). Bids are invited by the Commissioner, Namakkal Municipality for his authorized person for Construction of New Bus Stand at Muthalaipatti survey no 306/1,306/2 & 307 in Namakkal Municipality at an estimate cost-Rs. 1950.00 lakhs under I&A fund 2021-2022.

Bharat Coking Coal Limited. Notice. All the tenders\* issued by Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCLL) for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of BCLL www.bcclweb.in.

Government of India. Department of Space. CMG, SDSC - SHAR SRIHARIKOTA - 524124. Brief E-TENDER NOTICE : CORRIGENDUM-3E & 5A. No:SHAR:CMG:CIVIL:MAINT:EP-T03(B)&05 (A)/22-23. Dt: 30.06.2022.

Karur City Municipal Corporation. Tender Notice. Form of contract: Item rate (Two cover system). Bids are invited in work for the Infrastructure and Amenities Fund 2021-22 detailed below.

Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd. Tender Notice. Form of contract: Item rate (Two cover system). Bids are invited in work for the Infrastructure and Amenities Fund 2021-22 detailed below.

Office of the Additional Chief Engineer (Project) PHED Bharatpur. Tender Notice No. 02/2022-23. On behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan, online tender are hereby invited from eligible bidders for NIT no. 02/2022-23 for the work of "Water Supply Scheme of 190 Villages of Rajahera & Dholpur Block of District Dholpur from Lift Irrigation cum Drinking Water Project for providing FHTCs including 10-year O&M after defect liability period of one year on percentage rate basis single point responsibility turn-key contract under Jal Jeevan Mission."

# How delisting is a ticking political time bomb in northern Chhattisgarh

With the next Assembly elections just about a year away, the drive towards delisting of converted tribals has attained great political significance in the State

SHUBHOMOY SIKDAR  
RAIPUR

During a recent visit to Chhattisgarh's Jashpur, Chief Minister Bhpesh Baghel was asked about the delisting of tribals who have converted to other religions, primarily Christianity – an issue that has been festering in the State since the beginning of this year. A number of rallies have been held in Jashpur in recent months to protest against tribals who have converted, but still avail benefits of the Scheduled Tribe provisions.

Mr. Baghel sought to put the ball in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s court, saying that the campaign for delisting was being run by the BJP and since the party is in power at the Centre, it should initiate a constitutional amendment if it means business rather than

“hold rallies in Jashpur”. While the issue of delisting of Christian tribals in order to deny them reservation benefits has gained momentum nationally since the beginning of this year, the question assumes greater significance in a district like Jashpur that has 67% tribal population, most of whom hail from the Oraon tribe and a majority of whom are converts to Christianity from several generations ago.

The issue has assumed political significance in the light of the fact that the entire northern belt of Surguja had voted en masse for the Congress in the 2018 assembly elections, forcing the BJP to draw a blank in all the 14 seats there. With the next Assembly elections just about a year away, the drive towards delisting of convert-



**Key issue:** The drive towards delisting of converted tribals may split the 32% tribal votes in the State. \*PTI

ed tribals may split the 32% tribal votes in the State, which is not good news for the ruling Congress party, admits its leaders privately.

**Bhagat, face of protests**  
Ganesh Ram Bhagat, a former State minister and the national convenor of Janjati Sur-

tract that shares borders with Jharkhand and Odisha, is Mr. Bhagat's home turf and hence, crucial from his individual standpoint too, according to those in the BJP.

## SPECIAL

“We will not sit quietly till the demands are met. If the Christians do not follow our tribal cultures and traditions, do not worship the gods that we do, how can they be counted as tribals and keep on taking the reservation benefits?” he asks.

However, such assertions have sparked fears among the Christians, says Yakub Kujur, a former college professor and member of the Jashpur Vikas Samiti that works for the rights of the tribals and the displaced. He also says that despite the

conversion, his family and other fellow Christians follow many tribal customs and traditions.

It is to be noted that it was also in Jashpur, where the first Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram was founded in 1952 by Ramakant Keshav Deshpande (also known as Balasaheb Deshpande), an official of the Odisha State Department of Tribal Welfare, with the support of the then undivided Madhya Pradesh government [led by Congress' Ravi Shankar Shukla] and the RSS.

## Ghar Wapasi Abhiyaan

The turf-war over the years has only intensified. More recently, the region was the main hub of a Ghar Wapasi Abhiyaan in Chhattisgarh's tribal hub, with the members of the Jashpur royal family, particularly the now

deceased BJP leader Dilip Singh Judeo, playing a leading role in the campaign. During his lifetime, he had claimed to have reconverted thousands of Christian tribals back to Hinduism.

Since his death in 2013, there has been a clamp down on such activities.

“It is common knowledge that the Christians do not vote for us and hence if they are delisted, it will only help us electorally. However, there is the larger question of other tribals being denied the benefits meant for them. Christians can no longer be termed backward,” says an ex-MLA on condition of anonymity.

Mr. Kujur, however, feels that delisting will have far-reaching consequences and it does not merely concern reservation benefits. “Delisting may also mean that we

won't be counted as tribals and that means de-scheduling Fifth Schedule of the Constitution that deals with the administration and control of Scheduled Areas as well as of Scheduled Tribes residing in any State other than the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram,” he says.

Mr. Bhagat says that the animist beliefs and worshipping of nature by the tribals are closer to Sanatana Dharma than Christianity.

After having organised several rallies at the district level, Mr. Bhagat's JSM now wants to take the issue to each and every block of Surguja and later Bastar, another tribal belt in South Chhattisgarh. He distances himself from BJP party and says he is only working for tribal rights and “anyone was free to benefit from it”.

## India is world's pharmacy: Mandaviya

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Pharmacopoeia is important to develop a *Swasthya* and *Samrudh* Bharat, to maintain standard quality of our medical products – vaccines, medicines, equipment, etc. and to keep an eye on the effect of these medicines on patients, said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday. The Minister released the 9th edition of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) at Vigyan Bhawan and said the country should work towards getting the IP appreciated worldwide.

Stating that India had become the “pharmacy of the world” by specialising in generic medicine formulation and manufacturing, and by supplying medicines globally, the Minister said there is a need to strengthen research in the pharmaceutical sector.

# Modi holds talks with Putin

The leaders discuss Ukraine, bilateral trade in agricultural goods, and fertilizers

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, where the leaders discussed Ukraine and the latest developments in the global commodities market. The talks came days after Mr. Modi participated in the G-7 summit in Germany.

“The two leaders reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken during President Putin's visit to India in December 2021. In particular, they exchanged ideas on how bilateral trade in agricultural goods, fertilizer and pharma products could be encouraged further,” an official press release said.

The two sides discussed the latest developments in the Ukraine crisis, with Mr. Modi reiterating “India's long-standing position in fa-



**Deepening dialogue:** Vladimir Putin and Narendra Modi had met in New Delhi in December 2021. \*FILE PHOTO

avour of dialogue and diplomacy.” Friday's discussion showed a continuum of diplomatic consultation that has intensified over the last few days which also witnessed heavy warfare between Ukraine and Russia.

According to a Russian statement on the conversation, President Putin accused the Western powers of obstructing a peaceful settle-

ment of the Ukrainian crisis. Diplomatic sources indicated that India is closely following the course of the war in Ukraine, especially the latest Russian strikes in Odessa, and Kyiv.

The Indian announcement of the telephone conversation said that the “leaders also discussed global issues, including the state of the international energy and food markets”. Despite West-

ern objections, India has emerged as a major buyer of Russian crude oil in the last four months since Russia invaded Ukraine.

The latest estimates suggest that Russian oil supplies to India in June reached an average of 1.2 million barrels per day. That apart, Russia has emerged as a major partner for India as New Delhi battles the “commodities shock”, that is the fallout of the combination of war and the punitive western sanctions on Russia.

In order to prevent a fertilizer shortfall, India reached out to Russia earlier this year. According to Russian news outlet, Sputnik, India imported 3,50,000 tonnes of diammonium phosphate from Russia between April and July. India's fertilizer requirement is expected to grow as the monsoon rains will be accompanied by the kharif sowing season.

# Lakhs of devotees throng Puri to attend annual Rath Yatra

200 special trains run for the convenience of pilgrims

SATYASUNDAR BARIK  
BHUBANESWAR

Lakhs of devotees thronged the coastal town of Puri to witness the annual Rath Yatra with three decorated chariots of sibling deities Lord Balabhadra, Lord Jagannath and Devi Subhadra towed in front of the 12th century Shree Jagannath Temple on Friday.

For the first time in two years, devotees turned up for Rath Yatra at Puri as COVID-19 scare had forced the State government to organise the annual festival restricting participation below 500 people including priests in 2020 and 2021.

As not all devotees can enter the temple on normal days, three deities, it is said, are taken out once in a year to give *darshan* to all. Ministry of Railways had



**Annual procession:** Temple priests and devotees preparing for the Jagannath yatra in Puri. \*SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

announced that it will run over 200 special trains during the yatra for smooth travel and convenience of the pilgrims.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Governor Ganesh Lal, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Chief Justice of Odisha

High Court S. Muralidhar towed the chariots.

In view of congregation of a massive crowd, 180 police platoons led by 1,000 trained officers were deployed for traffic control and to prevent any untoward incidents including attempts of sabotage.

# Active COVID-19 cases rise to 1,07,189 in country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

India added 17,070 new coronavirus infections on Friday, taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 4,34,69,234, while the active cases increased to 1,07,189, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The death toll climbed to 5,25,139 with 23 new fatalities. The active cases comprise 0.25% of the total infections, while the national

COVID-19 recovery rate was 98.55%, the ministry said. The daily positivity rate was recorded at 3.40%, while the weekly positivity rate was 3.59%, according to the ministry. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 4,28,36,906.

According to the ministry, 197.74 crore doses of vaccine have been administered in the country so far, under the nationwide vaccination drive.

# Toll in Manipur landslide rises to 21

50 bodies still remain buried, says officials

IROYAIMA LAITHANGBAM  
IMPHAL

The death toll in the massive landslide at Tupul, in Noney district of Manipur, on Thursday has increased to 21, officials sources said.

As many as 13 bodies were recovered on Friday. Officials said that over 50 bodies are believed to be buried under the debris. Manipur Chief Minister N.

Biren, who visited the devastation site on Friday for the second time, said that a sophisticated machine would arrive shortly from Ladakh that would help retrieve missing bodies.

The State government had announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh each for the family members of the deceased and ₹50,000 each for the family members of the injured.

The rescued victims had been admitted to the Public Health Centre, Tupul. However, three persons who

had developed health complications were rushed to Imphal for better treatment.

Officials said that rescue teams are finding it difficult to reach the areas as vehicles cannot ply along the slippery and muddy hill roads. Search operations were suspended the whole night as there was no electricity in Tupul areas.

The bodies found on Friday were of ten Army personnel and a railway employee. At least five tribal villagers are missing. Workers are trying to dig out por-

tions of the debris, which has blocked the flow of water in Ijei river, to prevent flooding of low lying villages.

The landslide has raised serious questions about the advisability of completing the railway lines connecting Manipur to Jiri station in Assam. The entire rail line will be located in the hills. The Manipur hills are of loose earth and rains always trigger landslides and mud slides, disrupting vehicle traffic on State and national highways.

# Dhankhar appoints V-C for Rabindra University

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has announced the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor for Rabindra Bharati University (RBU), even as several legislations replacing him as Chancellor of State-run universities are awaiting his consent.

The West Bengal Legislative Assembly earlier this month passed several legislation replacing the Govern-

nor with the Chief Minister as the Chancellor of universities. The development has triggered a fresh controversy in the State.

“WB Guv Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar as Chancellor has appointed Dr. Mahua Mukherjee, Professor, Dept. of Dance, Rabindra Bharati University, as Vice Chancellor Rabindra Bharati University in terms of section 9(1) (b) of the Rabindra Bharati Act, 1981,” Mr. Dhankhar tweeted on Thursday.

THE CROSSWORD

13598

To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site @ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>

**Across**

1 In other words, a moist European plant (4,2,1,4)  
 7 Nothing much, first downward trend (3)  
 9 Botherome without right way of doing things (5)  
 10 Master control, block capital (9)  
 11 Union member comfortable in prison (9)  
 12 Dig into some strudel, very tasty (5)  
 13 Approval to review communist reformer (7)

**Down**

1 Capital stay, one supports protein rich food (4,4)  
 2 Talks about right sides and whirlpools (8)  
 3 Paper goes topless, it's a problem (5)  
 4 A friend's hurt, being exposed as a greenhorn (7)  
 5 Small-town ceramic, perhaps to be removed (7)  
 6 Sing about doctor made exercise equipment (9)  
 7 Doubled increase of fraud (6)  
 8 Moderate check on Pound (6)  
 14 Truly assumed charge and gave a speech (9)  
 16 Arranged guides to go with an invocation (5,3)  
 17 It accommodates a subject not belonging to any country (8)  
 19 Broadcast over our PM shortly coming up in country (7)  
 20 Composition with one part of Tin and two parts of Tantalum (7)  
 21 Bones formed by vehicle discharge (6)  
 22 Fungal attack on door frame, right from below (3-3)  
 25 Place to rest, very big in Erode (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

**Solution to puzzle 13597**

C	S	R	S	I	D								
F	L	O	C	K	R	A	T	I	F	I	E	D	
A	M	I	A	E	E	R	E						
T	H	A	L	L	S	M	A	L	L	A	R	D	
W	T	L	S	L	L	I	I						
A	C	S	O	L	T	E	M	A	I	L	L	O	T
H	S	R	E	N	N	O	H						
E	L	U	C	I	D	A	T	I	N	G			
E	A	R	A	G	A	S	D	A	M	P	I	S	H
A	H	R	E	L	E	O	P	O	S	T	E		
S	T	Y	R	E	N	R	I	P	O	S	T	E	
H	T	A	L	I	P	A	S						
C	H	I	N	A	M	A	N	E	L	I	T	E	
M	S	G	T	D									

**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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

FAITH

## Nectar personified

Abirami Bhattar refers to Ambal as nectar. Nectar is said to confer immortality on those who consume it. When the ocean was churned, Lord Siva took Halahala poison. Ancient Tamil Nadu was classified into different regions, each with its own climate and vegetation. Dry, desert-like areas came under the classification known as paalai. In Silappadikaram, there is a verse which says that in the paalai region, hunters worshipped Goddess Kotravai. The verse says that the Goddess Herself consumed the Halahala poison, said M.A. Manickavelu in a discourse. The devas were afraid of the poison that came from the ocean. They took nectar, thinking it would keep them alive forever. But it did not. But the Goddess took the poison, and continues to remain untroubled by the poison. She is indestructible, and She is the One who blesses even the devas, who are destined to die and to be reborn. That is why Abirami Bhattar says that She is nectar personified.

The pancha bhutas constitute Her divine body. One of the names of Ambal in Lalitha Sahasranama is Panchabhuthesi. Lord Siva dances in the forest. Even after the world is destroyed, this Cosmic dance goes on. This dance is known as Pandaranga. Siva gladly bears on His head the feet of Ambal. The idea that the beloved of a deity could put her feet on her Lord's head, is seen in an incident in poet Jayadeva's life. He penned a verse, where he said that Radha, the Gopika, put her feet on Krishna's head. Then thinking it was sinful to write such a verse, Jayadeva abandoned the verse. But when he returned from his bath, he found the same verse put back. Lord Krishna had come as Jayadeva and had written the verse again, showing that He accepted the idea of Radha placing her feet on His head.

MARKET WATCH

	01-07-2022	% CHANGE
Sensex	52,908	-0.21
US Dollar	78.94	0.15
Gold	51,458	1.75
Brent oil	110.88	-3.55

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	677.90	5.85
Apollo Hosp	3736.15	52.65
Asian Paints	2773.15	77.95
Axis Bank	643.95	7.15
Bajaj Auto	3624.60	-82.00
Bajaj Finserv	11322.55	390.80
Bajaj Finance	5614.40	213.90
Bharti Airtel	673.45	-11.50
BPCIL	318.35	9.95
Britannia Ind	3584.35	117.95
Cipla	949.30	32.10
Coal India	183.25	-2.35
Divis Lab	3637.55	7.15
Dr Reddys Lab	4385.90	-7.90
Eicher Motors	2782.80	-11.55
Grasim Ind	1347.25	26.50
HCL Tech	975.35	2.10
HDFC	2210.55	39.70
HDFC Bank	1353.75	5.75
HDFC Life	565.45	15.45
Hero MotoCorp	2763.80	44.10
Hindalco	341.15	2.50
Hind Unilever	2282.35	51.75
ICICI Bank	703.90	-3.30
IndusInd Bank	807.20	12.85
Infosys	1479.40	17.50
ITC	284.35	10.85
JSW Steel	578.85	14.35
Kotak Bank	1667.75	6.65
L&T	1572.15	13.90
M&M	1107.35	14.20
Maruti Suzuki	8402.60	-68.15
Nestle India Ltd.	17795.05	325.05
NTPC	140.65	-2.25
ONGC	131.05	-20.50
PowerGrid Corp	206.50	-5.40
Reliance Ind	2408.70	-186.95
SBI Life	1099.85	18.25
State Bank	466.85	0.95
Shree Cement	19213.80	204.10
Sun Pharma	829.25	-1.35
Tata Consumer		
Products Ltd.	719.55	13.20
Tata Motors	412.70	0.90
Tata Steel	872.85	5.80
TCS	3315.10	48.00
Tech Mahindra	1010.70	10.70
Titan	1946.20	4.95
UltraTech Cement	5691.70	84.40
UPL	643.50	11.10
Wipro	422.00	5.95

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on July 01

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	78.85	79.17
Euro	82.39	82.73
British Pound	94.98	95.37
Japanese Yen (100)	58.30	58.54
Chinese Yuan	11.77	11.82
Swiss Franc	82.13	82.47
Singapore Dollar	56.52	56.76
Canadian Dollar	61.03	61.28
Malaysian Ringgit	17.87	17.97
Australian Dollar	53.56	53.78

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



June power consumption grows 17.2% on heat

NEW DELHI  
Power consumption grew by 17.2% y-o-y to 134.13 billion units in June, amid severe heat and spurt in economic activities. Consumption in June 2021 stood at 114.48 billion units, as per Power Ministry data. Moreover, peak power demand met remained at an all-time high of 209.80 GW (on June 8). PTI

Va Tech Wabag resumes Russia client's operations

CHENNAI  
City-based Va Tech Wabag has resumed operations for its client in Russia, said Rajiv Mittal, CMD and Group CEO. "On Thursday, we received a communication from Amur Gas Chemical Complex LLC (AGCC) to resume the services and works under the contract in the region," he said in an interview. "Due to the geopolitical situation, there was a stoppage of work for two-and-a-half months," he added.

SBI's gold loan portfolio crosses ₹1 lakh crore

MUMBAI  
State Bank of India's (SBI) gold-loan portfolio has crossed the ₹1 lakh-crore mark for the first time, chairman Dinesh Khara said. "Last week, we crossed ₹1 lakh-crore portfolio in gold loans for the first time. In the first quarter of the current year, we have seen much better growth as compared to what we have achieved in the past. I expect in the current year we should be in a position to grow well in this segment," he said. PTI

Crisil reduces FY23 GDP growth estimate to 7.3%

MUMBAI  
Domestic rating agency Crisil on Friday lowered its real GDP growth forecast for India to 7.3% in FY23 from 7.8% estimated earlier. It attributed the downward revision to higher oil prices, slowing of export demand and high inflation. This is in line with the RBI's estimate of 7.2% of real GDP growth for this fiscal year. Crisil said there are a slew of negatives such as high commodity prices as global growth projections get lowered. PTI

# Govt. hikes duty on gold to cushion rupee

Centre raises tariff on gold to 15%; imposes cess on export of crude oil, fuels to check 'windfall' profits

VIKAS DHOOT  
NEW DELHI  
In a bid to curb a surge in gold imports and check "windfall gains" being made by producers of crude oil and petroleum products, the Centre has raised the import duty on the yellow metal to 15%, from 10.75%, and levied fresh taxes on the export of fuels, including petrol and ATF, as well as on the domestic sale of crude oil.

The higher gold import levy is expected to help rein in India's rising current account deficit and ease the pressure on the rupee. As much as 107 tonnes of gold were imported in May and imports have been 'significant' in June as well, the Finance Ministry said, stressing that the surge in gold imports was putting pres-



Costly glitter: A surge in gold imports has added pressure on India's current account deficit and also the rupee. • FILE PHOTO

sure on India's current account deficit. Foreign trade data show India's gold imports surged almost ninefold in May to surpass \$6 billion, from \$677.7 million in May 2021. A cess of ₹23,250 per tonne has been levied on crude oil in the face of the elevated global prices that were leading to windfall profits for domestic oil producers who sell their output at

international parity prices even to domestic refineries. This cess would, however, not apply to imported crude and would have no adverse impact on domestic fuel prices, the Ministry said.

A special additional excise duty has also been imposed on exports of petroleum products at ₹6 per litre on petrol and aviation turbine fuel (ATF), and ₹13 per litre on diesel as exports have become more attractive for more domestic refineries.

'Boost local availability' Exporters would now also be required to declare at the time of exports that 50% of the outbound quantity of fuel has been or will be supplied in the domestic market during the current financial year. "These measures will

ensure domestic availability of the petroleum products," the Ministry stressed.

"The higher duties on inbound gold shipments will slightly reduce the outflow on account of gold imports, and help provide stability" to the rupee-dollar exchange rate, said Abhishek Jain, partner (indirect tax) at KPMG India. "The change in taxation on petroleum products will help reduce the recent uptick in the demand-supply gap," he added.

The cess on crude would not be levied for small producers with annual output of less than 2 million barrels in the previous financial year. Also, to incentivise additional production, the levy would be waived on a firm's crude oil output that was in excess of last year's output.

# PMI hints manufacturing slowed to a 9-month low

Prices drag confidence to 27-month low

VIKAS DHOOT  
NEW DELHI  
Price pressures dampened growth in India's manufacturing sector to the slowest pace in nine months, with the survey-based Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) sliding to 53.9 in June, from 54.6 in May. Worries about inflation also dragged business confidence sentiment down to a 27-month.



vated inflation," she noted.

"Factory orders and production rose for the twelfth straight month... but in both cases the rates of expansion eased to nine-month lows," S&P Global said in a note.

A reading of 50 on the PMI indicates no change in the level of activity from the previous month.

Export orders rise New export orders rose for the third successive month in June and employment rose for the fourth successive month, albeit at a slight pace. While stronger client demand sustained order books, growth was curbed by acute inflationary pressures as per respondents' inputs in the PMI survey.

The manufacturing sector displayed encouraging resilience on the face of acute price pressures, rising interest rates, rupee depreciation and a challenging geopolitical landscape, said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at S&P Global Market Intelligence Unit.

"Yet, there was a broad-based slowdown in growth across a number of measures such as factory orders, production, exports, input buying and employment as clients and businesses restricted spending amid ele-

'Output unlikely to rise' Although the outlook for the Indian manufacturing industry remained positive midway through 2022, sentiment slipped to a 27-month low, S&P Global said, with less than 4% of panelists forecasting output growth in the year ahead. The vast majority expect no change in output from present levels a year on, citing inflation as the key concern.

The rate of input cost inflation faced by producers remained historically high, but was the slowest in three months, as were the pass-through of costs through higher charges to consumers. Firms reported increases for a wide range of inputs, including chemicals, electronics, energy, metals and textiles.

"There was positive news regarding supply chains, with the latest results showing the first shortening of input lead times since the onset of COVID-19. This seemed to have curbed the upward pressure on input costs, with purchase prices and output charges increasing at sharp but slower rates," Ms. De Lima noted.

"Companies nevertheless remained very concerned about inflation, a key factor that dragged down business confidence," she concluded.

# Carmakers post wholesales growth as chip shortage eases

Maruti Suzuki reports 5.7% increase in June total wholesales

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Major carmakers including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors on Friday reported growth in passenger vehicle wholesales in June as pandemic-led semiconductor shortage woes showed gradual signs of easing.

Other manufacturers, Kia India, MG Motor India and Skoda Auto India also reported robust sales growth.

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) reported a 5.7% increase in total wholesales to 1,55,857 units in June. The company's domestic sales in-



Domestic sales grew 21% to 49,001 units last month, HMIL added.

"With the semiconductor situation showing signs of easing out, the sales numbers have again started showing a positive trend," HMIL Director (Sales, Marketing and Service) Tarun Garg said. The newly introduced Hyundai Venue had also received good customer response, he added.

Tata Motors reported domestic passenger vehicle sales growth of 87% at 45,197 units, from 24,110 units in the year-earlier period.

# Govt. recasts Banks Board Bureau to FSIB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Centre has transformed the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) into Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) by making some amendments.

Guidelines for selection of general managers and directors of public sector general insurance companies have been made part of FSIB, sources said.

The amendments were required as the Delhi High Court in its order last year said the BBB is not a competent body to select the general managers and directors of state-owned general insurers.

# Maruti Suzuki to strengthen SUV portfolio, says Srivastava

Automaker targets 50% market share in the segment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. (MSIL) will strengthen its product offerings in the fast-growing Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) segment to increase its market share in the passenger vehicle segment, a top official said.

"Currently, we are lagging others in SUV offerings," Shashank Srivastava, senior executive director, marketing and sales, told reporters. "We have only two models out of 48 SUVs in the country and we need to strengthen it."

In the non-SUV segment, MSIL enjoys a market share of 67%. The company's entry-level SUV Brezza holds a market share of 22%. In the B-segment, comprising SUVs and MPVs, it has a 20%



Shashank Srivastava

market share. MSIL gradually plans to increase the market share of the entire SUV portfolio to 50%.

"Going forward, the focus will be more on the SUV segment with more new models as new segments are emerging with the increase in sales volumes. For instance, the lifestyle SUV market is emerging," he said.

He also said that the country's largest carmaker would be introducing a hybrid vehicle in two variants - mild and strong. The cars would be produced at Toyota Kirloskar Motor's Bidadi plant in Karnataka. The vehicle would be unveiled during the third week of July and mass production would commence by August.

"The upcoming hybrid SUV will be a game changer. We may discontinue the S-Cross model at a later stage. However, we will continue to make small cars," he said.

Unveiling the new Brezza, he said it had received more than 46,000 bookings in nine days.

On chip shortage, he said the situation had improved with MSIL's plants operating at about 93-95% capacity.

# Cotton season expected to close with lower stocks

'Sector facing demand, supply curbs'

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA  
COIMBATORE

The current cotton season is expected to end on September 30 with 39.27 lakh bales as closing stock.

The Committee on Cotton Production and Consumption had estimated the closing stock at almost 41.27 lakh bales at its meeting held in May.

After a meeting on Friday, the Committee said imports were expected to be 15 lakh bales, production 315.43 lakh bales and opening stock 71.84 lakh bales.

Stock availability With this, the total availability for the season was estimated at 402.27 lakh bales.

On the consumption side, textile mills (non-SSI units) were likely to consume 285 lakh bales, against the Committee's May estimate of 289 lakh bales.



With weak demand for yarn, demand for cotton had declined, industry sources said.

Consumption by SSI (small scale industry) units were likely to be 20 lakh bales, whereas 16 lakh bales were estimated to be the non-textile consumption.

Exports were estimated at 42 lakh bales, the Committee said.

There were both supply and demand side constraints, observed an official in the Ministry of Textiles.

# GM not to sell India plant to Great Wall

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI/SHANGHAI

General Motors (GM) said on Friday it had called off the sale of a shuttered Indian plant to China's Great Wall Motor after they failed to obtain regulatory approvals, amid a tougher stance by New Delhi towards investments from Beijing.

GM struck a deal in January 2020 to sell the plant to Great Wall, with the Chinese SUV-maker expected to pay up to \$300 million as part of a broader plan to invest \$1 billion to establish a presence in India's growing car market. The agreement expired on June 30.

"We have been unable to obtain approvals within the time frame of the deal," George Svigos, ED of communications at GM International, told Reuters. The Indian government did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment.



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# Hong Kong moving from chaos to order: Xi

Chinese President hails 'one country, two systems' model, vows support for the city's new leader Lee

ANANTH KRISHNAN  
BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday said Hong Kong was "in a new stage of transitioning from chaos to order" on a rare visit to the Special Administrative Region (SAR).

July 1, 2022 marked the 25th anniversary of the former British colony's handover to China and also saw the swearing-in of new Chief Executive John Lee and his government.

Mr. Xi's visit wasn't certain until earlier this week, given Beijing's concerns over the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong, which has seen around 10,000 deaths this year and reported more than 2,000 cases on Friday. The Chinese mainland, by contrast, follows a strict "zero-COVID" policy and reported only a dozen cases on Friday. The capital Beijing, which reported no cases on Friday, like most Chinese cities requires all residents to undertake a PCR test every three days and continues to maintain strict restrictions on international travel.

Underlining this concern,



In control: Xi Jinping waving at the crowd following the swearing-in of Chief Executive John Lee in Hong Kong. ■ AFP

Mr. Xi chose not to stay in Hong Kong having arrived there on Thursday, instead taking the bullet train back to Shenzhen on the mainland, and returning once again on Friday. The Hong Kong-mainland border, which was closed during his visit, is yet to open more than two years into the pandemic with a daily quota of only a few hundred travellers allowed every day, including with mandatory two weeks' quarantine.

That Mr. Xi chose to leave the mainland for the first time in more than two years since the outbreak in Wuhan

his last visit abroad was in mid-January to Myanmar a few days before the lockdown of Wuhan - underlined the importance of the anniversary in signalling what Mr. Xi called "a new stage of transitioning from chaos to order", apparently referring to the 2019 pro-democracy protests.

## 'Tough period'

"Having gone through ups and downs, people have learned the hard way that Hong Kong must not be destabilised and cannot afford any chaos," he said.

"Enforcing the central

authorities' overall jurisdiction and upholding the SAR's high degree of autonomy are integral aspects of the same policy, and only by ensuring both can we run the SAR truly well," he said, adding that Beijing would fully back the new Hong Kong leader, Mr. Lee and the "one country, two systems" model.

A former policeman, Mr. Lee was a strong proponent of the new national security law that listed sweeping crimes for sedition, and saw the disbanding of most of Hong Kong's pro-democracy opposition parties. Beijing has also overhauled the electoral system and reduced the share of directly elected representatives in the legislature, with the majority now establishment appointees. Critics saw the changes as the most significant alterations to the "one country, two systems" model, under which China also committed to, at the time of the handover, a pathway to universal suffrage.

"Upholding national sovereignty, security and development interests is the para-

mount principle in the policy. On the basis of this prerequisite, Hong Kong and Macao maintain their capitalist system over the long run and enjoy a high degree of autonomy," he said. Mr. Xi did acknowledge Hong Kong's problems, with the economy reeling from two years of isolation and this year's COVID-19 wave, and "stressed the need to help Hong Kong young people overcome difficulties in education, employment, business start-up, and home-buying".

Mr. Xi earlier this week visited Wuhan on his way to Hong Kong and defended the country's continuing zero-COVID policy. "If China had adopted the 'herd immunity' policy or a hands-off approach, given its large population, the country would have faced unimaginable consequences," he said. "Even if there are some temporary impacts on the economy, we will not put people's lives and health in harm's way, and we must protect the elderly and the children in particular."

# At least 21 killed in Russian missile strike in Odesa region

This comes a day after Russia withdrew from Snake Island

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KYIV

Missile strikes slammed into a residential building and a recreation centre early on Friday, killing at least 21 people and wounding dozens in Ukraine's Odesa region.

Two children were among the dead and six others among the injured, Ukrainian officials said, one day after Russia abandoned positions on the Snake Island in a major setback to the Kremlin's invasion.

The missiles struck the two buildings in the town of Serhiivka about 80 km south of the Black Sea port of Odesa, which has become a strategic flashpoint in the now more than four-month-old war.

"The death toll in Odesa blast rose to 21," Sergiy Bratchuk, Odesa deputy chief of district, said. A 12-year-old boy was among the dead, he added.

The strikes were launched by aircraft that flew in from the Black Sea,



A residential building damaged by a Russian missile strike in Serhiivka, Odesa region, on Friday. ■ REUTERS

said Odesa military administration spokesman Sergiy Bratchuk.

"The worst-case scenario played out and two strategic aircraft came to the Odesa region," he said in a television interview, adding they had fired "very heavy and very powerful" missiles.

The Kremlin denied targeting civilians: "I would like to remind you of the president's words that the Rus-

sian Armed Forces do not work with civilian targets," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed a "new" chapter of "history" with the EU, after Brussels recently granted Ukraine "candidate status" in Kyiv's push to join the 27-member bloc, even if membership is likely years away. (With Reuters input)

# Australia and France seek thaw in relations

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PARIS

Australia and France opened a "new chapter" in their relations on Friday as the new Australian Prime Minister seeks to heal wounds from a secret submarine contract that infuriated France.

President Emmanuel Macron warmly shook hands with Australian premier Anthony Albanese outside the French presidential palace.

"Trust, respect and honesty matters," Mr. Albanese

told reporters. "This is how I will approach my relations" with France.

Paris responded with fury when the previous Australian government announced in September that it was cancelling a \$62 billion contract for French-made diesel-electric submarines. Instead, Australia had struck a deal with the U.S. and Britain to provide submarines powered with U.S. nuclear technology, which French leaders said was sealed behind their backs.

# 'Stop interfering in Afghanistan'

At gathering of over 3,000 clerics in Kabul, Taliban supreme leader backs sharia law

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KABUL

The Taliban's reclusive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada called on Friday for the world to stop telling them how to run Afghanistan, insisting sharia law was the only model for a successful Islamic state.

Akhundzada, who has not been filmed or photographed in public since the Taliban returned to power in August, was addressing a major gathering of religious

scholars in the Afghan capital called to rubber-stamp the hardline Islamist group's rule.

More than 3,000 clerics have gathered in Kabul since Thursday for the three-day men-only meeting, and Akhundzada's appearance had been rumoured for days - although media are barred from covering the event.

"Why is the world interfering in our affairs?" he asked in an hour-long speech broadcast by state radio.

"They say 'why don't you do this, why don't you do that?' Why does the world interfere in our work?"

Akhundzada rarely leaves Kandahar, the Taliban's birthplace and spiritual heartland, and has almost no digital footprint.

But analysts say the former sharia court judge has an iron grip on the movement and he bears the title "Commander of the Faithful".

His arrival at the meeting hall was greeted with cheers

and chants, including "Long live the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", the Taliban's name for the country.

No women are attending the clerics' meeting, but a Taliban source said this week that thorny issues such as girls' education would be discussed. Akhundzada did not mention the subject in his speech, which was confined largely to telling the faithful to strictly observe Islamic principles in life and governance.

# Thousands rally after 9 killed in Sudan protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CAIRO

Thousands took to the streets Friday in Sudan's capital, a day after nine people were killed in demonstrations against the country's ruling generals.

The U.S. and others in the international community condemned the violence in this East African nation, which has been rocked by near-weekly protests since an October 25 coup upended its fragile transition to democracy.

Sudanese military authorities have met the protesters with a deadly crackdown, which has so far killed 113 people, including 18 children.

In and near Khartoum, large funeral marches took place for some of those killed the day before, while others gathered after Friday prayers at mosques in the country's capital.

Online, photographs of the dead were posted, in some cases in an effort to identify them.

# SPORT

## LIVE TELECAST

England vs India: 5th Test, day 2, Sony Six (SD & HD) & Sony LIV, 3 p.m.

Wimbledon: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 3 p.m. onwards, SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 3.30 p.m. onwards; SS Select 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 10.30 p.m.

Formula One: British GP (Qualifying), SS Select 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 7.30 p.m.

Formula E: Marrakesh EPrix, SS Select 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 9.30 p.m.

West Indies vs Bangladesh: 1st T20I, Fan-Code, 11 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



Krunal Pandya to play for Warwickshire

BIRMINGHAM India all-rounder Krunal Pandya will play for English county Warwickshire in the Royal London Cup one-day championship from August 2-23. Krunal, elder brother of star all-rounder Hardik Pandya, has played in 19 T20Is, five ODIs and 76 List A matches scoring 2,231 runs and taking 89 wickets. ■PTI



Spurs complete £60m signing of Richarlison

LONDON Tottenham Hotspurs on Friday completed the signing of Brazil international Richarlison from Everton on a five-year deal for a fee that could reportedly rise to £60 million. Spurs will pay an initial £50 million fee with a further £10 million in performance-related bonuses. ■AFP

# Lyon, Head oversee three-day demolition of Sri Lanka

Australia erases sour memories of 2016; Mathews out with Covid

AUSTRALIA IN SL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GALLE

Spinner Nathan Lyon starred with a match haul of nine wickets as Australia wrapped up the opening Test on Friday with a crushing victory over Sri Lanka before lunch on the third day.

The hosts were bundled out for 113 in their second innings allowing the Australians to seal a 10-wicket victory in their first over back at the crease.

## Huge result

Lyon, whose five-for helped bowl out Sri Lanka for 212 in the first innings, and fellow spinner Travis Head took four wickets each to send the hosts packing before the morning was over.

It was a huge victory for Australia, who suffered a 3-0 whitewash in Sri Lanka on its last tour in 2016.

Opener Usman Khawaja (71) and Cameron Green (77) stood out in Australia's first innings effort of 321. Green put on crucial partnerships



Smiles all around: Lyon, second right, celebrates the dismissal of Sri Lanka captain Karunaratne. ■AFP

with Khawaja and then wicket-keeper-batsman Alex Carey, who made 45, to handle the spinners with aplomb.

Sri Lanka suffered a blow before play began when Angelo Mathews was ruled out due to Covid-19, with Oshada Fernando named his replacement.

Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne started strong, smashing four boundaries in the 17-run first over of the innings off Mitchell Starc. But the tables soon turned when Lyon and fellow spinner Mitchell Swepson took charge.

Wickets kept tumbling with Sri Lanka's batsmen desperately trying to hit their way out of trouble.

## First scalp

Head struck twice in his first over to claim Dinesh Chandimal - his first Test scalp - and Dhananjaya de Silva.

Opener David Warner brought an easy finish to formalities, hitting a four and a six off Ramesh Mendis to bring up the win in four balls. The second and final Test begins on July 8 at the same venue.

## SCOREBOARD

Sri Lanka - 1st innings: 212. Australia - 1st innings: Usman Khawaja c Nissanka b Vandersay 71, David Warner lbw b R. Mendis 25, Marnus Labuschagne c A. Fernando b R. Mendis 13, Steve Smith run out 6, Travis Head c b de Silva 6, Cameron Green lbw b R. Mendis 77, Alex Carey c Chandimal b R. Mendis 45, Mitchell Starc c b Vandersay 10, Pat Cummins b A. Fernando 26, Nathan Lyon (not out) 15, Mitchell Swepson b Fernando 1; Extras (b-20, lb-3, nb-1, w-2); 26; Total (in 70.5 overs): 321.

Fall of wickets: 1-47, 2-75, 3-83, 4-100, 5-157, 6-241, 7-278, 8-278, 9-319.

Sri Lanka bowling: A. Fernando 8.5-1-37-2, de Silva 5-0-8-1, Embuldeniya 15-0-73-0, R. Mendis 32-0-112-4, Vandersay 10-0-68-2.

Sri Lanka - 2nd innings: Pathum Nissanka lbw b Swepson 14, Dimuth Karunaratne c Carey b Lyon 23, Kushal Mendis c Swepson b Lyon 8, Oshada Fernando c Smith b Swepson 12, Dhananjaya de Silva lbw b Head 11, Dinesh Chandimal b Head 13, Niroshan Dickwella c Labuschagne b Lyon 3, Ramesh Mendis c Khawaja b Lyon 0, Jeffrey Vandersay b Head 8, Lasith Embuldeniya lbw b Head 0, Asitha Fernando (not out) 5; Extras

(b-10, lb-5, nb-1): 16; Total (in 22.5 overs): 113.

Fall of wickets: 1-37, 2-39, 3-59, 4-63, 5-95, 6-96, 7-97, 8-108, 9-108.

Australia bowling: Starc 2-0-23-0, Lyon 11-1-31-4, Swepson 7-0-34-2, Head 2.5-0-10-4.

Australia - 2nd innings: David Warner (not out) 10, Usman Khawaja (not out) 0; Total (for no loss in 0.4 overs): 10.

Sri Lanka bowling: R. Mendis 0.4-0-10-0.

Man-of-the-Match: Green; Australia won by 10 wickets to lead two-match series 1-0.

# Amreli expected to score in Juvenile Sprinters' Million

BENGALURU: Amreli, who has been well tuned, is expected to score in the Juvenile Sprinters' Million (1,200m), the chief event of the races to be held here on Saturday (July 2).

False rails (width about 9.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

1 SUPERVITE PLATE (DIV. II), (1,200m), rated 00 to 25, 2-30 p.m.: 1. Ozark (1) T.S. Jodha 61.5, 2. Baroness (4) Rajesh K 61, 3. Apollo Light (3) S. Saqlain 60.5, 4. Don's Den (5) G. Vivek 60.5, Mega Success (10) Ikram A 60, 6. The Omega man (2) Saddam K 59.5, 7. Jersey Legend (9) Salman K 58.5, 8. Beldona (8) Arvind K 58, 9. Zehnaaseeb (6) Darshan 56.5 and 10. Star Citizen (7) Kirtish B 54.5.

1. DON'S DEN, 2. BELDONA, 3. OZARK

2 FANTABULOUS KING PLATE (1,200m), maiden 3-y-o only, (Terms), 3-00: 1. Dedicated Boy

(3) Kiran N 56, 2. Stormy Ocean (8) Ajinkya 56, 3. Urban Borbon (1) N.S. Parmar 56, 4. Impiana (10) Vivek 54.5, 5. Inyouwbelieve (6) Trevor 54.5, 6. Peridot (7) Likith 54.5, 7. Silver Canyon (11) Akshay K 54.5, 8. Solid Power (9) Darshan 54.5, 9. Stormwatch (12) Hindu S 54.5, 10. Sweet Talk (5) K. Nazil 54.5, 11. The Sound of Music (2) Arvind K 54.5 and 12. Tripitaka (4) P.S. Chouhan 54.5.

1. INYOUWBELIEVE, 2. STORMY OCEAN, 3. TRIPITAKA

3 NAWAB M ARSHAD ALI KHAN MEMORIAL CUP (1,600m), rated 80 & above, 3-30: 1. Bellator (3) Trevor 61, 2. Taimur (1) Bhawani S 57.5, 3. Truly Epic (6) Sandesh 57.5, 4. Automatic (5) P.S. Chouhan 57, 5. Sea Of Cortez (2) P.P. Dhebe 50 and 6. The Bawaji (4) N.S. Parmar 50.

1. BELLATOR, 2. TAIMUR

4 JUVENILE SPRINTERS' MILLION (1,200m), 3-y-o only, (Terms), 4-00: 1. Ballerina (2) Suraj 57, 2. O Hansini (5) Trevor 57, 3. Ay (3) N.S. Parmar 55.5, 4. Kay Star (6) Ashhad A 55.5, 5. Amreli (4) Sandesh 54 and 6. Artemis Ignacia (1) Akshay K 54.

1. AMRELI, 2. O HANSINI

5 AKHAL-TEKE PLATE (2,000m), rated 40 to 65, 4-30: 1. Green Channel (4) J.H. Arul 61.5, 2. Pissarro (6) Trevor 61.5, 3. Silvarius (8) Suraj 61, 4. Siege Perilous (3) Akshay K 58.5, 5. Peluche (7) T.S. Jodha 57.5, 6. Starry Wind (1) Shreyas S 55.5, 7. Success (2) Hindu S 51.5 and 8. Towering Presence (5) P.P. Dhebe 51.5.

1. PISSARRO, 2. SUCCESS, SILVARIVUS

6 LADY GIBRALTAR PLATE (1,400m), rated 20 to 45, 5-00: 1. Polished Girl (2) Suraj 62, 2. Yukana (5) Srinath 60.5, 3. La Reina (4) Sandesh 59, 4. Nikolina (8) Akshay K 58.5, 5. Wild Emperor

(7) T.S. Jodha 58.5, 6. Singhsaab (1) Kirtish B 56, 7. Twilight Fame (3) Rajesh K 54 and 8. Impeccable (6) Vinod Shinde 53.

1. POLISHED GIRL, 2. NIKOLINA, 3. YUKAN

7 SUPERVITE PLATE (DIV. I), (1,200m), rated 00 to 25, 5-30: 1. Debonair (9) Md. Aliyar 62.5, 2. Elite Agent (4) Rajesh K 62.5, 3. Emerald (-) (-) 62.5, 4. Port Of Beauty (2) S. Shareef 62, 5. Red Lucifer (6) Salman K 61.5, 6. Altair (7) Arvind K 61, 7. The Intruder (5) Chetan K 60.5, 8. Cinco De Mayo (1) Mark 60, 9. Comeonson (3) S. Saqlain 58.5 and 10. Speaking Of Skies (8) Rayan 57.

1. RED LUCIFER, 2. PORT OF BEAUTY, 3. ALTAIR

Dan's best: AMRELI Double: BELLATOR - POLISHED GIRL Jkt: 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7; Tr (i): 2, 3 and 4; (ii): 5, 6 and 7.

# TAI welcomes decision to re-look levying GST on horse racing

VINAYAK M. ZODGE  
PUNE

The Turf Authorities of India (TAI), which conducts horse racing in India, has welcomed the GST Council's decision to allow the group of ministers (GoM) to re-examine the issues related to levying GST on horse racing.

Zavaray S. Poonawalla, chairman of GST reform cell of TAI, in a statement said "We are happy to note that the GST Council has deferred its decision on imposing GST on the value of bets placed @28%. We look forward to the GoM considering how horse racing is different from other gaming.

This gives us a window of 15 days to present to the GoM that unlike gaming for commercial gain, which is undertaken by other service providers, all race clubs in India are set up as not-for-profit clubs.

"The licensed horse race clubs have been in existence for over 200 years in India and in the span of their operations of over two centu-



Zavaray Poonawalla. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

ries, the tax imposed on betting has been on the commission made by the race courses and not on the value of bets.

"The proposed GST would be against this centuries-old norm, international norms and even the state's betting and entertainment tax, which the GST regime subsumed. All over the world, payouts/prize money on horse racing is not taxed. This should definitely be applicable to the horse racing industry in India too."

The TAI further stated that "Unlike commercial

gaming, all revenue made by the clubs is completely ploughed back into the welfare measures like supporting jockeys, horses, equestrian breeding and training, besides providing employment to thousands of people.

"The GoM needs to be cognizant of the fact that horse racing and equestrian breeding will suffer irreversible damage, if the proposed GST on value of bets is imposed. Besides the loss of revenue to the Government of India, it would have a cascading effect on India's environment, considering that the turf clubs provide much needed green spaces in the crowded cities.

The sport generates lakhs of jobs in the agriculture sector, pharmaceutical industry, and labour industry etc. No value can be attributed to the above in terms of money and the GoM needs to consider the same while taking its decision, which should not be made with only a monetary outlook."

# Sindhu and Prannoy bow out

MALAYSIA OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KUALA LUMPUR

Two-time Olympic medalist P.V. Sindhu crashed out in the women's singles quarterfinals of the Malaysia Open Super 750 badminton losing to Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei here on Friday.

Sindhu, seeded seventh, lost 21-13, 15-21, 13-21 to second seed Tai Tzu, silver medalist at the Tokyo Olympics.

Despite a slow start, Sindhu won the first game. But, Tai fought back and took control of proceedings.

Tai thus extended her domination over the Indian to 16-5 on head-to-head record. Sindhu has now lost six matches on the trot against Tai.

The Indian challenge ended as H.S. Prannoy also made a quarterfinal exit, losing to seventh-seeded Jonatan Christie of Indonesia 18-21, 16-21.

# The serial record-breaker with a monk's calmness



## SABLE'S PERSONAL BESTS

- 5000m: **13:25.65** (NR, 2022)
- 3000m steeplechase: **8:12.48** (NR, 2022)
- 10km: **30:36** (2019)
- Half marathon: **1:00:30** (NR, 2020)
- 25km: **1:15:17** (2017)
- 3000M STEEPLCHASE PROGRESSION
- 2017: **8:39.81** (Chennai)
- 2018: **8:29.80** (Bhubaneswar)
- 2019: **8:21.37** (Doha)
- 2021: **8:18.12** (Tokyo)
- 2022: **8:12.48** (Rabat)

Avinash Sable has experienced the highs and braved the lows, transforming into a runner with a single-minded focus on performance. He may not be the poster boy of Indian athletics yet, but he is one of the country's few genuine medal prospects on the world stage

### UTHRA GANESAN

For someone who has made breaking records seem like an everyday affair, it is difficult to believe Avinash Sable once had doubts about whether he would ever be competitive within the country – at that point, the world stage was a dream too far.

It's a good thing he was talked out of his doubts in July 2017. For, over the next year, the 3000m steeplechaser experienced the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, becoming a man focused on performances and records to the point of obsession, with all the calmness of a monk. This has made him one of the few Indian track athletes genuinely capable of a world-level medal.

"We began his steeplechase training in March 2017," reveals Amrith Kumar Adhana, the Services coach who introduced Sable to the sport and guided him until the Tokyo Olympics.

"In July at the inter-State championships in Guntur, he was prepared well enough to win gold but he finished fourth with a timing of over nine minutes, falling at the hurdles. He was 23, just starting out and frankly, just a kid. And like kids who become

wary after getting hurt, he was upset on return, wasn't sure he could continue and wanted to quit. 'Sir, ye hota nahi lag raha mujhse [I don't think I can do it],' were his words.

"But we convinced him to continue. 'Ye hi hoga aur tujhse hi hoga [It will happen and you will make it happen],' I said and promised him he would make a new meet record at the Chennai Open Nationals that year if he followed my instructions. It was all about getting the negativity out of him, in mind and in training," says Adhana.

From there to the Diamond League, the unsure kid has come a long way in establishing his legend in the event that has become synonymous with his name in India.

Five years back, that meet record stood at 8:39.18 (Elam Singh), and Sable had to cut his personal best by more than 23 seconds in two months to better it. He almost did it, clocking 8:39.81 to win. On June 5 this year, when Sable ran 8:12.48 in the Rabat Diamond League, there were no more Indian records left to break but his own, several times over.

His 2017 Chennai performance made the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) bring him into the national fold, six months after he had first heard of steeplechase. It

was also to be the beginning of a torrid 12 months for the youngster, racked with an ankle injury (Sable blames his own over-training), self-doubts (failing to qualify for the Asian Games), alien conditions and unknown faces away from the comfort of his coach, army teammates and familiar surroundings.

### Shaped by hardship

Born on September 13, 1994, in Maharashtra's Beed district, Sable developed endurance early, more out of compulsion than choice. Raised in a family of farmers struggling to make ends meet in a hot, water-scarce place, the army offered Sable a way out of deprivation. The 5 Mahar regiment became his refuge after school.

From 2013 to 2016, Sable was a regular *fauji* – posted at outposts such as the Siachen Glacier, the deserts of north-western Rajasthan in Lalgah Jattan, border posts in Sikkim and the forests of Arunachal Pradesh – before being identified as a sporting talent and included in the army cross-country team in 2016.

The first stint with Belarusian coach Nikolai Snesarev in the national camp wasn't great. The comfort of familiarity was important for Sable and the Army Sports Institute (ASI) gave him that. Away from it, he struggled. Adhana says he tried to convince the AFI not to break Sable's training group at least until the 2018 Asian Games, then just eight months away, because he was a medal prospect. But the federation was insistent and Sable had to report at Shilaroo.

At the 2018 Federation Cup in Patiala, Sable avoided third place by a microsecond. By June, he had slipped to 8:49.25 at the inter-State in Guwahati. From being a medal hope to not qualifying for the Asian Games, it was quite a fall, as much in the mind as in the body.

Sable returned to the ASI after the Asian Games and the reunion sparked a period that saw him go from being just another runner to a record-breaking machine. He began with

the 37-year-old national record of Gopal Saini (8:30.88), stopping the clock at 8:29.80 in Bhubaneswar. That's a neat 20 seconds shaved off in three months, one of which was spent off training!

"When you get the right results at the beginning, there is trust. Between us, there was clarity that indiscipline, aggression and being casual or negative in training won't do – not with any coach anywhere in the world. Being calm and focused is the only thing that gives results," Adhana says, explaining the runner's zen mode.

Sable's legend isn't only one of growth on track. Off it too, the 27-year-old has become confident – enough to train in California with coach Scott Simmons, all alone without an Indian face around him for reassurance.

"It took time and I was nervous, especially because others before me had struggled here but once I settled into training, it got better. The training partners and environment here is something not possible in India, they push you to constantly do better," Sable says. The fact that the next best Indian is almost 20 seconds off his pace also forced his hand.

Back home, he had got used to running a lonely race. "I know I have to compete against myself and it is difficult but not impossible. I set a target before every event and train accordingly, depending on my fitness. Competing internationally helps because you get pushed to do better," Sable has said. Few competitions and no competitors are definitely not what a top-level athlete craves. Now, he is happy not to worry about the pace or falling behind.

### World-class run

"The best part about his race [in Rabat] was that he followed the plan perfectly. In India, if he goes out back, he is already going to be slow. But here there was no need to push the pace. I told him this was the first opportunity where he didn't have to worry about the pace; all he needed to do was relax and focus on himself," Simmons says, explaining Sable's performance.

This was the seventh time since 2018 that Sable has bettered himself, the latest in a field that included two Olympic gold medalists (Soufiane Bakkali and Consuelo Kipruto), an Olympic silver (Lamecha Girma) and bronze medalist (Benjamin Kigen, whom

he finished ahead of). He has also added the last long-standing Indian track record of 5000m and the half-marathon to his kitty, becoming the first Indian to finish the 21km in under 61 minutes.

"Abhi to aur bahut record tootenge [There will be more records broken]," Adhana declares. "His base is strong and he will only get better. People don't know that the timings he is clocking now, he has already done it in training long back, even before the Olympics. The two bouts of Covid affected his performance at Tokyo and his mind after that but the momentum is back now. He can go under eight minutes and he will also break the 10,000m record, going under 28 minutes. He will win a medal at the CWG and if everything goes fine, gold at the Asian Games. These I can guarantee," is Adhana's bold prediction.

Simmons believes Sable is a natural athlete and only needs minor tweaks to be a regular challenger at the top level. The Rabat Diamond League, where he finished fifth, proved he was on track to do so sooner than expected. International sport is a game of fine margins, a grind dominated by champions that often have a long line of predecessors to emulate and exceed. Sable, by that definition, is an exception in a country starved of sporting icons.

He isn't yet the poster boy of Indian athletics but that hasn't stopped him from overhauling records by the dozen – with the promise of more to come.



The best part about his race [in Rabat] was that he followed the plan perfectly. In India, if he goes out back, he is already going to be slow. But here there was no need to push the pace... all he needed to do was relax and focus on himself

SCOTT SIMMONS, Coach

## STACKING UP

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Daniil Medvedev	26	7,955	21
2	Alexander Zverev	25	7,030	19
3	Novak Djokovic	35	6,770	12
4	Rafael Nadal	36	6,525	10
5	Stefanos Tsitsipas	23	5,150	25
6	Casper Ruud	23	5,050	27
7	Carlos Alcaraz	19	4,890	19
8	Andrey Rublev	24	3,870	25
9	Felix Auger-Aliassime	21	3,760	25
10	Hubert Hurkacz	25	3,735	24
11	Matteo Berrettini	26	3,480	17
12	Cameron Norrie	26	3,200	27
13	Jannik Sinner	20	3,185	28
14	Taylor Fritz	24	3,045	27
15	Diego Schwartzman	29	2,325	25



#	DRIVER	TEAM	POINTS	WINS
1	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	175	6
2	Sergio Perez	Red Bull	129	1
3	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	126	2
4	George Russell	Mercedes	111	0
5	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	102	0
6	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	77	0
7	Lando Norris	McLaren	50	0
8	Valtteri Bottas	Alfa Romeo	44	0
9	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	39	0
10	Fernando Alonso	Alpine	22	0
11	Pierre Gasly	AlphaTauri	16	0
12	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	15	0
13	Daniel Ricciardo	McLaren	15	0
14	Sebastian Vettel	Aston Martin	13	0
15	Yuki Tsunoda	AlphaTauri	11	0
16	Zhou Guanyu	Alfa Romeo	3	0
17	Alex Albon	Williams	3	0
18	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	2	0
19	Mick Schumacher	Haas	0	0
20	Nico Hulkenberg	Aston Martin	0	0
21	Nicholas Latifi	Williams	0	0



#	PLAYER	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Viktor Axelsen	121,606	40
2	Kento Momota	112,554	28
3	Anders Antonsen	98,300	37
4	Chou Tien Chen	93,776	39
5	Lee Zii Jia	91,578	43
6	Anthony Sinisuka Ginting	87,879	37
7	Chen Long	84,400	18
8	Jonatan Christie	82,812	37
9	Loh Kean Yew	77,854	33
10	Lakshya Sen	75,874	41
11	K. Srikanth	72,481	44
12	Rasmus Gemke	70,551	38
13	Ng Ka Long Angus	70,257	36
14	Kanta Tsuneyama	67,848	33
15	Lee Cheuk Yiu	66,061	36



#	PLAYER	RATING	CAREER BEST
1	Joe Root	899	917
2	Marnus Labuschagne	892	936
3	Steve Smith	845	947
4	Babar Azam	815	815
5	Kane Williamson	786	919
6	Dimuth Karunaratne	772	781
7	Usman Khawaja	757	757
8	Rohit Sharma	754	813
9	Travis Head	744	773
10	Virat Kohli	742	937

#	PLAYER	RATING	CAREER BEST
1	Pat Cummins	901	914
2	R. Ashwin	850	904
3	Jasprit Bumrah	830	835
4	Shaheen Afridi	827	827
5	Kagiso Rabada	818	902
6	Kyle Jamieson	788	836
7	James Anderson	787	903
8	Kenar Roach	756	780
9	Neil Wagner	752	859
10	Trent Boult	747	825

#	PLAYER	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Rankumar Ramanathan	169	3 spots
2	Prajesh Gunneswaran	287	13 spots



#	PLAYER	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Babar Azam	892	898
2	Imam-ul-Haq	815	815
3	Virat Kohli	811	911
4	Rohit Sharma	791	885
5	Quinton de Kock	789	813
6	Ross Taylor	775	841
7	Rassie van der Dussen	769	776
8	Jonny Bairstow	752	796
9	David Warner	737	880
10	Shai Hope	718	808

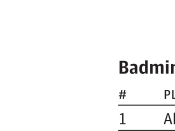


Top Indians ▶ Lakshya Sen Rank 10, K. Srikanth Rank 11

#	PLAYER	AGE	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Iga Swiatek	21	8,576	16
2	Ons Jabeur	27	4,340	19
3	Anett Kontaveit	26	4,306	20
4	Paula Badosa	24	4,245	25
5	Maria Sakkari	26	4,205	21
6	Aryna Sabalenka	24	4,046	20
7	Karolina Pliskova	30	3,777	17
8	Danielle Collins	28	3,255	19
9	Beatriz Penedas	28	3,150	17
10	Garbine Muguruza	28	3,015	20
11	Emma Raducanu	19	2,952	23
12	Coco Gauff	18	2,886	17
13	Daria Kasatkina	25	2,645	21
14	Barbora Krejickova	26	2,593	17
15	Leylah Fernandez	19	2,590	22

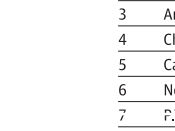


POS	TEAM	POINTS	WINS	PODIUMS
1	Red Bull	304	7	12
2	Ferrari	228	2	9
3	Mercedes	188	0	5
4	McLaren	65	0	1
5	Alpine	57	0	0
6	Alfa Romeo	51	0	0
7	AlphaTauri	27	0	0
8	Aston Martin	16	0	0
9	Haas	15	0	0
10	Williams	3	0	0



### F1 Constructors' standings

#	PLAYER	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Alkane Yamaguchi	111,963	37
2	Tai Tzu Ying	111,645	24
3	An Se Young	103,603	45
4	Chen Yu Fei	103,456	28
5	Carolina Marin	100,380	23
6	Nozomi Okuhara	96,560	26
7	P.V. Sindhu	94,010	42
8	Ratchanok Intanon	87,549	38
9	He Bing Jiao	83,064	31
10	Pongpawee Chochuwong	78,265	43
11	Busanan Ongbamrungphan	70,294	49
12	Michelle Li	70,130	40
13	Wang Zhi Yi	69,978	28
14	Sayaka Takahashi	66,573	35
15	Mia Blichfeldt	63,819	30



Top Indians ▶ P.V. Sindhu Rank 7, Saina Nehwal Rank 24

#	PLAYER	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Rankumar Ramanathan	360	2 spots
2	Rutuja Bhosale	455	3 spots



#	PLAYER	RATING	CAREER BEST
1	Trent Boult	726	770
2	Matt Henry	683	691
3	Shaheen Afridi	681	688
4	Chris Woakes	680	711
5	Jasprit Bumrah	679	841
6	Josh Hazlewood	679	733
7	Mujeeb Ur Rahman	676	712
8	Mehedi Hasan	661	725
9	Mohammad Nabi	657	657
10	Shakib Al Hasan	657	717

#	PLAYER	RATING	CAREER BEST
1	Babar Azam	818	896
2	Mohammad Rizwan	794	798
3	Aiden Markram	757	796
4	Dawid Malan	728	915
5	Aaron Finch	716	900
6	Devon Conway	703	784
7	Ishan Kishan	682	717
8	Pathum Nissanka	661	689
9	Rassie van der Dussen	658	780
10	Martin Guptill	658	793

#	PLAYER	RATING	CAREER BEST
1	Josh Hazlewood	792	806
2	Adil Rashid	746	746
3	Tabraiz Shamsi	709	821
4	Rashid Khan	709	816
5	Adam Zampa	698	743
6	Wanindu Hasaranga	668	797
7	Anrich Nortje	658	695
8	Maheesh Theekshana	647	647
9	Ashton Agar	640	717
10	Nasum Ahmed	637	637

#	PLAYER	POINTS	EVENTS
1	Red Bull	304	7
2	Ferrari	228	2
3	Mercedes	188	0
4	McLaren	65	0
5	Alpine	57	0
6	Alfa Romeo	51	0
7	AlphaTauri	27	0
8	Aston Martin	16	0
9	Haas	15	0
10	Williams	3	0

# Freestyle queen Ledecky closer than ever to immortality

After not matching her own lofty standards at the 2019 Worlds and Tokyo Olympics — she still won three gold medals — the American swimmer was unstoppable in Budapest. She added four World titles to take her tally to 19, a number bettered only by Michael Phelps

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**W**hen you win two gold and two silver medals at an Olympics, you are entitled to indulge in a cheat meal of choice and relive memories of a legacy-establishing performance.

Katie Ledecky allowed herself a hamburger, savoured the time gainfully spent in the Tokyo water and ensured that the people who supported her knew how much she valued them.

But — and perhaps this is one of the things that separate the greatest from the great — she felt it was time for a reset. After a difficult World Championships in 2019, when she won just one gold and struggled with illness, and last year's Games, where she was beaten for the first time in an individual event in three editions, Ledecky knew she had to evolve to reassert her dominance.

Seven Olympic titles and 15 World crowns weren't enough; she wanted everlasting superiority in the freestyle.

"I'm starting to shift my mindset toward the future, but also just kind of trying to let these past five years sink in, and Tokyo especially, and my whole career up to this point," she told *The Stanford Daily*. "I'm planning on 2024. I think each Olympic cycle brings new and different challenges."

So Ledecky decided to shift base from California to Florida last October to work with Anthony Nesty, who won the 1988 Olympic butterfly gold for Suriname. An assistant for Team USA at Tokyo, Nesty had guided Bobby Finke to 800m and 1500m freestyle golds and Kieran Smith to the 400m freestyle bronze; his expertise in

the distance freestyle events appealed to Ledecky.

The move to Florida also offered Ledecky the valuable opportunity to train with competitors who would push her — America's top male mid-distance and distance swimmers.

"I was training with a college team [Stanford University], and I'm older than most of the other swimmers," she said. "I didn't have too many mid-distance, distance people to train with. I'm excited to be a part of the University of Florida's world-class programme and train with coach Nesty and the top-tier mid-distance and distance training group."

Ledecky, 25, had two specific challenges to counter. One was historic: she was seeking to become the oldest female World and Olympic champion in the mid-distance events over the next three years; these stamina events have long been a stronghold of the 'youngsters', which in swimming terms has been 23 and under. The other challenge was her own greatness: when you are already the best-ever at what you do, how much room do you have for progress?

"We talk a lot about improvement," Ledecky told NBC. "Of course, improvement looks a little different for me than some other people, given that my times are really hard to improve. I've acknowledged that, and I've learned that over the years."

So the interest in Ledecky's performance at the recent World Championships in Budapest was at an all-time high. She wouldn't face Ariarne Titmus, the woman who beat her in the 400m freestyle in Tokyo, because the Australian had decided to concentrate on the Commonwealth Games, but could Ledecky prove that her best — domination — wasn't behind her?

### Not fading away

She did just that, showing that some 'old' swimmers don't fade away as fast as they used to and that a few prodigies stay prodigious ten years into their career.

When she won the 800m freestyle at the 2012 Olympics at 15, Ledecky was a teenage sensation. Her 800m freestyle gold last Friday was a record fifth straight World title in that event, something nobody else, not even Michael Phelps, has achieved. It was also an eight consecutive triumph, across the Worlds and the Olympics, in the 800m freestyle!

"I think back to London," Ledecky said. "I made it a goal to not be a one-hit wonder and here we are 10 years later, so I'm really proud of that and still excited for the future as well."

Ledecky's time of 8:38.04 was under four seconds off the world record she set at the 2016 Olympics. "I'm happy with that," she said. "Fastest I've been in a couple of years."

The timing, the fifth quickest ever, also means Ledecky has swum the 27 fastest races in the history of the women's 800m freestyle — a sports mo-



**I think back to London [2012 Olympics]. I made it a goal to not be a one-hit wonder and here we are 10 years later, so I'm really proud of that and still excited for the future as well**

### LEDECKY'S MAJOR TITLES

#### 7 OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALS

200m freestyle (2016)

400m freestyle (2016)

800m freestyle (2012, 2016, 2020)

1500m freestyle (2020)

4x200m freestyle (2016)

#### 19 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS GOLD MEDALS

200m freestyle (2015)

400m freestyle (2013, 2015, 2017, 2022)

800m freestyle (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2022)

1500m freestyle (2013, 2015, 2017, 2022)

4x100m freestyle (2017)

4x200m freestyle (2013, 2015, 2017, 2022)

nopoly, if ever there was one.

It was also her 19th gold at the Worlds, second only to Phelps' 26, and her fourth at Budapest. She earlier helped the USA win the 4x200 freestyle relay, two days after she won the 1500m freestyle, which came two days after she won the 400m freestyle.

She completed the 400/800/1500 triple for the fourth time at a single Worlds, more than all the other swimmers who managed the feat combined. Germany's Hannah Stockbauer, Australia's Grant Hackett and China's Sun Yang each managed it only once.

At 25, Ledecky is older than any woman to win a World Championships distance freestyle race (400m, 800m and 1500m).

And she's not finished yet. "This is just the start, which is tremendously exciting for me," said Ledecky, who said the changes to her approach are paying off. "There have been a couple of things that are a little different — training

with the men, to try to keep up as much as I can and they push me. I hope that they feel that they've benefited from me being there, and just a lot of work on my stroke and my rhythm."

Ledecky's stroke and rhythm are unique — described as a 'gallop' or a 'giddy-up', she has a slightly longer right stroke than left, in part because she breathes exclusively to her right. Her pull underwater is exemplary: her early vertical forearm pull is efficient and less susceptible to injury. She kicks less in longer races, only using a strong kick in the final stages and in shorter races.

In addition to focusing on her stroke and rhythm, Ledecky is also monitoring her competitive workload. When Phelps won eight gold medals at the 2008 Games, he swam about 3,300 metres; Ledecky swam 6,200 metres at the Olympics last year. She is looking to reduce it to the mid-5,000s in major events by dropping the 200m.

It isn't merely the total distance, although that is a major factor. The more events she enters, the less time she has to recover between races, which leaves her vulnerable to younger rivals — the most formidable among them at the moment being Titmus, four years Ledecky's junior.

### The Titmus rivalry

Titmus has had the measure of Ledecky over 400m, beating her at both the 2019 Worlds and the 2020 Olympics. The Australian also recently bettered Ledecky's world record in the 400m freestyle, which the American had set at the 2016 Olympics. Titmus thus became the first swimmer other than Ledecky to break a Ledecky world record!

Ledecky, however, retains her superiority over 800m and Titmus doesn't swim anything longer.

The rivalry has pushed both women to their best, and although they aren't scheduled at this moment to compete against each other this

year, they are likely to go head to head in two World Championships and the Olympics over the next two years.

"I can't put myself up next to her," Titmus said of her rival. "What she has done for female swimming has been insane. She's been at this level for 10 years. To be in the conversation with her, I feel completely honoured. I wouldn't be here without her. I hope this is going to keep the battle going, give her some drive, hopefully, we can see how much faster we can keep going."

Ledecky, for her part, said she enjoys the thrill of being chased as much as she enjoyed the thrill of the chase. "It's great for the sport, great to have somebody like [Titmus] to race," she said. "And I know that there are other swimmers as well that are coming up that are going to be very competitive over the next couple of years. So that definitely keeps me on my toes. And I think we'll continue to have some great races."



GETTY IMAGES

**Failing spectacularly describes what I aim for in practice, where I am pushing the limits and am so aggressive that there is a chance that I might fall off. I push myself to a breaking point**

## GAME THEORY

### Rubbing shoulders with Bradman, Headley, Merchant, Tendulkar and Dravid

Sarfaraz Khan, 24, continues to pile on the runs in First Class cricket, topping the charts for the 2021-22 Ranji Trophy season. He became only the third player, after Ajay Sharma and Wasim Jaffer, to tally more than 900 runs in two separate seasons. Significantly, he is now on the all-time top-five lists for batting averages in the Ranji Trophy and First Class cricket

#### MOST RUNS IN RANJI TROPHY 2021-22 SEASON

Batter	Team	Matches	Innings	Runs	Average
Sarfaraz Khan	Mumbai	6	9	982	122.75
Rajat Patidar	Madhya Pradesh	6	9	658	82.25
Chetan Bist	Nagaland	4	6	623	311.50
Yash Dubey	Madhya Pradesh	6	10	614	76.75
Shubham Sharma	Madhya Pradesh	6	9	608	76.00
Sakibul Gani	Bihar	3	5	601	150.25
Taruwar Kohli	Mizoram	3	6	526	131.50
Yashasvi Jaiswal	Mumbai	3	6	498	83.00
Shrikant Mundhe	Nagaland	4	6	492	98.40
Shahbaz Ahmed	Bengal	5	10	482	60.25

#### HIGHEST RANJI TROPHY BATTING AVERAGE (MIN: 2,000 RUNS)

Batter	Matches	Innings	Runs	Average
Vijay Merchant	32	47	3,639	98.35
Sachin Tendulkar	38	57	4,281	87.37
Rusi Modi	29	37	2,696	81.70
Sarfaraz Khan	23	35	2,445	81.50
Rahul Dravid	48	70	4,874	81.23



VIJAY MERCHANT



DON BRADMAN

#### HIGHEST FIRST CLASS BATTING AVERAGE (MIN: 2,000 RUNS)

Batter	Matches	Innings	Runs	Average
Don Bradman	234	338	28,067	95.14
Sarfaraz Khan	25	37	2,530	81.61
Vijay Merchant	150	234	13,470	71.64
George Headley	103	164	9,921	69.86
Bahir Shah	29	48	2,554	69.02

SOURCE: ESPNCRICKINFO

## PICTURE THIS



MARCO KOST/GETTY IMAGES

### Walking on air

The long jump is one of athletics' most spectacular events to watch, featuring competitors who, in slow motion, appear to float through air.

It's a demanding discipline, requiring speed, strength, agility, body-control and high levels of technique in every aspect of the

jump: run-up, take-off, flight, landing.

At the top level, jumpers sprint down a runway, similar to running tracks, and take off from a wooden or synthetic board eight inches wide. They land in a pit of soft sand. The jumper has to start the leap without any part of the foot past the foul line.

There was a time in the 1970s when some jumpers used a forward somersault as they travelled through the air — the front flip both ensured the competitor didn't break the forward momentum and also reduced air resistance. This made it the most effective technique for the longest jumps.

But the risk of injury with the

front flip led to it being banned. Mike Powell (8.95m) and Galina Chistyakova (7.52m) hold the men's and women's long jump world records, respectively. The men's season leader this year is Simon Ehammer (8.45m), with India's M. Sreeshankar second (8.36m). Malaika Mihambo (7.09m) is the women's season leader.

# Pant's blistering ton, Jadeja's solid knock help India fight back

Their 222-run partnership for the sixth wicket takes the visitors to 338 for seven from a precarious 98 for five on day one; Anderson, Potts shine for England

## INDIA IN ENG

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BIRMINGHAM

Rishabh Pant was combative and Ravindra Jadeja composed in leading India's recovery from 98 for five to 338 for seven against England on the first day of the series-deciding Test at Edgbaston on Friday.

Pant made 146 off 111 balls in a fabulous 222-run sixth-wicket stand with Ravindra Jadeja, who was not out on 83 at stumps. Pant's brutal counterattack featured 19 fours and four sixes and ended when he was deceived by Joe Root's off-spin and gave Zak Crawley his third catch in the slips.

### Receiving end

Ben Stokes' men were on the receiving end of a belligerent Pant and Jadeja, who played the anchor role. Their brilliant stand of 222 came off 239 balls.

England took full advantage of winning the toss and opting to bowl in overcast conditions. James Anderson and Matthew Potts troubled the India's top order and reduced the visitors to 98 for five midway through the second session.

Pant resisted and reached his half-century at the stroke of tea off 51 balls. He raised



Different strokes: Pant was aggression personified during his brilliant century, while Jadeja played perfect foil with a controlled unbeaten 83. •GETTY IMAGES



## SCOREBOARD

**INDIA - 1ST INNINGS**  
Shubman Gill c Crawley b Anderson 17 (24b, 4x4), Cheteshwar Pujara c Crawley b Anderson 13 (46b, 2x4), Hanuma Vihari lbw b Potts 20 (53b, 1x4), Virat Kohli b Potts 11 (19b, 2x4), Rishabh Pant c Crawley b Root 146 (111b, 19x4, 4x6), Shreyas Iyer c Billings b Anderson 15 (11b, 3x4), Ravindra Jadeja (batting) 83 (163b, 10x4); Shardul Thakur c Billings b Stokes 1 (12b), Mohammed Shami (batting) 0 (11b); Extras (b-4, lb-16, nb-12): 32; Total (for seven wkts. in 73 overs): 338.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-27 (Gill, 6.2 overs), 2-46 (Pujara, 17.6), 3-64 (Vihari, 22.2), 4-71 (Kohli, 24.2), 5-98 (Shreyas, 27.5), 6-320 (Pant, 66.2), 7-323 (Shardul, 67.6).

**ENGLAND BOWLING**  
Anderson 19-4-52-3, Broad 15-2-53-0, Potts 17-1-85-2, Leach 9-0-71-0, Stokes 10-0-34-1, Root 3-0-23-1.  
**Toss:** England.

his third Test hundred against England off a mere 89 balls.

### Hardly bothered

Jadeja proved a perfect foil to Pant's aggression. Pant took charge from the outset and was hardly bothered by the bounce of Potts, and was quick to pounce on full-

pitched deliveries by Anderson and Broad.

Leach was also not spared as Pant used his feet well against the spinner, who finished the day conceding 71 runs off nine overs without success.

This fifth Test was postponed a year ago when India, up 2-1 in the series, was

stricken by a coronavirus outbreak. The virus hit the team again on the eve of this match when captain Rohit Sharma was ruled out and Jasprit Bumrah became the first fast bowler since Kapil Dev to lead the side as interim skipper.

Opening batters Shubman Gill (17) and Cheteshwar Pujara (13) were worn down by the bowlers' nagging line and length, and Potts extracted lots of bounce.

Gill hit two boundaries in a Broad over, but succumbed to Anderson's brilliance when he edged to second slip.

Broad came close to his 550th Test wicket but Pujara, who replaced Rohit, successfully overturned a caught behind ruling off the DRS. However, Pujara didn't last long against Anderson's relentless seam and swing as the fast bowler struck in his second spell when Crawley grabbed a straightforward catch in the slip cordon.

Crawley should have had

his third catch, but couldn't hold onto a sharp one-handed chance off Hanuma Vihari, which could have earned Potts his first wicket.

India lost three more wickets inside six overs after rain delayed post-lunch play for 90 minutes.

Vihari was trapped leg before by Potts on 20.

Virat Kohli, on 11, was indecisive against Potts and left the ball which cannoned on to his stumps after hitting the toe end of the bat.

Anderson had Shreyas Iyer out for 15 down the leg-side off a short delivery.

Stokes got an edge off Shardul Thakur just before stumps.

## England squads for India series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LONDON

Veteran Lancashire seamer Richard Gleeson earned his maiden England call-up for the three-match T20I series against India starting on July 7 in Southampton.

### The squads:

**T20Is:** Jos Buttler (Capt.), Moeen Ali, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Richard Gleeson, Chris Jordan, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Tymal Mills, Matthew Parkinson, Jason Roy, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, and David Willey.

### ODIs:

Buttler (Capt.), Moeen, Jonny Bairstow, Brook, Brydon Carse, Curran, Livingstone, Craig Overton, Parkinson, Joe Root, Roy, Salt, Ben Stokes, Topley, and Willey.

### The schedule:

**T20Is:** July 7, Southampton (10.30 p.m.).

**July 9,** Edgbaston (7 p.m.).

**July 10,** Trent Bridge (7 p.m.).

**ODIs:** July 12, The Oval (5.30 p.m.).

**July 14,** Lord's (5.30 p.m.).

**July 17,** Old Trafford (3.30 p.m.) (all times IST).

# Deepti does the star turn as Women in Blue draw first blood

All-rounder scalps three and also takes the team home; Renuka lends support with the ball; Harmanpreet anchors chase

## INDIA IN SL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PALLEKELE

Deepti Sharma shone with the bat after her exploits with the ball, coming to India's rescue in a tricky chase, to set up a four-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the first ODI here on Friday.

In the company of Pooja Vastrakar (21 not out), Deepti (22 not out) guided India home in 38 overs after being set an easy target of 172, in Harmanpreet Kaur's first match as ODI captain.

Cruising at 123 for three, India made heavy weather of what seemed a comfortable run-chase after Harmanpreet departed for a well-made 44, slipping to 138 for six.

India bowled out Sri Lanka for 171 in 48.2 overs, and then chased down the target with 12 overs to spare.

Off-spinner Deepti and medium-pacer Renuka Singh were the wreckers-in-chief, finishing with impressive figures of three for 25 and three for 29 respectively.



Big breakthrough: Renuka got rid of Athapaththu to set the tone for India. •TWITTER@BCCIWOMEN

Renuka got the first breakthrough when she removed skipper Chamari Athapaththu. It was a huge wicket for India, and straightaway put the hosts on the backfoot. As wickets tumbled at

one end, Nilakshi de Silva held fort at the other until she was trapped in front for a 63-ball 43. The Indians also got off to a poor start, losing Smriti Mandhana (4) as early as the second over. Yastika Bhatia too did not last long, leaving India at 17 for two in

the fourth over.

Harmanpreet then played the role of anchor allowing Shafali Verma to blaze her way to 35 off 40 deliveries. Harleen Deol chipped in with 34 off 40 balls, before the duo of Deepti and Pooja took the visitors home.

## SCOREBOARD

**SRI LANKA**  
Hasini Perera lbw b Deepti 37 (54b, 5x4), Chamari Athapaththu c Yastika b Renuka 2 (8b), Hansima Karunaratne c Pooja b Deepti 0 (11b), Harshitha Samarawickrama lbw b Pooja 28 (54b, 3x4), Kavisha Dilhari c Shafali b Harmanpreet 0 (2b), Nilakshi de Silva lbw b Renuka 43 (63b, 4x4), Anushka Sanjeevani c Yastika b Rajeshwari 18 (48b), Oshadi Ranasinghe b Renuka 8 (14b, 1x4), Rashmi Silva b Deepti 7 (21b), Inoka Ranaweera c Yastika b Pooja 12 (15b, 2x4), Achini Kulasuriya (not out) 0 (0b); Extras (b-4, lb-3, w-9): 16; Total (in 48.2 overs): 171.

**FALL OF WICKETS**  
1-13 (Athapaththu, 2.5 overs), 2-29 (Hansima, 6.6), 3-63 (Hasini, 17.5), 4-65 (Kavisha, 18.5), 5-84 (Harshitha, 22.5), 6-131 (Anushka, 37.6), 7-144 (Nilakshi, 41.5), 8-152 (Oshadi, 43.5), 9-171 (Inoka, 47.6).

**INDIA BOWLING**  
Renuka 6-0-29-3, Meghna 8-0-23-0, Deepti 8-2-1-25-3, Rajeshwari 9-0-33-1, Harmanpreet 7-1-13-1, Pooja 5-0-26-2,

Harleen 3-0-11-0, Shafali 2-0-4-0.

### INDIA

Shafali Verma c Anushka b Inoka 35 (40b, 1x4, 2x6), Smriti Mandhana b Oshadi 4 (7b, 1x4), Yastika Bhatia b Oshadi 1 (8b), Harmanpreet Kaur lbw b Inoka 44 (63b, 3x4), Harleen Deol lbw b Inoka 34 (40b, 2x4), Deepti Sharma (not out) 22 (41b), Richa Ghosh c Anushka b Inoka 6 (11b), Pooja Vastrakar (not out) 21 (19b, 2x6); Extras (lb-2, nb-1, w-6): 9; Total (for six wkts. in 38 overs): 176.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-9 (Smriti, 1.3), 2-17 (Yastika, 3.6), 3-61 (Shafali, 15.2), 4-123 (Harmanpreet, 25.2), 5-130 (Harleen, 27.3), 6-138 (Richa, 29.6).

### SRI LANKA BOWLING

Achini 6-0-34-0, Oshadi 8-1-34-2, Inoka 10-0-39-4, Kavisha 7-0-33-0, Rashmi 6-0-30-0, Athapaththu 1-0-4-0.

**Toss:** Sri Lanka.

**Player-of-the-Match:** Deepti.

India won by four wickets with 12 overs remaining to lead three-match series 1-0.

**Second ODI:** July 4, Pallekele.

## Harmanpreet is cool and calm: Deepti

P. K. AJITH KUMAR

On Friday at Pallekele, Deepti Sharma saw through the chase for the Women in Blue with a responsible knock coming in at number six against Sri Lanka in the opening ODI.

Her unbeaten 22 helped her side tide over the loss of three wickets in the middle-order in quick succession. Earlier, she had taken three for 25 with her off-spin.

She said she had worked on her batting ahead of the tour. "I developed some shots," she said. "My role is to finish the job for the team. I just keep that in my mind."

The match was India's first ODI after Harmanpreet Kaur took over as captain from Mithali Raj. "She is calm and cool as a captain, which is good for the team," Deepti said. "We enjoyed playing under her, and she enjoyed her captaincy too."

## Lampaert wins Stage 1



Lampaert. •AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
COPENHAGEN

Belgian Yves Lampaert won the first stage of the Tour de France on Friday, gate-crashing the opening day individual time-trial as crowds defied the rain along the 13.2km route in downtown Copenhagen.

Quick-Step rider Lampaert suffered less from the rain with his later start than the pre-race favourites, finishing five seconds ahead of compatriot Wout van Aert, with defending champion Tadej Pogacar third best seven seconds off the pace.

"I was hoping for a top 10, but not this," 2021 Belgian time-trial champion Lampaert said. "I beat the big guys."

## I approach every event with a free mind, says Neeraj Chopra

Olympic champion concerned only about giving his best

## ATHLETICS

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

More than a month ago, Neeraj Chopra had admitted to this correspondent that the pressure of being an Olympic champion would be known only when he began competing. Given his performance at the three events since then, that question seems to have been answered.

### Marked progress

He has set a new National record each time, going closer to the 90m mark with every outing and managing 89.94m at the Diamond League in Stockholm on Thursday, his first DL event since 2018. Two of the three marks came on his first attempts while one came on his second.

"It's a good feeling to get good results. The first throw was very good and it looked very close to 90m, fell just 6cm short, but I am happy with my performance," Neeraj said after the Stockholm meet.

His lead lasted only a few minutes with reigning World champion Anderson Peters managing a 90.31m on his



In the limelight: Neeraj continues to rise and rise as his Stockholm Diamond League performance showed.

third attempt and while Neeraj admitted it gave him an extra push, he isn't bothered too much.

"When Anderson crossed 90m, I wanted to do it too but it doesn't happen automatically. Everything has to be perfect for such a long throw. Plus, the body also gets tired when we put full effort into every throw," he insisted.

Up next is the World Championships in Oregon, USA, and Neeraj, like always, doesn't commit to anything.

"I am going in with a free mind with 100% in training and competition, there is no pressure of the past. For the World Championships also, I can only say that there is no pressure at the moment," he said.

Anju Bobby George remains India's lone World Championships medallist till date but Neeraj, despite the expectations, is not thinking about it. "I keep saying every competition is very different every day. Just give it your all," he signed off.

## Jabeur cruises into the fourth round

Djokovic demolishes Serbian compatriot Kecmanovic; Sakkari shocked



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

World No. 2 Ons Jabeur beat French teenager Diane Parry 6-2, 6-3 on Friday to cruise through to the fourth round at Wimbledon.

The Tunisian had too much for the 19-year-old in their clash on Centre Court, breaking her five times and hitting 22 winners.

Greek fifth seed Maria Sakkari was knocked out, losing in straight sets to German World No. 103 Tatjana Maria.

The 34-year-old Maria, who only returned to the tour from maternity leave less than a year ago, won 6-3, 7-5 to reach the last 16 of a Slam for the first time.

She will face former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko for a place in the quarterfinals.

Three-time defending champion Novak Djokovic reached the fourth round for the 14th time, with a straight-sets demolition of



A first: Maria, who only returned to the tour from maternity leave less than a year ago, reached the last 16 of a Slam for the first time. •AFP

Serbian compatriot Miomir Kecmanovic.

Djokovic, looking to pull level with Pete Sampras as a seven-time Wimbledon champion, triumphed 6-0, 6-3, 6-4.

Friday's win was the 330th of Djokovic's Grand Slam career.

"So far, so good," said the 35-year-old top seed, who has now reached the last 16 of a major for the 55th time.

"I expect high standards from myself. You always want to raise the level and things are shaping up well."

Waiting in the fourth round will be Dutch wild card Tim van Rijthoven.

van Rijthoven, who has taken a slow and agonising road to the last 16 at Wimbledon - which has included

the best part of three years lost to injury - posted a a straight-sets win over Niko- loz Basilashvili.

## IMPORTANT RESULTS

**Third round: Men:** 1-Djokovic (Srb) bt 25-Kecmanovic (Srb) 6-0, 6-3, 6-4; van Rijthoven (Ned) bt 22-Basilashvili (Geo) 6-4, 6-3, 6-4; 10-Sinner (Ita) bt 20-Isner (USA) 6-4, 7-6(4), 6-3; 5-Alcaraz (Esp) bt 32-Otte (Ger) 6-3, 6-1, 6-2; 9-Norrie (GBr) bt Johnson (USA) 6-4, 6-1, 6-0.

**Women:** Bouzkova (Cze) bt 28-Riske-Amritraj (USA) 6-2, 6-3; 24-Mertens (Bel) bt 15-Kerber (Ger) 6-4, 7-5; 3-Jabeur (Tun) bt Parry (Fra) 6-2, 6-3; Maria (Ger) bt 5-Sakkari (Gre) 6-3, 7-5; 12-

Ostapenko (Lat) bt Begu (Rou) 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

**Mixed doubles (first round):** 6-Sania (Ind) & Pavic (Cro) bt Dzalamiidze (Geo) & Hernandez (Esp) 6-4, 3-6, 7-6(3).

### Fallen seeds

■ Men: 20-Isner, 22-Basilashvili; 25-Kecmanovic

■ Women: 5-Sakkari; 15-Kerber; 28-Riske-Amritraj

# Duplantis rewrites own pole vault mark

Olympic champion Jacobs pulls out of 100m at last moment

## DIAMOND LEAGUE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
STOCKHOLM

Armand Duplantis warmed up for next month's World Championships in perfect style at Stockholm's Diamond League meet on Thursday, delighting home fans by setting an outdoor pole vault record.

Meanwhile Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs was a late withdrawal from the men's 100m.

## Dominant display

In yet another dominant display in the final major meet before the July 15-24 World Championships in Eugene, USA, Duplantis had the competition wrapped up after his third effort at 5.83m.

The US-born vaulter then nailed 5.93 and 6.03 before clearing 6.16m on his second attempt, the best-ever performance outdoors that bettered by 1cm his previous



To greater heights: Duplantis delighted home fans with Thursday's exploit. • REUTERS

outdoor best set in Rome in September 2020.

With little time to fine-tune preparations ahead of the Worlds, Jacobs – a shock

gold winner at the Tokyo Olympics last year – pulled out of the 100m in another blow to his injury-hit season.

His coach Paolo Camossi,

however, played down the latest setback for his sprinter, who kicked off the season with world 60m indoor gold in Belgrade before a

thigh injury in mid-May disrupted track plans.

## Season's best

In Jacobs' absence, South African Akani Simbine clocked a season's best of 10.02s to win the 100m ahead of the fastest European this year, Britain's Reece Prescod (10.15).

**The results (winners): Men: 100m:** Akani Simbine (RSA) 10.02s; **800m:** Slimane Moulali (Alg) 1:44.60s; **3000m:** Dominic Lokinyomo Lobalu (ART) 7:29.48s; **Discus:** Kristjan Ceh (Slo) 70.02m; **Pole vault:** Armand Duplantis (Swe) 6.16m (WR); **400m hurdles:** Alison Dos Santos (Bra) 46.80s.

**Women: 100m hurdles:** Jasmine Camacho-Quinn (Pur) 12.46s; **200m:** Dina Asher-Smith (GBR) 22.37s; **400m hurdles:** Femke Bol (Ned) 52.27s; **800m:** Mary Moraa (Ken) 1:57.68s; **3000m steeplechase:** Daisy Jepkemei (Kaz) 9:15.77s; **High jump:** Eleanor Patterson (Aus) 1.96m; Long jump: 1 Lorraine Ugen (GBR) 6.81m.

# Yuki-Saketh pair in semis

SPORTS BUREAU

Yuki Bhambhani and Saketh Myneni beat Luca Margaroli and Yasutaka Uchiyama 6-7(8), 6-2, [10-8] to reach the semifinals of the €45,730 Challenger tennis tournament in Malaga, Spain.

**Other results: \$53,120 Challenger, Cali, Colombia: Quarterfinals:** Sriram Balaji & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan bt Ignacio Carou (Uru) & Facundo Mena (Arg) 7-5, 4-2 (retd).

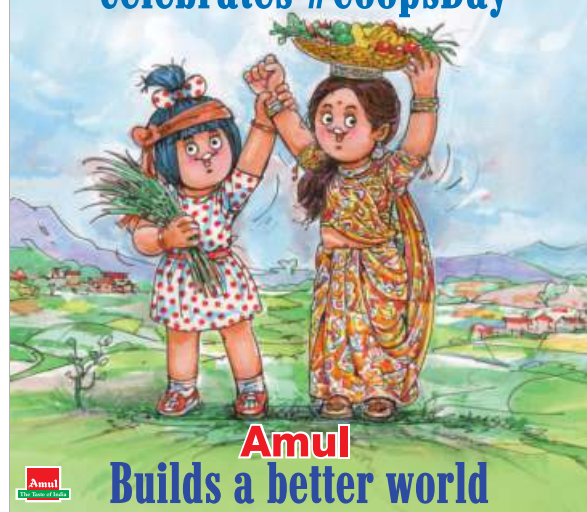
**\$15,000 ITF, Monastir, Tunisia: Men: Quarterfinals:** Boris Butulija (Srb) & Niki Poonacha bt Wang Chukang (Chn) & Faris Zakaryia (Egy) 6-3, 3-6, [10-7].

**Women: Singles (quarterfinals):** Jennifer Luikham bt Chiara Girelli (Ita) 3-6, 7-6(6), 6-0.

**\$100,000 ITF women, Charleston, USA: Singles (first round):** Victoria Duval (USA) bt Riya Bhatia 6-2, 6-2.

**\$15,000 ITF women, Los Angeles: Quarterfinals:** Sofia Da Cruz Mendonca & Eduarda Piai (Bra) bt Brandy Walker (USA) & Prathyusha Rachapudi 6-2, 7-6(2).

# India's favourite Cooperative celebrates #CoopsDay



Amul Builds a better world

# AFI to conduct trial for Aldrin on July 4

STAN RAYAN  
KOCHI

Perhaps realising that it had not been fair to Jeswin Aldrin, who was not cleared on Thursday for this month's World Championships despite achieving the automatic qualification standard in April, the Athletics Federation of India has now asked the long jumper to attend a trial at the NIS Patiala on July 4.

"Your performance should be close to 8.10m only then will you be considered for selection for the World Championships (in Oregon, USA, from July 15)," says a letter from the chief national coach Radhakrishnan Nair to Aldrin.

A similar letter has gone to Aishwarya Mishra. "It will be on the same day, same time. And the target is around the qualifying time (51.35s) set by World Athletics...thereabouts," Adille Sumariwalla told *The Hindu* on Friday night.

## NADA presence

While including Aishwarya, who had clocked a stunning



Jeswin Aldrin. • FILE PHOTO

51.18s at the Federation Cup in Malappuram in early April, the AFI had said on Thursday that the quartermiler would have to attend a trial where National Anti-Doping Agency officials would also be present.

Aldrin had jumped 8.26m (also a wind-assisted 8.37m) while winning the Federation Cup gold beating National record holder M. Sreeshankar.

If Aldrin qualifies, for the first time three male Indian long jumpers will be at the Worlds, the others being Sreeshankar and Muhammed Anees.

# IAU 24 Hour meet to kick off today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU) 24 Hour Asia and Oceania Championship will be held at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium. This is the first time the event is being conducted in India and the first since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic.

The event, comprising 37 elite runners, will see participation from four Asia-Oceania countries (India, Australia, Chinese Taipei and Lebanon) and will be flagged off at 9 a.m. on Saturday and will end 24 hours later.

The competition is a test

of who runs the most in a 24-hour window, in the present case on an outdoor 400m track. There will be a change in the direction of running once every four hours and the minimum time an athlete has to spend on the track is 21 hours.

Runners from Poland and the United Kingdom have been invited to the competition and they will run in the open category.

Additionally, there will be 12 hours open category run and 12 hours relay run (six runners running for two hours each).

India has fielded a team of 12 ultrarunners led by Amar Singh Devanda.

# Incredible comeback by Sourav Kothari

Down 0-5, the PSPB cueist registers a 6-5 win over Dilip

## SNOOKER

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Sourav Kothari of PSPB displayed tremendous resilience as he staged a remarkable fightback to defeat Railways' Dilip Kumar in the semifinals of the National Sports Club of India-organised ₹6.4 lakh all-India snooker open at the NSCI billiards hall on Friday.

In the best-of-11 frame contest, Kothari was 0-5 down at the break before reeling off the next six in remarkable fashion. The decider was a humdinger as both players were under pressure and missed some



Determination writ large: When all seemed lost, Kothari stepped up. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

easy pots. It was Kothari who kept his nerve to prevail 13-57, 17-62, 34-71, 22-62, 01-109, 81-07, 69-23, 88-16, 65-16, 79-

06, 70-69. In the quarterfinals, Kothari defeated Malkeet Singh of Railways 5-3 while Dilip over-

came Maharashtra's Sparsh Pherwani 5-4.

**The results: Semifinals:** Sourav Kothari (PSPB) bt Dilip Kumar (Rlys) 6-5 (13-57, 17-62, 34-71 (45), 22-62, 01-109(49), 81-07, 69-23, 88-16, 65(55)-16, 79-06, 70-69).

**Quarterfinals:** Kothari bt Malkeet Singh (Rlys) 5-3 (71-67 (67), 104(104)-0, 21-55, 59-50, 117(67,50)-15, 44-113(40), 17-107(72), 72-32); Dilip bt Sparsh Pherwani (Mah) 5-4 (75(46)-17, 72(50)-20, 14-45, 16-67(57), 49-88(41), 31-69, 67(57)-4, 95 (34)-13, 80-40); Lakman Rawat (PSPB) bt Brijesh Damani (PSPB) 5-1 (70-23, 55-44, 1-77, 139(139)-0, 78-32, 73(73)-26); Ishpreet Singh Chadha (Mah) bt Krieshh Gurbaxani (Mah) 5-0 (55-15, 63-62(60), 124(124)-1, 92(55)-27, 127(89)-15).

# Hamilton aims for more home-track success

Mercedes has struggled badly this season, but has reason to hope this weekend

## BRITISH GP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
SILVERSTONE

This weekend's British Grand Prix offers Lewis Hamilton a chance to make a statement on and off the track after a build-up dominated by how Formula One deals with racism.

Hamilton's Mercedes team has struggled badly this season but has reason to hope for an improved performance this weekend at Silverstone, where the British driver is an eight-time winner.

Unlike the recent races on street circuits, the British track has a smooth surface which could reduce the Mer-



Home advantage: Hamilton will be looking for a second straight podium finish and a ninth win at Silverstone. • REUTERS

cedes car's tendency to bounce up and down at speed, causing Hamilton back pain.

Hamilton said the team has done "phenomenal" work on upgrading the car

for this week's race, where he will be looking for a second straight podium finish after coming third at the Canadian GP.

The seven-time F1 champion also spoke out this

week about improving F1's record on diversity and inclusion, especially as drivers across F1 condemned former champion Nelson Piquet for comments in an interview describing Hamilton, the sport's only Black driver, with a racial term which drivers and teams widely condemned as offensive.

Standings leader Max Verstappen, who is in a relationship with Piquet's daughter Kelly, said Thursday that the man he calls his "father-in-law" had used a word that is "very, very offensive" but that he didn't consider Piquet to be a racist.

He added that Piquet's lifetime paddock access given to former F1 champions should not be revoked.

# Sahaja and Ankita make the semifinals

Slovakian Viktoria Morvayova tames Rutuja Bhosale to advance

## TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Sahaja Yamalapalli quelled the challenge from Saki Imamura of Japan 6-7(5), 6-0, 6-3 in the quarterfinals of the \$25,000 ITF women's tennis tournament at the Tennis Project, Baliawas, on Friday.

On a long day, when a sharp spell of rain provided a much-needed breathing time for the players in the afternoon, the 21-year-old Sahaja won two singles matches.

## Five-hour stint

She spent about five hours on court to set up a semifinal against fourth seed Ekaterina Yashina of Russia.

Second seed Aniketa Raina was the other Indian to make the semifinals, and did so with a 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 victory over Punnin Kovapitukted of Thailand in a three-hour battle.

If anything, the Thai's remarkably strong game helped Ankita sharpen her arsenal, as she had no option



Easy win: Viktoria Morvayova beat Rutuja Bhosale in the quarterfinals on Friday. • KAMESH SRINIVASAN

but to hammer a string of winners to close out the match.

In the semifinals, Ankita will be up against third seed Slovakian Viktoria Morvayova, who played the big points well to tame Rutuja Bhosale

haja served well to take a 5-3 lead.

Saki could not survive the onslaught of Sahaja any more and brought the curtains down on her challenge after nearly three hours.

## Hard work

The Japanese, with a heavily strapped thigh, had done the hard work of beating the top seed Diana Marcinkevica of Latvia 6-2, 6-2 earlier in the day.

**The results:** Quarterfinals: Sahaja Yamalapalli bt Saki Imamura (Jpn) 6-7 (5), 6-0, 6-3; Ekaterina Yashina bt Vaidehi Chaudhari 6-4, 4-6, 6-4; Viktoria Morvayova (Svk) bt Rutuja Bhosale 6-4, 6-2; Ankita Raina bt Punnin Kovapitukted (Tha) 4-6, 6-2, 6-3.

**Pre-quarterfinals:** Saki bt Diana Marcinkevica (Lat) 6-2, 6-2; Sahaja bt Sowjanya Bavisetti 6-2, 6-4; Ekaterina bt Anna Ukolova (Rus) 7-5, 7-6(6); Vaidehi bt Mihika Yadav 6-3, 6-1.

**Doubles (quarterfinals):** Marcinkevica & Rutuja bt Abhaya Vemuri & Apurva Vemuri 7-5, 6-2; Priska Madelyn Nugroho (Ina) & Ankita bt Punnin & Luk-sika Kumkhum (Tha) 6-2, 6-2.

# Government approves Indian team's training in Portugal

## TABLE TENNIS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A. Sharath Kamal will lead a 10-member Indian table tennis team for a training tour of Portugal from July 3 to 10, ahead of the upcoming Birmingham Commonwealth Games.

The team consists of five men and as many women paddlers and will be accompanied by two coaches in S. Raman and Anindita Chakraborty.

Besides Sharath, the other members of the men's team are Sanil Shetty, G. Sathiyam, Harmeet Desai and Manush Shah. Sreeja Akula, T. Reeth Rishya, Manika Batra, Diya Chitale and Swastika Ghosh form the women's side.

The Sports Ministry has sanctioned the tour at cost to government, subject to clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs.

Sharath, who will be featuring in his fifth CWG, is the



Sharath Kamal. • FILE PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

most experienced of the lot.

"We have come into the final phase of preparations for the Commonwealth Games. We will be going for match practice and a training camp in Portugal. The tour will be followed by a WTT tournament in Hungary," Sharath said at a virtual press conference, organised by SAI.

"We will play in a good international tournament. The camp will help us reevaluate our training session and preparations ahead of the CWG," the 39-year-old said.

Sharath is India's best bet, constantly working on his physical fitness and mental health.

"The amount of time I am spending at the gym is much more than what I spend on table tennis. I am also working on my mental fitness. I am having two fitness sessions and one table tennis session. It changes according to necessity and intensity varies," he said.

The four-time CWG gold medalist will partner Sreeja in the mixed doubles. Sharath won a bronze in the last CWG at Gold Coast along with Mouma Das.

All the players on the tour are part of the Birmingham-bound Indian team, named by the Committee of Administrators.

**The teams: Men:** Sharath Kamal, Sanil Shetty, G. Sathiyam, Harmeet Desai and Manush Shah. **Women:** Sreeja Akula, T. Reeth Rishya, Manika Batra, Diya Chitale and Swastika Ghosh. **Coaches:** S. Raman, Anindita Chakraborty.

# Jamuna, Sonia in last four

SPORTS BUREAU

World championship medallists Jamuna Boro and Sonia Lather posted wins to enter the semifinals of the Elorda Cup boxing tournament in Nur-Sultan on Friday.

Jamuna beat Aishagul Yeleubayeva of Kazakhstan 5-0 in a women's 54kg quarterfinal bout. Sonia defeated another local boxer Zhuldyz Shayakhmetova 5-0 in a 57kg contest. Jyoti Gulia (52kg) and Sakshi Choudhary (54kg) also advanced to the last four.

## Important results (Indians unless specified):

**Quarterfinals: Men: 54kg:** Ananta Chopade bt Altybek Nursultan (Kaz) 5-0; **57kg:** Sachin Siwah bt Lyu Ping (Chn) RSC-1; **67kg:** Aditya Pratap Yadav lost to Baatarsukh Chinzorig (Mgl) 5-0. **Women: 52kg:** Jyoti Gulia bt Zhansaya Rakhymberdi (Kaz) 4-1; **54kg:** Jamuna Boro bt Aishagul Yeleubayeva (Kaz) 5-0, Sakshi Choudhary bt Muzdiman Balauza (Kaz) 5-0; **57kg:** Sonia Lather bt Zhuldyz Shayakhmetova (Kaz) 5-0.

## NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

### Yatharth scalps five

A five-wicket haul by Yatharth Singh and half-centuries by Yash Kumar and Reeyansh Kapoor helped L.B. Shastri Club beat Gemini Club by seven wickets in the DDCA under-16 league. In other games, Ahaan Singhal's 126 saw Universal CC defeat Anand Sports by 158 runs, Harsh Pandey's 51 not out and Yash Motla's 4/20 helped Madras Club beat Malviya Club by eight wickets and four wickets by Sumit Kumar saw City Gymkhana down Young Association by 122 runs.

**The scores:** Gemini Club 133 in 39 overs (Lakshay Khatir 35, Yatharth Singh 5/18, Rihan Sharma 3/27)

lost to LBSC 137/3 in 19 overs (Yash Kumar 50, Reeyansh Kapoor 50); Universal 259/6 in 50 overs (Ahaan Singhal 126) bt Anand Sports 101 in 37 overs (Neen 3/24, Bhavishya Rajan 3/12); Malviya Club 104 in 39 overs (Yash Motla 4/20) lost to Madras Club 115/2 in 18 overs (Harsh Pandey 51 n.o.); City Gymkhana 256/8 in 50 overs (Mayank Yadav 66, Lalitshwar 43, Vidhit Chhabra 3/42) bt Young Association 134 in 50 overs (Krish Sharma 39, Sumit Kumar 4/17).

**All-round show by Sachin** Man-of-the-match Sachin Kumar Singh top-scored with an unbeaten 78 and also claimed seven wickets as Triaksh Cricket Club beat Ekta Cricket Club by 47 runs

in the third all-India Brahm Singh Gurjar memorial tournament.

**The scores:** TCC 188/4 in 20 overs (Sachin Kumar Singh 78 n.o., Mayank Choudhary 56) bt ECC 141 in 18 overs (Saurabh Deswal 79, Sachin Kumar Singh 7/14).

### Maanvish Club in final

Samarth Bhardwaj (3/8 and 60 n.o.) helped Maanvish Cricket Club thump beat PV Cricket Academy by nine wickets and enter the final of the Dev Dhanda memorial tournament.

**The scores:** PVCA 101 in 25 overs (Samarth Bhardwaj 3/8, Arpit Pal 3/28) lost to MCC 102/1 in 12 overs (Samarth Bhardwaj 60 n.o.).

# Rain washes out play

SPORTS BUREAU

Rain washed out play in the ₹1,00,000 AITA women's tennis tournament at the Joygaon Academy at Jhajjar on Friday.

The clay courts were ready for the semifinal matches in the afternoon, but a fresh spell of rain ruled out any scope of play for the rest of the day.

Sonal Patil, Riya Sachdeva, Tamanna Takoria and Medhavi Singh had made the semifinals. With most of the players scheduled to play another tournament at the same venue next week, referee Prasad Apte was not particularly worried about the schedule being upset by the rain.