



## Golden Team Looks for a Silver Lining

They lost to Italy, but Euro 2020 has offered a peek into the Belgian team's future

GREAT GAMES ►► 10

## on Sunday

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Sunday Chatter, Pure Politics and Bottomline

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

# wealth

## Find your lost investments

ON PLEA OVER NON-COMPLIANCE WITH INTERMEDIARY NORMS, TWITTER TELLS HC...

# 'Appointment of Compliance, Grievance Officers in Process'

ON PLEA OVER NON-COMPLIANCE WITH INTERMEDIARY NORMS, TWITTER TELLS HC...

## 'Appointment of Compliance, Grievance Officers in Process'

**Our Bureau**

Bengaluru: Microblogging platform Twitter is in the final stages of appointing a resident grievance officer after its interim appointee withdrew his candidature on June 21, the company told the Delhi High Court in an affidavit.

It is also in the process of appointing an interim chief compliance officer in the country, the US-based social media network said.

ET reported last month that Dharmendra Chatur, who was appointed Twitter's interim resident grievance officer for India in May, had quit.

Meanwhile, grievances of its users in India were being addressed by a grievance officer whose details are available on its website, the company told the court.

Responding to a petition alleging that it had not complied with India's Information Technology Rules, Twitter said the plea was not main-

**Empty Chair**

**Dharmendra Chatur, appointed interim resident grievance officer for Twitter, quit in June**

**Grievances of Indian users currently being addressed by US-based grievance officer**

**company says it is US-based, hence petition against under Section 266 is not maintainable**

**Neither originator nor publisher of electronic records transmitted through platform: Twitter**

**Delhi High Court is set to hear the case next on July 6**

tainable under Article 226 of the Constitution, as it is a corporation registered in the US.

Twitter also said it was neither the originator nor the publisher of electronic records transmitted through its platform. The petitioner claims to be aggrieved by tweets on its platform, but the authors of the same have not been impleaded as respondents in the case, it argued.

"The grievance of the petitioner was received and acknowledged by the answering respondent (Twitter) within 24 hours (on May 26). Further, the grievance has also been disposed of within the period of 15 days, on June 9 as prescribed by Rule 3(2) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021," the company said, arguing that the writ petition was not maintainable.

Twitter was responding to a notice issued on May 31.

Facing Several Cases ►► 6

## Pandemic Weddings Shrink in Scale, Not Luxury

Big fat Indian wedding makes way for intimate affairs with smaller guest lists, personalised gifts, plush locations

**Varunl.Khosla@timesgroup.com**

New Delhi: Last month, when a Dubai-based couple in their early 30s came down for their wedding in Hyderabad, they knew they couldn't invite more than 100 people. So, instead, hundreds of personalised gifts were sent to their friends and relatives.

The indulgences included customised pashmina shawls, special mithai and fragrant litars keeping personal preferences in mind. The couple chose the ritzy Taj Falaknuma Palace as the venue for sit-down dinners, with personalised name cards at each table.

In the past year, the 'big fat, lavish Indian wedding' has turned into a muted, private affair, as many who

had been waiting for the pandemic to subside have finally gone ahead with their plans.

What has come to the fore is personalisation, say planners. Mumbai-based Prerika Puri, founder of bespoke wedding service To The Aisle, said the scale of weddings

has shrunk tremendously, making way for intimate luxury weddings.

However, she pointed out that budgets and scope of work aren't very different. "Luxury personalised shawls, better gifts for guests who can't attend and the grandeur — all still remain intact, despite

the wedding size," said Puri.

**TIMING & TIMELINES**

Wedding planners have also been working on much shorter deadlines since a fluid Covid-19 situation means that planning can't happen too far in advance. "The new mo-

del for us is having a full-fledged plan B. In that if something doesn't work out, we can quickly arrange other things," said Puri.

Off-peak seasons such as July too are seeing some enquiries, observed Aash Studio's Aashna Saran. She said "auspicious" calendars were out to some extent, and many who had been waiting are now going ahead with their ceremonies.

Darshan Shroff, another wedding planner based in Mumbai, agreed. His company, Mamente Wedding Planners, is preparing for a high-end business family wedding in Delhi in July in the hopes that the government will ease restrictions — that currently allow only 50 people to attend.

**30% Business Shaved Off ►► 6**

### Marriage in Times of Covid

**15-20% of the wedding market business has been wiped out by Covid: Experts**

**Fewer garments, lesser grandeur has made glitzy Indian weddings a private affair**

**Wedding planners working on shorter deadlines due to fluid covid-19 situation**

**Say Intimate luxury with customised gifting will remain the theme this year**

**₹3,681 billion Indian marriage services industry in 2016: KPMG report on Market Study of Online Matrimony and Marriage Services in India**

**Resorts, hotels 'buyout' business from weddings will add 15-20% to bottom line**



PHOTO: TO THE AISLE

### Walking Towards K. Bridge



Puppet theatre actors walk with a giant figure depicting Fyodor Dostoevsky marking the **Day of Dostoevsky** in St. Petersburg, Russia, on July 3. The date of the holiday is associated with the beginning of Dostoevsky's novel 'Crime and Punishment', the events of which begin in July. — AP

## France Initiates Judicial Probe into Rafale Deal

Opposition reiterates its demand for JPC inquiry; BJP accuses Congress of lying

**Our Political Bureau**

New Delhi: With a judicial investigation into alleged corruption and favouritism reportedly initiated in France, the Opposition reiterated its demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Rafale fighter jet deal that was signed in 2016, while the BJP reacted strongly, accusing the Congress of lying.

According to French media reports, a judge has been appointed to lead a "highly sensitive" judicial investigation into allegations of corruption. This has reignited interest in the case that had been buried for years after a clean chit from the Supreme Court as well as all-clear reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

French media outlet Mediapart reported that the judicial inquiry has been initiated on June 14 and alleges that a "financial gift (was) granted by Dassault to Anil Ambani's Reliance Group". It also claims to have documents showing that the partnership between the French company and its Indian off-set partner was signed two weeks before a surprise announcement was made to procure 36 Rafale jets, instead of the 126 aircraft that were being negotiated earlier.

Following the reports, the Congress party has demanded a JPC probe into the deal, breathing back life into its charge against alleged corruption and favouritism. "Corrup-

### Under Lens

French media outlet Mediapart reported that the judicial inquiry has been initiated on June 14

**Alleges that a "financial gift (was) granted by Dassault to Anil Ambani's Reliance Group"**

**Claims to have documents showing partnership between Dassault and its Indian off-set partner was signed two weeks before the Rafale deal announcement**

**Says investigation being done under oversight of the national financial prosecutors' office**



tion in the Rafale deal has come out clearly now. The stand of the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government has ordered a probe," Congress Spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said at a press conference.

"Congress is synonymous with lies and myths. Today they lied about Rafale deal, again. If a country's NGO complains against a charge and its financial prosecution body orders a probe accordingly, it should not be seen as corruption," BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said.

Complaint by NGO Sherpa ►► 6

### KOSHYARI LOYALIST SUCCEEDS KHANDURI'S MAN

## PS Dhami is New Uttarakhand CM

**Two-term MLA Pushkar Singh Dhami has been elected the new chief minister of Uttarakhand. Outgoing chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat and BJP's state unit president Madan Kaushik proposed the name of the 46-year-old MLA from Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar district. The BJP legislature party, which met at 4 pm on Saturday, unanimously accepted the proposal, reports Sanjay Singh ►► 2**

## 'Foxconn Founder, TSMC Fix BioNTech Deal for Taiwan'

Reach initial agreement to buy 10 m vax doses on behalf of govt; deal not yet final, say sources

**Reuters**

Taipei: Foxconn founder Terry Gou and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co (TSMC) on Friday reached initial agreements to each buy 5 million doses each of BioNTech's Covid-19 vaccine, said three sources with knowledge of the situation.

Taiwan's government has tried for months to buy the shots directly from Germany's BioNTech and has blamed China, which claims the self-ruled island as its own territory, for nixing a deal the two sides were due to sign earlier this year. China denies the accusations.

Last month, facing public pressure about the slow pace of Taiwan's inoculation, the government agreed to allow Gou and TSMC to negotiate on its behalf for the vaccines, which would then be donated to the government for distribution.

Gou and TSMC reached the agreements with a subsidiary of Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Group Co Ltd, which has a contract with BioNTech to sell the Covid-19 vaccines in China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, the sources said.

The deal is not final and will still take some time to close the deal, one source said. It includes "related legal documents" needed to finalise the deal but does not specify a delivery date, as global demand for vaccines continues to outstrip supply, this person said.

The vaccines will be shipped directly to Taiwan from the German manufacturer, the person added.

Taiwan's government has said any BioNTech vaccines should be "produced in the original factory with the original packaging" and

### Corporate Help

Taiwan govt tried to buy vaccine directly from Germany's BioNTech

**Foxconn's Terry Gou, TSMC allowed to negotiate after govt talks failed**

**Taiwan blames China for deal falling through; China denies claim**

**Gou, TSMC reach agreement with Shanghai Fosun Pharma subsidiary**

**Co has contract with BioNTech to sell vax in China, HK, Macau, Taiwan**

**Thankful to Foxconn, TSMC; buying shots quite difficult: Taiwan minister**



be directly delivered to Taiwan.

Fosun did not respond to a request for comment. Foxconn, a major Apple Inc supplier, said it was continuing to "work hard" on the vaccine purchase plan. It did not elaborate.

TSMC, in an email statement, said it was still a work in progress and "no further information is available at this time." BioNTech declined to comment.

"The German government doesn't want to leave the impression that they didn't sell vaccines to Taiwan due to the Chinese pressure, so it has been pushing the company (BioNTech) to speed up its talks with Taiwan," a source said.

Sources said Fosun, as an exclusive dealer for the vaccine in China and Taiwan, is able to secure higher priority for distribution.

## THIRD EYE

## The Power of Personal Touch



Prime Minister Narendra Modi believes in the personal touch and it often reflects in his conversations. During his video conference with beneficiaries of Digital India programme, a lady from Meghalaya was surprised when the PM asked her about her engagement, saying he came to know it happened a day before. Pleasantly taken aback, the lady replied in the affirmative and thanked Modi for his wishes.

## Amid Cabinet Reshuffle Buzz



Last two weeks saw several MLAs and MPs, particularly from UP, Gujarat and West Bengal, camping in Delhi for reasons that they claimed was related to issues about their respective states. At least six MPs from Bengal were seen meeting senior party leaders and even ministers in what seemed like an attempt to increase their visibility as buzz about cabinet reshuffle intensifies.

## Much-Awaited Appointments



There are important appointments expected soon in the government. The crucial position of the DPIIT secretary is now officially vacant with the unfortunate demise of Guruprasad Mahapatra. While the MORTH Secretary Giridhar Aramane has been holding fort at DPIIT as well so far, the Centre is yet to decide on full-time charge of the department. The Skill Development Secretary Praveen Kumar also superannuated last week, and the appointment of his successor is just as keenly awaited.

## On Hold for Months



Assam Congress leaders have been reaching out to national leaders and their other contacts in New Delhi almost every evening to know whether the High Command has issued any order on the appointment of new Pradesh Congress Chief. It's been two months since Ripun Bora resigned as state chief taking moral responsibility for the party's humiliating defeat in the assembly polls.

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## UTTARAKHAND POLITICS

## Koshyari Loyalist PS Dhami Succeeds Khanduri's Man as CM



Dhami is from Kumaon region while his predecessors, Tirath Singh Rawat and Trivendra Singh Rawat, are from Garhwal

Sanjay.Singh2@timesgroup.com

**Dehradun:** Two-term MLA Pushkar Singh Dhami, a protégé of former CM Bhagat Singh Koshyari, has been elected the new chief minister of Uttarakhand. He replaces Tirath Singh Rawat, a known loyalist of another BJP stalwart BC Khanduri.

Outgoing chief minister Rawat and BJP's state unit president Madan Kaushik proposed the name of the 46-year-old MLA from Khatima in Udham Singh Nagar district.

The BJP legislature party, which met at 4 pm on Saturday, unanimously accepted the proposal.

This is the second change of guard in the state following Rawat's four-month term. Rawat, a Lok Sabha MP, had little chance of being elected MLA within two months so as to remain in his post. Uttarakhand is slated to go to the polls in about 6 months.

Dhami had served as Officer On Special Duty (OSD) in the chief minister's office during the tenure of Bhagat Singh Koshyari. During Koshyari's tenure as BJP's state unit president, Dhami had got the post of BJP's youth wing Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) president of Uttarakhand.

Dhami is from the Terai belt of the Kumaon region, while his predecessors, Tirath Singh Rawat and Trivendra Singh Rawat, are from the Garhwal region of the state. Tirath Singh Rawat, Dhami's predecessor, is known to be close to former CM B C Khanduri. He belongs to the Pauri Garhwal seat represented by Khanduri in the past.

Dhami was first elected to the state assembly in 2012. Born on September 16, 1975 in Kanailichhina village of Pithoragarh district, Dhami was associated with the BJP's student wing ABVP from 1990 to 1999. He later became state president of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) for two consecutive terms from 2002 to 2008.

"His good quality remains his easy accessibility, besides being a good communicator. So, it would not be a difficult task for him to ensure better coordination between the party organization and the state government which he will head," a source in the BJP said.

With about six months to go for the state polls, Dhami has little time to balance the equations between bureaucrats and politicians.

Dhami thanked the party leadership for reposing faith in him and said he would seek everybody's cooperation to deal with future challenges.

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## The Fall Of Tirath Singh Rawat

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**Dehradun:** The plan was to discuss the representation before the Election Commission to hold by-polls in Gangotri. At least that's what outgoing Uttarakhand chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat thought when he left for Delhi. Instead, ET has reliably gathered, BJP president J P Nadda gave him an elaborate explanation of the constitutional imbroglio the party finds itself in and that he should be prepared for all consequences.

This was on Thursday night, when he met Nadda at a senior leader's residence. The next day, sources said, the party president is believed to have shared a draft of letter with Rawat, which stated that he would be prepared to put in his papers if for the reasons enumerated in the letter. Insiders said he was expected to vet the letter and sign.

The letter broadly emphasized on two points as probable reasons. First, was a Covid19 issue that referred to the Election Commission decision to postpone bypolls to three parliamentary and eight assembly constituencies in May. Second, was the constitutional issue which related to the fact that while he needed to be mandatorily elected to the assembly within six months, the Election Commission was under no constitutional obligation because Article 151A of the Representation of Peoples Act makes it clear that it may not hold bye elections if remainder term of the assembly is less than a year.

Rawat, informed sources told ET, had done his homework by way of identifying precedents when the EC had made exception to this rule. He had combined this with data to show how Covid19 had been contained in Gangotri. He had hoped that the BJP's central leadership would give him the go-ahead to formally make the said representation to the EC. But, as it turned out, all he was expected to do was formalize the draft letter, sign and deposit it to Nadda.



ANE

**MERE FORMALITIES**  
All Rawat was expected to do was formalize the draft resignation letter, sign and deposit it to Nadda.

Just prior to his departure from Delhi, ET has gathered, he was indicated that he ought to meet the governor and tender in his resignation. That, sources added, decisively closed the door on the option of waiting it out in office for some more time, at least until the EC makes its final call on bypolls in the state.

Insiders suggest that the party had probably taken the political call to take a position against bye elections citing Covid19, one which its state unit in West Bengal has forcefully articulated on the question of bypoll necessary for Mamata Banerjee to continue as CM. This may well be BJP's line in case EC were to consult political parties, added sources. Meanwhile, Rawat will have to take solace with the fact that he will remain MP from Pauri Garhwal, a prized constituency he has nursed so long along with his mentor BC Khanduri.

## CREATING SUB-CATEGORIES

## Rohini Panel on OBCs Likely to Get 1-year Extension

Amid countdown to assembly polls, report to have huge impact in Hindi heartland politics

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**New Delhi:** The Justice Rohini Commission on sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) – a politically loaded issue with significant implications for states like poll-bound Uttar Pradesh – is likely to get a year-long extension, ET has learnt, its eleventh so far.

This time it may go beyond the usual six-month extensions repeatedly given by the government. The commission's current term ends on July 31.

The latest extension - on account of the Covid-19 pandemic - will however coincide with a countdown to the next assembly polls in states where its report could significantly impact the electoral fortunes of all major political parties including the ruling BJP.

Set up in 2017, it was originally asked to submit the report by March 2018. An extension would invariably postpone the sub-categorization by months and may come well after the assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, slated for early next year.

The overall electoral implications of the Commission's findings make it a subject of high political sensitivity, especially in the Hindi heartland, because it is likely to change the constituency-wise voter make up and usher in new socio-political ramifications in several states.

At the core of the issue is the Commission's mandate to sub-categorise the OBCs to bring equitable distribution of the 27% OBC quota in government jobs and educational institutes among all OBC caste groups.

According to a February 2021 formula – which ET was the first to report – the Commission is working on a proposal to group the total

2,633 OBC castes in the Central List into four subcategories.

The reallocation is expected to benefit over 2,000 caste groups that have not been able to get full benefit of the OBC quota, which is seen as having been cornered by 97 influential castes in category 4.

Roughly, the sub-categories 1, 2, 3 and 4 are proposed to get reservation of 2%, 6%, 9% and 10% respectively from the overall 27% OBC quota.

## SPREAD BENEFITS

Sub-categorization expected to spread out 27% quota benefits to over 2,000 caste groups

## BEYOND POLLS

The 11th extension would push sub-categorisation to well after polls in UP and 4 other states, slated for early 2022

The reason for the sub-categorization is the current inequality.

An assessment of the implementation of the 27% OBC quota over the last five years has shown that one-fourth of the OBC quota benefit is currently being availed by 10 castes alone, while two-thirds and three-fourths are taken by 37 and 100 castes, respectively.

The remaining 2,486 castes get only a one-fourth part in the quota matrix.

The Commission's assessments indicate that even among these 2,486 castes, as many as 1,013 castes have no representation at all in the 27% quota and the remaining 972 have 2.6% representation.

Only 501 castes currently get the benefit of the quota in toto.

## Talks on to Form Opposition Front: Tejashwi Yadav

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**New Delhi:** RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said opposition leaders are in informal discussions over forming a united alliance against the BJP in the run-up to the 2024 general election.

Yadav told ET that informal discussions among leaders are happening whenever possible, although activities of all political parties including the RJD have stopped. "Now, to my knowledge everybody is working to stop the BJP in their states," he said.

The issue of who will lead the opposition alliance can be discussed later, said Yadav. "It's Modi versus muddle (issues) and Modi versus people of India this time around," he said. "It is a very shrewdly crafted narrative by the BJP as if there were no PMs in the country before Modi and there won't be after him either."

The RJD is in favour of an alliance which includes the Congress. Yadav said the Congress is in a direct fight with the BJP on around 200 seats and that any alliance without the Congress would be difficult. However, he emphasised on the role of regional parties in the formation. "Regional parties like ours, TMC, DMK, SP, NCP, JMM, SS, Left and BJD are formidable forces in their respective states and hence they should be in the driving seat in their strongholds. In the recent past regional parties have proved how to defeat BJP," he said.

He suggested that all like-minded parties should sit and work out a plan on a seat-by-seat basis and play their role for better electoral dividends.

Chairman of Assam State Minority Welfare Board, Syed Mominul Awal told ET, "Around 120 people

from indigenous Muslim community are expected to attend the meet." Muslims comprise 34% of the 3.12 crore population of Assam, of which 4% are indigenous Assamese Muslims and the remaining are mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims. The BJP led government in Assam had earlier proposed the creation of a development board for indigenous Muslims communities Gorla, Morla, Deshi and Jolah.

Recently, Sharma said that Muslim organisations have welcomed his proposal of adopting decent family planning norms.

He said he is meeting 150 Muslim intellectuals to discuss this issue three-adjare.

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## No Coercive Action Against NGOs That Fail to Meet Annual Returns Deadline: HC to MHA

Rahul.Tripathi@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court has "restrained" the government from taking any "coercive" action against Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) if they fail to file their annual returns before June 30.

The order was passed on petitions from NGOs which had expressed inability to submit the return under FC-4 Form for the year 2019-2020, as the online system, introduced under the amended Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act 2020, accepts the entry only if the account is in SBI's New Delhi Main Branch. They sought the court's direction to the Union home ministry to amend the FC-4 Form and grant an extension for filing their annual returns.

Passing the order, the court further observed that "a citizen cannot be penalised for a discrepancy in the form prescribed by the union government, resulting in the form being unable to be submitted even in the case of a law-abiding citizen."

As per the rules, the government may cancel FCRA licenses of NGOs for such violations.

The home ministry, however, told the court that it cannot extend the deadline, but organisations could submit their returns later with the appropriate penalty.

On this, the court noted, "The submission does not comment it is the government's responsibility to ensure that the form is user-friendly and accessible to all citizens."

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## OTHER NEWS OF THE DAY

## LUNCH BREAK AMID PROTEST DUTY



Police personnel during AAP's protests at the Siswan house of CM Capt. Amarinder Singh - PRITAM THAKUR

## AAP's Sanjay Singh Discusses Pact With Akhilesh Yadav

Kumar.Anshuman@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjay Singh met Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav at latter's office in Lucknow on Saturday, at a time when both parties are exploring new alliances to defeat the BJP in the state in

next year's assembly election. The SP has traditionally faced a challenge in performing well on urban seats, and the AAP could be of help if the two parties were to join hands, according to political observers.

Singh said it was a courtesy visit to wish Yadav on his birthday. But he did not rule out any possibility of the two parties

coming together.

This was the first such meeting between the two leaders, said people aware of the matter. They said the bonhomie between the two parties was evident recently, when they raised the issue of alleged irregularity in the land purchase for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"We are not doing politics with a tiny heart. We will take a decision based on whatever will be the best for the state," Singh told media persons.

## Tanishq Plans to Introduce Affordable Fine Jewellery Soon



Sutanuka Ghosal  
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Kolkata: Jewellery major Tanishq is all set to introduce jewellery made of materials that will give the feel of gold to the customers but will be more affordable.

Though the company did not divulge the details of the materials used, Ajay Chawla, CEO, Tita Jewellery, told ET "We have been experimenting in reducing the product weight which will be achieved through a mix of material, technology and design innovations. The objective is to develop a substantial range of products that will be the lightest weight when compared with equivalent jewellery elsewhere and thereby offer the best value to customers, given the substantial increase in gold prices over the last two years."

Gold prices have risen 37% in last two years. In July 2019, price of gold was ₹34,910 per 10 gm and it shot up to ₹47,590 per 10 gm in July 2021. Price of the yellow metal had crossed ₹57,000 per 10 gm in August 2020.

"Designs of lower weight would span across multiple categories under different workmanship types — machine made as well as hand-made jewellery including Calcutta style filigree, kundan jewellery and temple jewellery. These lightweight products are expected to be available across all Tanishq stores over the next few months," said Chawla.

## Automobile Demand Remains Skewed Towards PVs, Tractors

IAN S

New Delhi: Automobile demand in June has remained skewed in favour of passenger vehicles (PVs) and tractors, said Motilal Oswal Financial Services (MOFSL) in a report. According to the report, commercial vehicles (CVs) and two-wheelers' (2Ws) sales are yet to catch up.

"June 2021 saw a gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions across states, with a good recovery witnessed in PVs and tractors."

"Current valuations largely factor in a sustained recovery (our base case), leaving a limited margin of safety for any negative surprise."

According to MOFSL: "We prefer 4Ws over 2Ws, as PVs are the least impacted segment currently and offer a stable competitive environment."

"We expect the CV cycle to recover and gain momentum towards 2HFY22. We prefer companies with a higher visibility in terms of a demand recovery, a strong competitive positioning, margin drivers, and balance sheet strength." Besides, MOFSL pointed out that 2Ws, CVs, and tractors were above our muted expectations, while PVs were in line.

"Based on weak feedback for 2W or M&A/HCV retails, there seems to be a further inventory build-up in 2Ws."

# CBDT Issues Rules for Taxing Partnership Cos in India

Board says capital assets, money or stock received by a partner during dissolution to be considered as deemed transfer and profits

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said that capital assets, money or stock in trade received by a partner in a partnership firm during its dissolution or reconstruction would be considered a deemed transfer and profits of gains arising from the transfer would be subject to income tax.

In two separate sections introduced in the Finance Act, 2021 earlier this year, the government had brought in provisions of taxing capital gains on transfer of capital assets by a partner or member in a partnership firm, so as to prevent evasion of taxes on capital gains.

In a circular issued on Friday, the CBDT said that deemed transfer of capital assets or stock in trade or both

when received by the partner or member from the firm would be subject to income tax under capital gains or profits and gains of business or profession. The fair market value of the capital asset or stock in trade or both will be deemed as the full value of consideration, it said.

The board also said that any money or capital asset or both received by the partner or member from the firm during dissolution or reconstruction will be chargeable under capital gains. This provision includes capital assets forming part of a block of assets.



It notified the new rules, specifying short-term and long-term capital assets which will be chargeable under capital gains.

The board clarified that revaluation of an asset or valuation of self-generated asset or self-generated go-

odwill does not entitle depreciation on the increase in value of that asset.

Experts said the new rules will provide much-needed clarity for attribution of income and determination of long-term and short-term capital gains at the hands of the reconstituted entity. "Its characterisation as short-term or long-term capital gains depends upon the period of holding of remaining capital assets to which such income is attributed."

Any excess received on revaluation or valuation of assets will be deemed short-term capital gains if it relates to self-generated goodwill or assets forming part of a block of assets," said Sandeep Bhalla, partner at Dhruva Advisors LLP.

Further, no depreciation will be allowed on self-generated assets due to valuation or revaluation, he said.

"All self-generated assets including goodwill — if revalued or valued in books resulting in increase in capital base of a partner — will be regarded as short-term capital asset for taxability in case of transfer to a partner pursuant to its reconstitution. This will cause real hardship to taxpayers," said Amrith Shah, partner at Deloitte India.

The board clarified that when transfer of capital assets takes place both provisions will be applicable and taxation will be worked out independently. This will be applicable from assessment year 2021-22.

## Jio Offers Emergency Data Loan Packs for Prepaid Users

Users can borrow 5 emergency data loan packs of 1GB each under new scheme

Our Bureau

Mumbai: Reliance Jio Infocomm (Jio) has introduced emergency data loan packs customers can use now and pay later. The offer comes at a time when telcos are wooing subscribers with weekend recharges and additional validity plans to ensure customer loyalty and higher average revenue per user (ARPU).

"Emergency data loan facility provides the flexibility of 'Recharge Now and Pay Later' functionality to Jio users who run out of their high-speed daily data quota and are unable to recharge immediately," said a person familiar with the largest telco's latest customer offer.

The carrier is targeting a 500-million subscriber base.

Under the new scheme, prepaid users can borrow up to five emergency data loan packs of 1GB each, at ₹11 a pack.

Telcos are coming up with various options for data guzzling customers without raising tariffs across segments.

Last month, Jio, which mostly has a prepaid customer base, came up with a 30-day validity plan at a higher price point than the usual 28-day pack.

The target is to get customers to sign up for additional validity or data

### Ahead Of The Curve

Carrier targets a 500-million subscriber base

LAST MONTH, Jio came up with a 30-day validity plan at a higher price point

EXPERTS SAY co-aims to get users to sign up for addl validity or data and move them up price ladder

JIO'S LATEST offer comes at a time when rivals Airtel and Vi also are planning tariff hikes

IN THE March quarter, Vi clocked an ARPU of ₹107, while Airtel and Jio have ARPUs at ₹145 and ₹138.2, respectively



ta and move them up the price ladder, say experts. Jio's latest offer comes at a time when rivals Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea (Vi) also discussed raising tariffs.

On Friday, Vi's MD and CEO, Ravinder Takkar, discussed how various options are being rolled out in the absence of formal tariff increases, but with the aim of getting customers to adopt higher-value plans.

"How do you actually move customers up to a higher payment ladder? The new plans offer a bucket of data, which you can use during a period of time — 40, 60 or 90 days — and you can use them anytime.... When

you run out of that, you can buy more data, which I believe is the right architecture for price increase," Takkar said in a call with analysts.

On the same day, Bharti Airtel, India's second-largest telecom operator, launched all-in-one plans called Airtel Black to offer fiber, DTH and mobile services under one program, and with a single billing facility. The move is aimed at attracting high-paying customers and driving ARPUs.

Vi clocked an ARPU of ₹107, while Airtel and Jio have ARPUs at ₹145 and ₹138.2, respectively, in the March quarter.

## Clash with the European Season Creates Olympic Soccer Headache

Players spreading across the country not desired as Japan tries to stage a Games that limits risks of Covid infections rising

Often the event that connects an Olympic host city with the rest of the nation, soccer could be a source of trepidation rather than excitement in Japan. Players spreading across the country is far from desired as Japan is trying to stage a Games that limits the risks of Covid-19 infections spreading.

Of the seven stadiums, five are away from the Tokyo area, with Sapporo about a 100-minute flight north of the capital. With crowd sizes restricted, too, Japan's men won't get to experience the joy of the packed Maracana that provided one of the signature moments of the Rio Olympics, when Neymar's penalty clinched gold for the host nation. Japan has little pedigree in Olympic men's



soccer, winning its only medal — a bronze — at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. The country's most recent brush with glory came at the 2019 Asian Cup before a surprise loss to Qatar in the final. Even though men's soccer squads at this Olympics are mostly players under the age of 24, Japan isn't using a youth team coach for the Olympics. Moriyasu has opted for versatility with players who can adapt to different roles, including Kou Ikura, who plays for Dutch club Gron-

ningen at either center back or midfield. Soma Yuki of Nagoya Grampus can play at fullback on either flank.

### OLYMPICS CLASH

The clash of the Olympics with the start of the European season makes it hard for teams to often take their best players. So, Japan will be without its biggest star. Forward Takumi Minamino is with Liverpool trying to regain the Premier League title.

Egypt also wants to be able to call on Minamino's Liverpool teammate Mohamed Salah, especially given there is an African Cup of Nations starting in January. It's unclear whether he will be able to lead the team in Japan.

The Egyptians are in a group with Spain, Australia and Argentina. The Olympics is the only major title Lionel Messi has won with Argentina, at the 2008 Beijing Games. But the out-of-contract Barcelona forward is not one of the three permitted overage players in the Argentina squad at a time when he looks to resolve his club future and has been involved in the Copa America in this offseason. AP

## Jeff Bezos' Exit Is One of Many Among Amazon's Top Ranks

Seattle: When Andy Jassy is elevated to CEO of Amazon Monday, taking the reins from its founder, Jeff Bezos, it will be one of the most closely watched executive handoffs in years.

But a much less heralded — though still deeply meaningful — change has already been underway at the company. Dozens of executives in Amazon's upper ranks have departed in the past 18 months, many after working there for over a decade.

It is an unusual level of disruption inside the business. The departing executives don't represent a huge slice of the top ranks, with hundreds of vice presidents now.

Bezos epitomised that relationship. So did Jeff Wilke, who led the global consumer business, and Steve Kessel, who ran its physical stores, and others who introduced and ran key programs, including Alexa, free delivery and large parts of its cloud business. Now those leaders are gone.

Having Wilke and Bezos leave so close together amounts to "epic, tectonic shifts," said David Glick, a former Amazon vice president who is now the chief technology officer at Flexe, a logistics startup.

Wilke and Kessel retired, but many vice presidents are leaving for top jobs at public companies or high-growth startups.

Teresa Carlson, who over a decade built Amazon's government cloud business, in April became the chief growth officer of Splunk, which provides data software, and Greg Hart, who once shadowed Bezos for a year and then launched Alexa and Echo, is now the chief product officer at the real estate firm Compass.

"Amazon has done a better job than anyone in the history of the world at staying Day 1 longer," said Glick, referring to a phrase Bezos used regularly to encourage employees to act as if they were at a startup. NYT

### CHINA, EU, US AND OTHERS TIGHTEN SCRUTINY

## How Indian Agri Exporters Face Some Odd Barriers

A slew of technical hurdles have emerged as new stumbling blocks for Indian agri exporters

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New Delhi: Jagdish Fofandi, a Gujarat-based seafood exporter, is in a quandary. Just ahead of the new fishing season, which begins next month, there's been a rise in rejection of export consignments by Chinese authorities, who have cited the presence of Covid-19 residues in packing materials.

The processing unit of Fofandi's family-owned Deepmala Foods, in the fishing harbour at Veraval in Junagadh district, has Covid-appropriate measures, including disinfecting the packaging materials. But these efforts were in vain: just recently, a consignment to China was rejected. He suspects that what was in fact detected was residual DNA from dead coronavirus, something no disinfectant spray could erase.

Fofandi, also the national president of Seafood Exporters Association of India, told ET that a majority of the 160 seafood exporters from Gujarat alone, who supply fish like ribbon, croaker and silver pomfret to the Chinese market, have suddenly discovered they were victims of a non-transparent barrier, with default in payment from Chinese importers rising to the tune of Rs 40 crore. Gujarat accounts for a quarter of India's seafood export to China.

"The protocol followed by China is weird. Once they detect a dead material of Covid on the packet, they will suspend import from that particular company," he said.

And it's not restricted to the fish trade. A slew of technical barriers — some traditional and others have emerged as new stumbling blocks for Indian agricultural exporters. Whereas some of the protocols are opaque, others are transparent yet illogical, says an official from the department of commerce dealing with the subject.

Some of the barriers include the European Union's persistent tightening of norms on maximum residue level (MRL) of chemical substances used in pesticide, the US's recent move to force Indian suppliers to apply for organic certificates only from a US-accredited agency, and Mexico's continuing suspension of import

### Trade Walls

CHINA SAYS corona fragments are found in India's seafood packaging material

EU TIGHTENS and move norms on maximum residue level of chemical substance used in pesticide



INDIA'S BASMATI rice exporters are worried some Middle East nations are trying to copy EU norms on MRL

US CHANGED rules in Jan to force Indian suppliers apply for organic certificates only from a US-accredited agency



NO RESOLUTION found in Mexico's continuous suspension of import of dried chillies from India

of dried chillies from India after an incident in which a Khapra beetle was intercepted back in 2017.

In fact, all US-bound consignments carrying chilli, its powder and seeds, are mandatorily tested on food safety parameters in India, but the US does not recognise a certificate from the Spice Board of India's laboratory. "We are requesting the US authorities to accept the test reports for clearance of the spice consignments, which are sampled, tested and certified on a mandatory basis by the Indian Government laboratory," the board's chairman and secretary D Sathiyar said.

Interestingly, China, which has been discouraging marine products from India citing presence of coronavirus fragments and is also proposing a new health certificate format for shrimp import, hasn't felt the same concern about Indian spices.

FOR FULL REPORT, GO TO [www.economictimes.com](http://www.economictimes.com)



## Tipple Delight Minus the Booze!

**PUSH FROM BIGGIES** Sales of non-alcoholic beverages have been rising since May 2019, but the Covid-19 pandemic has given a fillip

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New Delhi: Karan Jain, a Mumbai-based importer of British gin and tonic mixers, is tirelessly working the phones to bring in more non-alcoholic beer because the demand has been soaring. For his three-year-old company that

runs the Bevs.in website, business has never been this good, as consumption of non-alcoholic and low-alcohol beverages (with alcohol content of 0.0-0.4%) has been on the rise.

Partly brought on by the vagaries of the Covid-19 virus outbreak that shut down liquor vends in many cities over sustained periods last year and recently, the

'adult' soft beverages category — as it is called — has both grown and evolved. In fact, it has closely mirrored the explosion in gin drinking, say industry observers.

The non-alcoholic beverage market was valued at ₹52,400 crore in 2015 and is expected to have grown at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate of 17.6% till last year, according to a PwC study.

Jain's company has been growing at a 4-time pace over the past year, he says, selling mixers and drinks from brands like Franklin & Sons, which makes ales, tonics and elderflower lemonades. People want to drink 'better' at home and are happy to pay, he adds, with order sizes on average often going up to ₹4,500.

"Our growth has been achieved in less than a year, since March and April 2020 were locked down. Before 2020, we only sold offline through partner stores but online sped up business by 3-4 years," Jain says.

According to market and consumer data provider Statista, the non-cola carbonated beverages market in India was three billion litres in 2016 and is estimated to touch about 4.2 billion litres this year. During the second Covid-19 wave, while alcohol sales were restricted, non-alcoholic beverages were available online or in supermarkets, says Sepoy and Co's co-founder Angad Soni.

Svami, a tonic water company that launched in 2016, has seen 2 times growth in the pandemic year, says

### Cheers! Teetotal Toaster

#### NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

• Superstores say demand is up 200% in pandemic

• BigBasket says the category grew 3 times in the 2020-21 period

• Consumers of non-alcoholic and low-alcohol beverages (0.0-0.4%) are on the rise

• Liquor vends being locked down in many cities cited as reasons

#### NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE

• The market was valued at ₹52,400 crore in 2015

• It is expected to grow at a CAGR of 17.6% till 2020: PwC

• At 3 billion litres in 2016

• Estimated to reach about 4.2 billion litres in 2021: Statista

Aneesh Bhasin, its co-founder. Businesses like Svami, Sepoy and Co, Gunsberg and Bengal Bay have quickly moved beyond the staid tonic water market to broaden their product range into flavoured and low-calorie tonics, ginger beer and ginger ales, and interesting varieties of non-alcoholic cocktails, says Vikram Achanta, founder of Tulleeho, a drinks training and consulting firm.

Achanta says having 'new-age' entrepreneurs at the helm helps businesses, without specifically commenting on how much the non-alcoholic category has

grown in the past year.

For Svami, consumption at home is a big focus now and it is building a drinking guide for the indoors, says Bhasin, adding that when it launched, 70% of its business came from bars and events.

Jimmy's Cocktails, which has raised \$1 million in its nearly two-year journey, has seen a 20-time month-on-month growth over the past year and home consumption has pushed its D2C economics.

"In a way, it may have been a temporary measure; when alcohol outlets were closed, that led to a spike in bu-

ness," says founder Ankur Bhatia. "There is a global trend of these types of drinks being popular, but are we completely there yet? Maybe not."

Ginsberg, a Punjab-based ginger beer firm, says it is growing at 5 times, selling about 5,000-8,000 bottles a day since it went online during the pandemic.

#### PUSH FROM BIGGIES

The big push has come from the bigwigs of the trade. Kingfisher launched two such products in 2020, while Hoegaarden, Heineken and Budweiser also sell their own non-alcoholic variants.

Online grocer BigBasket, for instance, carries 14 such brands and 80 products in its portfolio. The e-grocer has seen a 3-time growth in this business since the pandemic hit. While the traditional cola business is about 30 times the size of the non-alcoholic category, it has grown a tad slower than these 'adult beverages,' says Seshu Kumar Tirumala, national category head at BigBasket. "It has probably gained salience due to being lower in sugar etc, than colas and juices," Tirumala says.

For premium food supermarket Fofandi, the non-alcoholic beverages category has been rising since May 2019, but the pandemic gave a fillip to sales. Two years ago, the top three brands were Kingfisher, Heineken and Budweiser, which to-

ok up 45%, 35% and 20% share, respectively, once they launched.

But by the financial year 2020-21, the scenario had changed.

The closure of liquor shops boosted this category tremendously and Hoegaarden was the fourth to launch a product in the segment.

Overall sales in the category grew by 200%, with Budweiser becoming the number one brand with a 35% share, followed by Heineken and Kingfisher, both at 25% share, and Hoegaarden making up 15%.

The year saw regular stockouts due to increased demand, with a similar trend playing out this year as well.

According to a survey conducted online by market research firm Mintel, nearly one-third of Indians between the ages of 25 and 34 reduced their beer intake between 2019 and 2020. More than two in five (41%) of those surveyed said they were interested in switching from standard strength beer to low- or no-alcohol variants.

Separately, internal research by Svami also suggested that Gen-Z globally were drinking much less than their predecessors. The company broke all flavours of favourite drinks like rum and coke, used spices and flavours like vanilla and with a little backward integration, created a non-alcoholic version. In the last year alone, 25% of its sales have come from these types of products.

Shantanu Nandan Sharma

**O**n June 20, a double-stack container train, comprising 178 boxes in two layers, departed from Gujarat's Mundra port on a trial run. The rake carried real goods: glycerine, softwood pulp, aluminium scrap, base paper, electric parts, compressors, knitting machines and polyester fabric, all imported from countries such as France, Germany, Mexico, Italy and the United Arab Emirates. Their final destination was either Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) or Punjab.

A day later, an elated Railway Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted, "The first trial run for double stack container train from Mundra, Gujarat to NCR has been completed successfully," adding how his ministry's move would lead to efficient movement of freight between ports of Gujarat and the rest of India.

Meanwhile, Indian Railways (IR) is, at the time of writing this report, waiting for a date to be conveyed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to flag off a container train in the 646 km stretch from Rewari in Haryana to New Palanpur in Gujarat, comprising 42% of the western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project. With feeder routes to three Gujarat ports—the government-run Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla) and the privately held Mundra and Pipavav—being overhauled and upgraded for carrying double-stack containers, what is waiting in the wings is a faster, uninterrupted and highly cost-effective journey of export-import items between north India and coastal Gujarat. It sounds like a perfect script—till this stage.

But there is a problem, and that has arisen out of the partial rollout of the DFC project due to a delay in acquiring land in Maharashtra. The Mumbai-based, government-owned Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) port, also called Nhava Sheva, fears that it will be left in the lurch, with a big diversion of freight traffic to ports in Gujarat.

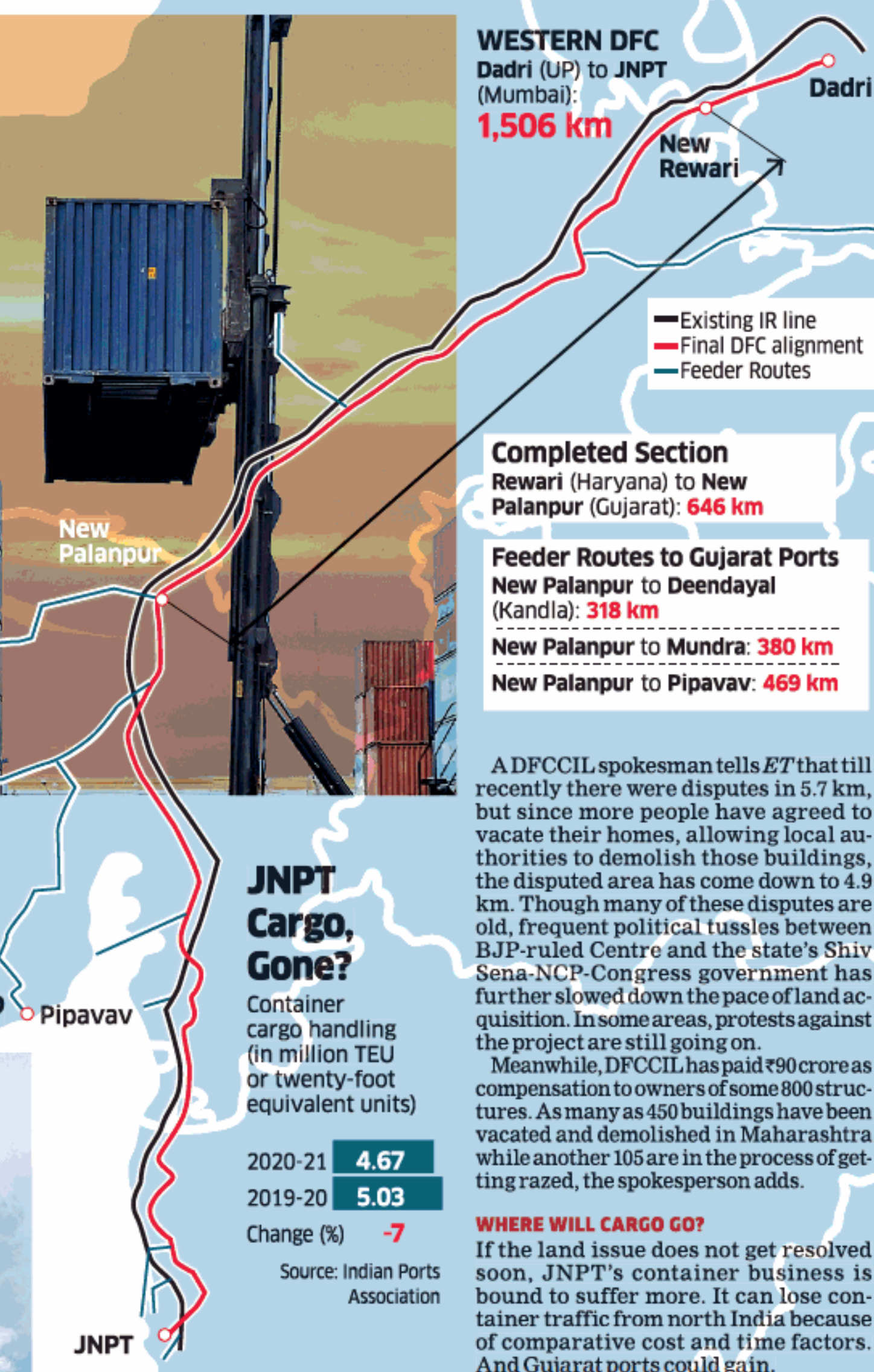
A railway official in the know says JNPT has taken up the matter with the ministries of shipping and the railways. JNPT Chairman Sanjay Sethi says, in an email interview to *ET*, that once the DFC is partially rolled out, the Mundra port of Gujarat will gain some initial volume. However, he insists that a market-driven rail tariff will finally decide the volume between Mundra and JNPT. He says JNPT's losses in the short run could be 10-20% of the present ICD (inland container depots) volume, which means cargo originating from dry ports.

The greater delay in acquiring land in Maharashtra the more the losses the JNPT could incur. Currently, the flagship DFC project faces major land acquisition bottlenecks in 16 locations in Maharashtra's Raigad, Thane and Palghar districts, according to documents previewed by *ET*, making it clear that the rest of the project is unlikely to be wrapped up by June 2022, the new deadline set by DFCCIL (DFC Corporation of India Ltd), the railway entity anchoring the project. The deadline for completing the project has been extended multiple times in the past.



# A PORT LEFT HIGH AND DRY

Will the delay in acquiring land in Maharashtra for the Dedicated Freight Corridor project affect the govt-owned JNPT port in Mumbai?



A DFCCIL spokesman tells *ET* that till recently there were disputes in 5.7 km, but since more people have agreed to vacate their homes, allowing local authorities to demolish those buildings, the disputed area has come down to 4.9 km. Though many of these disputes are old, frequent political tussles between BJP-ruled Centre and the state's Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress government has further slowed down the pace of land acquisition. In some areas, protests against the project are still going on.

Meanwhile, DFCCIL has paid ₹90 crore as compensation to owners of some 800 structures. As many as 450 buildings have been vacated and demolished in Maharashtra while another 105 are in the process of getting razed, the spokesperson adds.

## WHERE WILL CARGO GO?

If the land issue does not get resolved soon, JNPT's container business is bound to suffer more. It can lose container traffic from north India because of comparative cost and time factors. And Gujarat ports could gain.

In Covid-hit 2020-21, for example, JNPT's total container cargo business shrunk by 7% to 4.67 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) from 5 million TEUs a year ago. During the same period, Adani-owned Mundra port witnessed a robust 18% growth in container volumes, registering 5.65 million TEUs in FY



## Railways' routes."

In other words, faster and low-priced, double-stack journeys (rate could be 30% less) will be available between North India and ports of Gujarat whereas for JNPT it will be a break journey, partly in elite double stack and partly in ordinary railway lines.

## LAND IN TROUBLE

Former Railway Board chairman and CEO Vinod Kumar Yadav says JNPT port will continue to be relevant though it will be affected temporarily. "JNPT's traffic could be hit a bit for some time, but once the entire western DFC is ready, likely to be in June 2022, there will be a level-playing field once more. The Maharashtra government should ensure the remaining part of the land is acquired fast," he says.

One more year would not have made a big difference, but people associated with the project say it is impossible to complete the rest of the line by mid-2022. They have a reason. Although the non-acquired land impacts just 4.9 km or 0.3% of the length of the western DFC corridor, it is not one stretch. The disputed areas are scattered across several districts, involving too many stakeholders. In a linear project such as highways or railways, even a small dispute over just 100 metres of land could end up stalling the entire project.

2021, as against 4.81 million TEUs in FY 2020, piping JNPT for the first time to become India's biggest container port by volume. The government-run Deendayal Port, still better known by its earlier name Kandla, handled only 0.5 million TEUs of containers in 2020-21, which is just 10% of JNPT's container business. *ET*'s questionnaire to Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd did not elicit any response.

According to DFC officials, a new roll-on-roll-off (Ro-Ro) rail service, to be unveiled soon, will be useful for JNPT and Gujarat ports. The service, according to the blueprint, will be available for the 646 km stretch from Rewari to New Palanpur; here containerised trucks will be loaded on flat rail wagons, prompting a faster and cheaper journey. At New Palanpur, these trucks will move out of the train and embark on a road journey to their respective ports. "Whether the traffic is meant for JNPT or Gujarat ports won't matter. Both will be able to piggyback on our rail flat wagons and complete the journey in just 10-12 hours, much less than usual road journeys. This environment-friendly and economically sustainable traffic will equally help the JNPT," says DFCCIL's Jain.

Ro-Ro could, for now, assuage some of the fears of JNPT.

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## "JNPT May Lose 10-20% of ICD Cargo But Will Regain It"

Edited excerpts of an email interview with JNPT Chairman Sanjay Sethi:

### ON JNPT'S LOSSES DUE TO PARTIAL ROLLOUT OF DFC:

Commencement of dedicated freight trains in its first phase from northern India to Gujarat ports will surely have an impact, but how much the impact will be has yet to be ascertained. Mundra and Pipavav, over the years, are already catering to EXIM (export-import) trade from northern India and, with this partial DFC, Mundra and other ports in Gujarat do stand to gain. JNPT may lose cargo anywhere between 10% and

20% of present ICD volume in the short run. However, JNPT will surely regain it once DFC trains reach JNPT too.

### ON GUJARAT PORTS' FIRST-MOVER ADVANTAGE:

Now US, China, Europe and the Middle East are India's major trading partners by sea. JNPT provides a maximum number of sailings. Once DFC is rolled out, the first-mover advantage gained by Mundra naturally would get it some volume during the initial period of commissioning, but at a later stage the market-driven rail tariff will decide the volume between Mundra and JNPT.

## DFC: A Chronology

**2005** Project announced by PM Manmohan Singh



**2006** DFCCIL Incorporated

**2007** In-principle approval given for land acquisition

**2008** Eastern and western corridors approved

**2010** JICA extends first tranche of loan

**2013** Award of contract begins

**2014** Loan agreement with the World Bank signed

**2015** Estimated cost of ₹81,459 cr approved by CCEA

**2020 PM Narendra Modi launches 351 km in Eastern DFC**

**2021** 306 km Rewari-Madad double line launched

Source: DFCCIL

# In High Spirits

India's beer brands have learned to live with the pandemic. Better sales are proof

Shabori Das

**F**or beer manufacturers, the first wave of the pandemic wasn't kind. Bottom lines were hit as a result of uncertainty, store restrictions, and confusion about liquor consumption and how it might impact chances of testing positive.

But now, after nearly 15 months of dealing with Covid-19, this year has been somewhat better for the business economics of beer manufacturers. Learning from the first wave, manufacturers have set in place standards of operations keeping the second and future waves in mind.

Despite challenges, most market-leading beer manufacturers have reported strong sales in the second half of FY21. To be sure, the second half of any financial year has colder months, when lower beer sales are expected.

Moreover, the first few months of FY22, despite the second wave, were better for beer manufacturers compared with last year.

The sales were obviously driven by the fact that the liquor stores stayed open, albeit during specific hours, and manufacturing plants continued to stay operational as well.

"We witnessed a surge in demand during the festive season. This gave a much-needed respite and helped the industry recover at large. Simba

Craft Beer experienced growth of 20% in Q3 of last year, compared with the same quarter in the previous year," says Prabhtej Singh Bhatia, CEO and co-founder, Simba Craft Beer. "Simba was back to its pre-Covid numbers and reported a turnover of ₹150 crore in FY20, compared with a turnover of ₹125 crore in FY19."

Similar trends could be seen for market leaders United Breweries, AB InBev and Bira91.

Does this mean that this year,

**ETPrime.com**

despite the pandemic, the beer industry might see some respite? Perhaps.

The industry has been dealing with three primary challenges for the last 15 months:

- Perishability of the product and wastage of unsold inventory: stocking beer at home, as the per-session consumption of the beverage is a lot higher than spirits.

- Taxes on the beverage continue to be high compared with the alcohol content. In addition, a Covid-19 cess was applied by state governments, which made the product even more expensive than spirits and the alco-

hol content of the product.

- The final woe for the beer industry was the staggered operations of bars and restaurants. Beer is one of the alco-bev categories that are heavily reliant on on-trade channels, as the product is not easy to store at home in bulk.

When the pandemic hit, the difference between the two channels—on-trade and off-trade—widened. As of June 2021, on-trade sales of liquor, that is sales happening from pubs and restaurants, dropped to 11% of total sales, a sharp decline from 27% seen in 2019.

While the off-trade channel is a volume-driv-

pleas state by state for unlocking. In the pecking order, we are usually the first to close, and last to open," he adds.

## THE RISE OF BETTER BEERS

One of the primary changes in drinking habits was the rise in consumption of alco-bevs at home. Consumption at home is the only channel of sales for all alco-bev manufacturers and most consumers have their liquor stocked at home, as restaurants continue to stay shut. Industry sources confirmed that off-trade channel sales increased from 73% in FY19 to 88% in FY21.

"Last year, the caseload was low, but due to a complete national lockdown, the breweries were shut. So, while demand existed, there was no supply. This year, production and distribution were not halted. All retail vendors remained

**The first few months of FY22, despite the second wave, were better for beer manufacturers than last year. The sales were driven by the fact that the liquor stores stayed open, albeit during specific hours, and manufacturing plants continued to stay operational**

en market, the on-trade is value-driven. The on-trade channel is crucial for beer as a category especially because that is where new products and brands are discovered.

Rahul Singh, founder of Beer Café, says, "Unlike last time, when the Centre called the shots on unlocking, this time it's the states. Liquor being a state subject, we have to make our representations and

open. However, due to a sudden and lethal second wave, there is supply, but no demand due to uncertainty and fear among consumers," adds Singh of Beer Café.

As people across the nation get more acclimatised to the idea of lockdowns and retail shops run for certain duration through the day, sales of beers are slowly but definitely picking up.

Leading manufacturers of the country—United Breweries, AB InBev, and B9 Beverages—are all pushing for their premium portfolio. Industry sources confirm that consumers now prefer to buy better beers, as consumption at home means fewer beers per session,

and hosting. The latter is a big driver for consumers to invest in better beers.

"We are seeing key tailwinds in favour of more premium brands, which have been impacted less than mass-market beers. We are also increasingly seeing governments approving home delivery and e-commerce (Delhi being the latest one). This will fundamentally alter the beer and alco-bev market, benefiting premium brands," says Ankur Jain, founder, B9 Beverages.

B9 Beverages expanded its presence across newer markets, and launched Bira91 Gold and reformulated Bira91 Light, both in the premium segment, during FY21.

UB Group, the market leader, kept pushing its premium portfolio even during the first year of the pandemic. It launched Ultra Witbier in Q3 of FY21 in Delhi, and in markets like Maharashtra, Punjab and Chandigarh in Q4 of FY21.

The company expanded the presence of its international variant Amstel from 10 markets in March 2021 to 13 markets in FY21, adding Telangana, Maharashtra, and Haryana to the list. Its quarterly performance report says both expansions met with great responses.

During the Q4 FY21 earnings call, Berend Odink, CFO, United Breweries, said, "Q4 saw continued recovery in demand, with 9% growth on a reported basis, and many states, including Karnataka and Maharashtra, had a strong recovery. Demand in Telangana remains subdued due to the Covid-19 cess, which negatively impacts consumer prices. With an agile approach on costs and investments, the full-year Ebitda margin came in at 10% despite the 39% volume decline for the full year."

The group is betting on its premium portfolio for the remaining months of this year.

To read the full story, log on to [economictimes.indiatimes.com/prime](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/prime)

Shallesh Menon & Gaurav Laghate

When the pandemic became too much to bear, Saqlain Tariq packed a rucksack and headed for the hills with two friends. The trio trekked 60 km to the Pir Panjal ranges and pitched tents in the Girgan Valley overlooking lush green pastures and crystal-clear lakes, with snow-capped lofty peaks looming ahead.

It was August 2020. Five months had passed without Saqlain playing even a single volleyball match. The 24-year-old spiker from Kashmir's Poonch district was worried about his future — and wanted a change of scenery. “We could not even play practice matches in our local club during the lockdown,” says Saqlain, who is a member of the national team and played for U Mumba Volley franchise in the erstwhile Pro Volleyball League.

“You need regular practice in volleyball. If you don't play every day, your hand-eye co-ordination and game skills will go for a toss. Covid has hit us quite badly,” he says.

The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone, and sportspersons and athletes are among the worst-affected. Barring top-league cricket players and a few football stars, Covid-19 has plunged the sporting fraternity in misery, with many professional athletes finding it difficult even to make ends meet. Many professional leagues, apart from the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Indian Super League (ISL), have missed a season and are staring at another washout year. For several upcoming leagues and young sportspersons, missing out two seasons is like being at the wrong end of a knockout punch.

“We are back to square one. It's like razing a newly constructed building. We will have to rebuild it again,” says Prasad Mangpudi, MD, SportzLive, which runs the Premier Badminton League (PBL). “Brands put more money into sports when the economy is growing. We are gradually recovering from a slump now. As always, much of the money that is coming in now is going to cricket. There's hardly any money left for other sports,” he adds.

PBL, which has completed five seasons, is the world's biggest badminton league with over 5 crore viewers. Covid has set back its growth by at least three years, says Prasad. As the head of the league, his job is to keep the franchise owners interested in the game, reduce their financial burden, renegotiate agreements with broadcasters and wait for an appropriate time to resume the league. Other owners of professional sports leagues are in the same boat.

**TOP ORDER**  
Indian sport leagues offer an unabashed view of hegemony — and what money and influence can do. When Covid cases dipped last year, IPL and ISL managed to get the ball rolling in bio-bubbles. These leagues and their franchise owners — with deep pockets, strong balance sheets, alliances and network — got off the block soon and saved a season. IPL went one step ahead and decided to hold one more season this year but had to suspend midway (scheduled to resume in

“League owners should look at their sport's popularity — and see where it can go. They need to work on the right commercial model. Every sport cannot copy the IPL model!”  
**SANJOG GUPTA**, Head — Sports, Star and Disney

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE: T20 CRICKET	
ESTD	2007
OWNED BY	BCCI
HIGHLIGHT	Over 40cr viewers the last season
NO. OF TEAMS	8
NO. OF SEASONS	13

INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE: FOOTBALL	
ESTD	2013
Owned by	AIFF, Reliance & Star India
Highlight	Matches watched in 83 countries
No. of Franchises	11
No. of Seasons	7

ULTIMATE TABLE TENNIS	
ESTD	2017
Owned by	115 sports
Highlight	Supports TT academies across India
No. of Franchises	6
No. of Seasons	3

PRO KABADDI LEAGUE	
ESTD	2014
OWNED BY	Mashal Sports
HIGHLIGHT	Over 33cr viewers watched the last season
NO. OF FRANCHISES	12
NO. OF SEASONS	7

PREMIER BADMINTON LEAGUE	
ESTD	2016
Owned by	Badminton Association & SportzLife
Highlight	About 5 crore viewers
No. of Franchises	7
No. of Seasons	5

“League owners have to ensure the content (the way the sport is played or the format) is good for TV and digital distribution. For the league to be successful, the sport has to be structured in a racy, edge-of-the-seat format”  
**TENZING NIYOGI**, CEO, Ultimate Kho Kho

September) due to bio-bubble breach and incidence of Covid-19 among a few players. The smaller leagues do not have the wherewithal to hold sporting events in the middle of a pandemic.

Their ambitions are different — make a particular sport popular, get sponsorships and sell media rights, and distribute a part of their earnings to franchise owners, who in turn will pay the players. “Professional leagues are important for Indian players as they get to play with foreign players and under foreign coaches. There's money in it, too. Good players can make a career out of it,” says Rowlin Borges, who plays for the national football team and is a defensive midfielder for Mumbai City FC, an ISL franchise.

**BUSINESS OF LEAGUES**  
A professional sports league is a sum of several moving parts. The centerpiece is the league owner, who is responsible for creating a “saleable format” for a particular sport. In cricket, BCCI popularised the T20 format by creating a league. League owners take care of operational issues such as tying up with broadcasters, spreading awareness about the sport and arranging venues and marketing events. Most leagues in India are run by private companies in association with the respective sporting federations or associations.

“League owners have to ensure the content (the way the sport is played or the format) is good for TV and digital distribution. For the league to be successful, the sport has to be structured in a racy, edge-of-the-seat format,” says Tenzing Niyogi, CEO of Ultimate Kho Kho, a new league. “Apart from a good format, the nature of the deals struck with franchise owners and broadcasters will determine the success of a league,” he adds.

The league owners sign up franchise owners, who float the teams that will compete. The franchisees are in charge of everything from hiring a coach and support staff to holding training facilities and taking care of team travel and accommodation, food and playing kits. Team expenses, including salaries of players and staff, are borne by franchise owners.

“One of the most aspects of running a sports franchise is creating a distinction between the on-field and off-field performance of a team,” says Mustafa Ghouse, CEO of JSW Sports, which owns Bengaluru FC in ISL, Delhi Capitals in IPL and Haryana Steelers in PKL. “As a franchise owner, you have little direct influence over the technical side of your team, so it's always better to adopt a process-oriented approach than a result-oriented one in creating a sustainable business model for the franchise.”

League and franchise owners, along with players, support staff, broadcasters, federation members and corporate sponsors complete the sports league ecosystem.

“For leagues to succeed, you have to keep engaging with consumers. You have to bring down costs to keep franchise owners happy, too. Our league is built on a low-cost sustainable model,” says

## THE PANDEMIC HAS TAKEN A TOLL ON PROFESSIONAL SPORTS LEAGUES. APART FROM THE DEEP-POCKETED IPL AND ISL, MANY HAVE MISSED A SEASON AND ARE STARING AT ANOTHER WASHOUT YEAR



Vita Dani, co-promoter, Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT).

Pro sports leagues in India are run differently from their peers in developed nations. In India, revenue from selling media rights (broadcast and digital mediums) account for 70-80% of league revenues; sponsorships, merchandising and gating revenues account for 20-30%. In the West, merchandising and ticketing revenues account for a lion's share of league revenues.

“Ticketing and merchandising revenues are low in non-cricket sports; so non-cricket leagues may take a longer time to grow,” says Raghav Anand, segment leader (digital media practice) at EY, a consulting firm.

“Non-cricket leagues will grow only if they forge long-term rights deal with broadcasters. They will have to sell digital rights, too. Only these two sources can bring more money into leagues,” he adds.

Tying up with a broadcaster is easier said than done. India has only two specialised sports broadcasters — Star and Sony — and they have already picked equity stakes in popular leagues such as the Pro Kabaddi League. It is an open secret that some of the less popular leagues have to pay air-time fees to the broadcaster to live-telecast their matches.

“League owners should look at their sport's popularity — and see where it can go. They have to drive participation, talent and fan engagement,” says Sanjog Gupta, head — sports, Star and Disney. “They need to work on the right commercial model. Everyone tried to copy the IPL model, but IPL came out of a sport that was already popular. It may not work in a not-so-popular sport.” Gupta says league owners need to have a deep understanding of what fans want — and where the new fans will come from. “Fans are the only way to get revenues. If there are fans, you will get better deals in media rights, better gate revenues and sponsorship,” he says.

UTT's Dani says it may take a long time before merchandising and ticketing revenues go up in India. “We have to popularise the game first... we'll have to inculcate the habit of sports among kids. We will need mature and loyal fan bases to see merchandising and ticketing revenues go up,” she says.

Strong leagues charge an annual fee from franchise owners. The money that comes from media rights, title sponsorships and ticket sales go into a central pool, which is split between franchise owners and the league in a pre-defined ratio. Apart from getting a share in the central pool, the franchise owners can augment their revenues by local sponsorships (on jerseys, kits) and on-ground advertisement. On average, professional sports leagues take 8 to 10 years to turn profitable. The IPL took so many years to rake in surpluses.

“The fine blend of cricket with Bollywood helped IPL become a successful league. The shorter format of the game, with an added tinge of entertainment, made T20 cricket suitable for family viewing,” says Rajesh V Menon, VP & head of Royal Challengers Bangalore, an IPL franchise. “League and franchise owners have to be strong and deep-pocketed for any sports league to survive,” he adds.

Franchise owners — who missed a season last year — are hoping to get fee waivers from leagues. Many are also hoping to get additional funds from the central pool. Players in non-cricket leagues may also see pay cuts when the season resumes.

**SPORTS UNLOCK**  
The Indian sports market has seen a 37% drop in revenues last year, according to con-

SPORTS INDUSTRY IN INDIA: 2020	
ENDORSEMENT VALUE	₹564 cr
SPONSORSHIP VALUE	₹1,673 cr
MEDIA SPEND	₹3,657 cr
TOTAL INDUSTRY SIZE	₹5,894 cr

OVERALL SPORTS SPENDS	
Crick	₹5,133 cr
Emerging Sports	₹761 cr
Crick cornered nearly 87% of money spent on sports	

SPONSORSHIP TRENDS	
Ground Sponsorship	₹850 cr
Team Sponsorship	₹646 cr
Team Franchise Fee	₹177 cr
TOTAL	₹1,673 cr

SPORT-WISE SPONSORSHIP DISTRIBUTION	
Crick	₹1,069 cr
Football	₹362 cr
Emerging sports	₹242 cr
Source: GroupM ESP	

INDIAN SPORTS SEGMENT REVENUE TRENDS	
YEAR	REVENUES (₹ BILLION)
2018	92
2019	107
2020	70
Sports revenues shrunk 35% in 2020	

NEW & UPCOMING LEAGUES	
<b>ULTIMATE KHO KHO</b>	
OWNED BY	Dabur Group & others
USP	Over 15 lakh people play kho kho
<b>PREMIER HANDBALL LEAGUE</b>	
OWNED BY	Various handball federations & Bluesport Entertainment
USP	Olympic sport, played in many countries
<b>HIG BOUT INDIAN BOXING LEAGUE</b>	
OWNED BY	Boxing Federation & Others
No. of Seasons	1
No. of Franchises	6
USP	16 Indian boxers in top-25 global rankings

sultants like GroupM and EY. But many in the industry foresee a sharp revival of business once Covid fears die down. League owners will focus on growing the sport rather than just growing the league, industry watchers say.

“Covid-19 has given a golden opportunity for owners to reinvent the leagues,” says Vinit Karnik, head of sports, e-sports & entertainment at GroupM South Asia. “You will see the return of all the leagues that were there in 2019 — and some more. There will be changes in the business model and in ownership structures at league and franchise levels. There is going to be a lot of disruption,” he adds.

Established leagues like the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) will have to regain the interests of consumers and add to their fan bases. The popular PKL was not allowed to host its eighth season last year as kabaddi is a contact sport. PKL officials say they will resume the season “responsibly”, after getting approval. “We will come back re-invigorated. Kabaddi has a heritage that is rooted in this country. We will recapture consumer sentiment,” says Anupam Goswami, CEO of Mashal Sport and commissioner of PKL. “As a league owner, our idea is to deliver maximum value for the sport. We will provide the best in class competition,” he adds.

New leagues like the Premier Handball and Ultimate Kho Kho may launch their playing seasons early next year. The Hig Bout Boxing League, which hosted its first season in end-2019, may also resume in 2022.

“Handball is a fast-paced, thrilling game with a definitive end-result. We will capture eyeballs,” says Vivek Lodha, director, Bluesport Entertainment, which is gearing up to launch the Premier Handball League. “We are getting encouraging response from sponsors; we will have a new set of corporate bodies and industries supporting us and willing to grow the sport in India,” he adds.

Top athletes are gunning about the opportunities professional leagues can offer. Vikas Krishan Yadav, who is in a pre-Olympic camp in Perugia, Italy, says leagues can spread awareness about lesser-known sports like boxing. “But leagues have to be managed well. Players should get decent money. Only this will bring in newer talent into sports,” says Yadav.

The maxim for athletes rings true for sports leagues too: you don't lose if you get knocked down. You lose only if you stay down.

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## YO-YO HOTELS

The unpredictable nature of post-pandemic demand has led hotels to rethink their staffing strategy, product offerings and cost management. Now teams have to be agile and multiskilled to respond to erratic seasons

Varun Khosla

At the offices of French hospitality major Accor India, the numbers-focused cohort of revenue managers have been asked to reorient their analytical thinking to take into account travel sentiment, lockdown status and fluctuating holiday demand across locations to predict room prices.

A deputy housekeeping manager at a top-end boutique hotel in Delhi has taken on tasks like attending requests for bubble baths in rooms, servicing in-room dining and even taking guests on walking tours.

The iconic Imperial Hotel in Delhi, which temporarily reduced staff as part of cost-saving measures, has introduced its employees to multi-skilling, in which employees were rotated across a host of different teams so that they could pick up the skills needed to work in each department. Says senior executive vice-president Vijay Wanchoo, “We also skilled them well so that the quality of the service isn't compromised.”

For hotels of all sizes and stripes, the unpredictable, fluctuating nature of post-pandemic demand has led to a rethink in staffing strategy, product offerings and cost management. Call it the yo-yo model of hotel management: haphazard peaks of very high demand, which don't correspond to traditional popular travel times, interspersed with periods when leisure travel dries up completely due to staggered lockdowns.

Add manpower challenges and low cash flows to the

mix, and hotels have had to reinvent the wheel.

According to STR, a division of CoStar Group that provides market data on hotel industry, the resurgence of Covid-19 cases and lockdowns in India in April and May this year resulted in a steep decline in hotel occupancy levels. Preliminary data for May indicates that all-India occupancy levels were shy of 20% and revenue per available room hit rock bottom at under ₹650.

Dilip Puri, founder, Indian School of Hospitality, says about 50% of jobs in the hospitality sector (which accounts for about 10% employment in India) have been lost. This has hit blue-collar jobs as well as at leadership levels.

“Over the past year, we have found that the situation changes very quickly, requiring our teams to be agile and flexible,” says Anand Singh Shekhawat, regional director for Aman Resorts in India. Since most travellers are booking holidays at the last minute, it requires teams across departments to work reactively.

Like other companies, Aman has established flexible booking policies to enable guests to postpone or cancel their trips, something it did not offer before. But the hotel says it still has not compromised on its staff-per-room ratio, keeping it as high as 5:1 and 8:1, depending on the hotel.

For Ananda in the Himalayas and others, after a period of steady growth till mid-April 2021, demand abruptly petered out. While Ananda remained open

for a few long-stay guests, costs mounted. “Having 100% staff has significant cost implications when travel is severely hampered. Within the hotel, all departments, especially engineering, focused on optimisation techniques,” says Mahesh Natarajan, chief operating officer, IHHR Hospitality Ananda. So it reallocated customers to some wings and floors to save on energy.

At Niramaya Retreats across India, small changes have had a big impact — like keeping 50 bulbs on in public areas instead of 100 to save on energy, offering limited menus and training 90% of its people to do 100% of the work.

Many hotel businesses have tried never-before-tested strategies like furloughing staff for a three- or four-month period on a rotational basis so that every staffer gets an opportunity to earn, despite the lack of operations. A hotel general manager tells ET that they may never go back to previous staffing levels, since multi-skilling employees has emerged as a big winner.

At Lemon Tree Hotels, clustering of rooms, special service zones and curators with minimal staff. In some cities, the chain is down to just 0.5 or 0.6 employees per room, almost half of what has been the norm in midscale hotels pre-pandemic. Staff schedules have been worked

**ROOM FOR MORE**  
► Hospitality firm Hotelivate forecasts that FY22 will see an increase of 18.9% occupancy nationwide over FY21  
► Till March 31, 2021, just 33.8% hotel rooms were occupied, taking the industry to the level of at least five years ago  
► STR data for May 2021 indicates that all-India occupancy levels were shy of 20% and revenue per available room hit rock bottom at under ₹650  
► Many hotel managers ET spoke to said they were now operating with half the staff  
► Reskilling and upskilling have been integral in managing with smaller teams  
► Saving on fixed costs helps hotels prepare for difficult periods with low-to-no business  
► Hotels expect erratic demand to continue for at least one more year

around in such a way that key team members are permanently living on hotel premises for smoother operations and minimal risk of infection, says deputy MD Rattan Keswani.

Puri says that in the coming years, hiring preferences will lean towards candidates who can understand and react to evolving guest behaviour. “Employers now have more efficient models where they have cut the flab from the system by reducing their fixed costs (of electricity and manpower) and are now looking for more and better skilled people,” he explains.

Shruti Shibulal, chief executive officer, Tamara Leisure Experiences, says they have learnt that their operations must now be geared towards rushed service and have, therefore, invested heavily in automating processes and training employees in the less busy lockdown periods.

“Our resorts have had to shut earlier due to environmental disasters and through those experiences, we have learned the importance of developing nimble teams that are continually trained to handle challenges. This gives us a reliable system and the confidence to shut down as needed and reopen very quickly,” she says.

At Accor India, outsourced contractual staff is being used to meet sudden surges in demand. Meanwhile, the full-time staff is also multi-tasking, says Kerrie Hannaford, vice president — commercial, Accor India & South Asia. “Everyone is trying to pitch in wherever support is needed. Some hotels have also been sharing resources to manage the high occupancy.”

Manu Rishi Gupta, CEO, Niramaya, points to an unexpected spinoff: guests are now less demanding, and prefer a “less intrusive” experience (read: will settle for less pampering). For the beleaguered industry, that's a silver lining they are happy to live with.

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## 'Downton Abbey 2' Out in March '22



**LOS ANGELES** The sequel to "Downton Abbey" will now release in March 2022 after studio Focus Features delayed the movie by three months. It was previously set to release in December 2021. —PTI

## Miami: One more Building Evacuated

**MIAMI** Residents of a Miami-area high-rise were forced to evacuate the building when it was found to be unsafe in a review prompted by the collapse of a building just a few miles away. Law enforcement authorities cordoned off the area and went door-to-door telling residents they had to leave. —AP

## Myanmar Ruler's Effigy Burnt on B'day



**BANGKOK** Protesters in coup-hit Myanmar marked the birthday of junta leader Min Aung Hlaing Saturday by burning his portrait. The nation has experienced mass protests and a brutal military response since the February 1 coup. —AFP

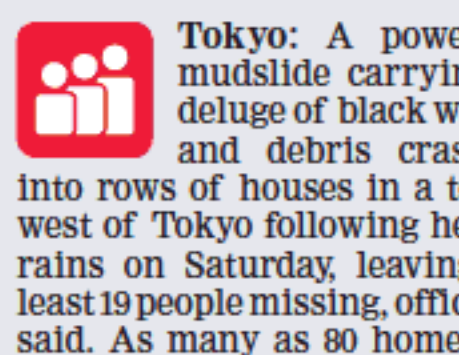
## Complaint by NGO Sherpa

**As of Saturday evening, there was no response from Dassault or the Indian government on the matter, though in the past both have vehemently denied any wrongdoing in the deal. Both have also pointed to a clean chit by the SC into allegations of corruption. According to French media reports, the investigation is being done under oversight of the national financial prosecutors' office (PNF). The assumption is that this was necessitated after a fresh complaint by corruption watchdog Sherpa NGO. They added that an earlier complaint by the NGO had allegedly been buried by the PNF. Earlier in April, Mediapart had reported on allegations that a middleman was paid a million euros as part of the Rafale deal. This report had been countered by Dassault that said no violations had taken place and the money was part of a contract to supply models of the fighter jet that were fabricated in India. Dassault had said that no viola-**



tions have been reported in the Indian contract and that it was in strict compliance of anti bribery convention and French national laws. "The contract with India for the acquisition of 36 Rafales has been established on a government-to-government basis. This contract, as well as the offsets corresponding contract, meet the criteria established by these regulations and are being executed in full transparency between the various government and industrial partners," Dassault had said. The company had also emphasised that it delivered all aircraft on schedule to India despite the Covid-19 epidemic and that the JV plant Dassault Reliance Aerospace has been producing aircraft parts since 2018 as part of the offsets deal.

## At Least 19 Missing as Mudslide in West of Tokyo Hits Houses



**Tokyo:** A powerful mudslide carrying a deluge of black water and debris crashed into rows of houses in a town west of Tokyo following heavy rains on Saturday, leaving at least 19 people missing, officials said. As many as 80 homes in

Atami were completely buried, according to an official with the Fire and Disaster Management Agency. The official said more people, possibly 100, could still be missing under the mudslides but warned that details were not immediately clear. —AP

## Facing Several Cases Across States

**From Page 1**  
A single-judge bench of Justice Rekha Palli had sought details from the company on its compliance with intermediary guidelines within three weeks. The court had also sought responses from the government. It is set to hear the case next on July 6. The plea was filed by Amit Acharya, practicing advocate in the Delhi High Court and Supreme Court. It said the petitioner was unable to find details of Twitter's resident grievance officer on the company's website to raise grievances against "objectionable tweets" made by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and journalist Swati Chaturvedi. According to the petition, the microblogging platform had not



complied with the new IT Rules that came into effect on May 25. The case is one among many filed against the social network in the recent past, after it failed to comply with the requirement of hiring

three officials—for grievance, nodal and compliance—within the stipulated three months set by the government. According to the rules, these officials should be residents of India and permanent

employees. ET had earlier reported that Twitter had likely lost its intermediary status, which offers protection from criminal liability for content posted on its platform by third parties.

**'MANIPULATED MEDIA'**  
Twitter is also engaged in a standoff with the government over its tagging of certain tweets by senior BJP leaders as 'manipulated media'. The government had asked the company to remove the tags in a strongly worded letter last month, but the company has yet to comply with the request, stating that the tweets had been tagged as per its global

# All China User Data Stored in China, says Didi

Ride hailing giant exec said it's 'absolutely not possible' that the company passed data to US; co to sue social media users who say it transferred data

Reuters

**Hong Kong:** China's ride hailing giant Didi Global stores all China user and roads data at servers in the country and it is "absolutely not possible" that the company passed data to the United States, a senior company executive said on Saturday. Didi Vice President Li Min also said the company would sue any social media users who said the company transferred data during its recent initial public offering (IPO) process after claims were made on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform.



China's cyberspace agency announced on Friday it had launched an investigation into Didi to protect national security and the public interest, just two days after the company began trading on the New York Stock Exchange.

News of the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) probe, and the agency's decision to block Didi from registering new users during its investigation, knocked 5% off Beijing-based Didi's shares on Friday.

## INVESTIGATION IS ON China's cyberspace agency said it had launched a probe into Didi, two days after it began trading on New York Stock Exchange

"Like many overseas-listed Chinese companies, Didi stores all domestic user data at servers in China. It is absolutely not possible to pass data to the United States," Li said in a post on Weibo. Didi, which offers services in Chi-

na and more than 15 international markets, gathers vast amounts of real-time mobility data every day. It uses some of the data for autonomous driving technologies and traffic analysis.

Founded by Will Cheng in 2012, the company has already faced regulatory probes in China over safety and its operations licence.

"I'm not sure what the final implications might be but regulatory crackdown has been an ongoing concern even before the listing, with Didi already having been called in by the regulators twice," Sumet Singh, Aequitas Research director who publishes on Smartkarma, said on Saturday, before

Li's post. "This time stopping the company from taking in new users shouldn't hurt a whole lot since the company already has 80% plus market share to begin with, as long as it's not extended for a period of time."

The cyberspace agency did not give any indication of how the long the investigation would last or provide any other details.

Didi said on Friday it planned to conduct a comprehensive examination of cybersecurity risks and would cooperate fully with the relevant government authority. It also said apart from the suspension of new user registrations in China, it was operating normally.

## Europe in Vaccination Race against Covid-19's Delta Variant

**HOLIDAY BUZZ** Urgency coincides with Europe's summer holiday months

AP

**Portugal:** Countries across Europe are scrambling to accelerate coronavirus vaccinations and outpace the spread of the more infectious delta variant, in a high-stakes race to prevent hospital wards from filling up again with patients fighting for their lives.

The urgency coincides with Europe's summer holiday months, with fair weather bringing more social gatherings and governments reluctant to clamp down on them. Social distancing is commonly neglected, especially among the young, and some countries are scrapping the requirement to wear masks outdoors.

Incentives for people to get shots include free groceries, travel and entertainment vouchers, and prize drawings. The president of Cyprus even appealed to a sense of patriotism.

The risk of infection from the delta variant is "high to very high" for partially or unvaccinated communities, according to the European Centre for Disease Control, which monitors 30 countries on the continent. It estimates that by the end of August, the variant will account for 90% of cases in the European Union.

"It is very important to progress with the vaccine rollout at a very

### WHO IS CONCERNED

The delta variant makes transmission growth "exponential", says Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO's tech lead on Covid

variant is "high to very high" for partially or unvaccinated communities, according to the European Centre for Disease Control, which monitors 30 countries on the continent. It estimates that by the end of August, the variant will account for 90% of cases in the European Union.

"It is very important to progress with the vaccine rollout at a very

high pace," the ECDC warned. The World Health Organization is also concerned. The variant makes transmission growth "exponential," according to Maria Van Kerkhove, its technical lead on Covid-19.

Daily new case numbers are already climbing sharply in countries like the United Kingdom, Portugal and Russia.

In the UK, cases of the delta variant have increased fourfold in less than a month, with confirmed cases Friday up 46% on the previous week.

Portuguese health authorities this week reported a "vertiginous" rise in the prevalence of the delta variant, which accounted for only 4% of cases in May but almost 56% in June. The country is reporting its highest number of daily cases since February, and the number of Covid-19 patients in hospitals has surpassed 500 for the first time since early April.

In some countries, the virus is spreading much faster among younger people. In Spain, the national 14-day case notification rate per 100,000 people rose to 152 on Friday. But for the 20-29 age group, it shot up to 449.

## 'South Africa Okays China's Sinovac Jab'

**JOHANNESBURG** South Africa has approved China's Sinovac vaccine against Covid-19, the acting health minister said on Saturday, as the country faces a crippling third wave of infections that has paralysed hospitals and brought its death toll to 60,000.

"I would like to express gratitude to our regulatory authority for their sense of urgency, which included reducing turnaround time to process applications for registration of... (the Covid-19 vaccine)," Mameloko Kubayi said.

The surge in infections in Africa's most industrialised nation has overwhelmed hospitals and left overworked healthcare personnel struggling to find enough beds for critically ill patients. — Reuters

## 25-30% Business Shaved Off

**From Page 1**

The event will have the works—a Bollywood performance and four other functions for close relatives. "Usually, such weddings had a budget of ₹2-2.5 crore. Today, that has shrunk to ₹1 crore. The grandeur remains, only the guests are missing," he explained, adding that venue costs are down by 5-10%, but not much else has reduced.

Mehak Sagar Shahani, cofounder of WedMeGood.com estimated that the wedding market has lost at least 25-30% of business. According to a KPMG and Matrimony.com study, the marriage services industry in India was estimated to be worth about ₹3,681 billion in 2016. Shahani said their leads jumped last year as soon as the lockdown lifted and people started to plan weddings again. But recovery has been slower after this year's second lockdown, amid more fear of

the virus. She said photographers and makeup artists are charging 25-30% less than their usual rates and venue ticket sizes or prices per customer have dropped 40% due to gathering size restrictions. The segments that have not been badly affected are jewellery and bridalwear, where ticket sizes have not changed too much, though the number of items purchased have fallen due to the reduction in the number of events, Shahani said.

**ON SAFE GROUND**  
Segments that have not been badly affected are jewellery and bridalwear, where ticket sizes have not changed too much, though the number of items purchased have fallen due to the reduction in the number of events, Shahani said.

**DESTINATION MATTERS**  
Many wedding planning companies are focusing on local destinations that are somewhat isolated and Mpire's Vikram Mehta said some clients are also picking destinations in the Middle East, owing to fewer Covid restrictions and better refund policies.

Hotels are still hopeful this will add to their revenue mix. The wealthy and those who can afford it have been picking locations and booking them fully, to ensure their guests remain in a "bubble."

Aman Resorts' property Amanbagh in Rajasthan has had multiple 'buyout' wedding events where the entire 47-room location has been booked. The hotel is projecting that private celebrations such as weddings will contribute 15-20% to this year's bottomline.

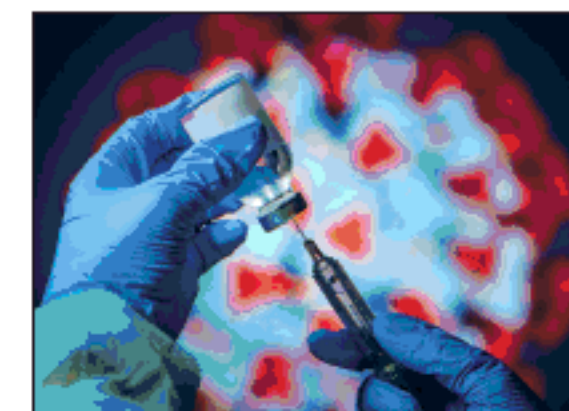
Soneva Resorts plans on focusing heavily on the wedding market from India over the next 12 months to maintain its growth trajectory.

## Additional Clinical Trials

**From Page 1**

"Covaxin is the first to report promising efficacy against asymptomatic infections based on qPCR testing that will help in reducing disease transmission," the company said.

The company is currently conducting additional clinical trials to establish the safety and efficacy of Covaxin in children aged 2-18 years. Apart from a clinical trial to determine the safety and immunogenicity of a booster dose now in process, the vaccine innovator is also carrying out several research activities to study variants of concern and to assess the



its suitability for follow-up booster doses.

The phase-3 clinical trials data showed that less than 0.5% of subjects faced serious adverse events and 12% of subjects experienced commonly known side effects.

The company said Covaxin was well tolerated and that the Data Safety Monitoring Board has not reported any safety concerns related to the vaccine. The overall rate of adverse events observed for Covaxin was lower than that seen for other Covid-19 vaccines, it said.

"The safety profile of Covaxin is now well established based on inactivated vaccines technology, and in large part due to the extensive 20-year safety track record of Bharat Biotech's vero cell manufacturing platform," said the company statement, adding that it has so far not sought indemnity for Covaxin from the government.

The Delhi Police, which is investigating the matter, has not filed a first information report yet. It had questioned Twitter India managing director Manish Maheshwari at his residence in Bengaluru in connection with the 'manipulated media' case.

Twitter is also facing separate police probes in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh over publishing an inaccurate map of India in the career section of its website. Last week, the Delhi cyber police sent a notice to Twitter following a complaint by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights on May 29, over child pornography allegedly circulated on its platform.

On Saturday, a fresh case was filed by a lawyer, Aditya Singh Deshwal, against Twitter and Maheshwari with the cyber police, over alleged cartoons that showed a Hindu goddess in an "obnoxious manner" being circulated on the platform.

## Numbers by the Riviera

**Ahead of the Cannes Film Festival's return on Tuesday, here are a few numbers related to the 74th edition of the festival that runs from July 6 to 17**



**WHEN THE FILM FESTIVAL WAS SHUT**

**1939** Due to the Second World War  
**1948 and 1950** Financial reasons  
**1968** Due to protests across France  
**2020** Due to the coronavirus pandemic

**THE TROPHY**  
**19** Number of golden fronds on the 18-carat gold Palme d'Or which will go to the winning film  
**20,000 euros (\$23,700)** Its worth is made by Swiss jeweller Chopard

**COVID PROTOCOL**  
**Delegates have three options in order to access the festival**  
**Attendees to be tested every 48 hours if they haven't been fully vaccinated**

**1** Certificate demonstrating full vaccination  
**2** Negative PCR or antigen test result that's no more than 48 hours old  
**3** Proof of immunity via a positive antibody test or RT-PCR test that is dated no less than 15 days

**24** Number of steps the stars have to climb to ascend the red carpet into the Palais des Festivals, nicknamed the "steps of glory"

**1,800** Length in metres of the red carpet

**40,000** Number of people with official accreditation who attend the festival

**500** Number of security personnel deployed at the Palais des Festivals  
**20,000,000 euros (about \$22 million)** - Festival's budget

Half the funding comes from French taxpayers, the other half from corporate sponsors

## South Korean Workers Rally in Covid-hit Seoul

**Seoul:** Thousands of South Korean workers staged a rally in downtown Seoul to demand better conditions, video images showed on Saturday, defying a government ban and shrugging off warnings that their protest could ignite a new wave of the coronavirus.

As South Korea battles a spike in infections fuelled by the highly infectious delta variant, officials had denied permission for the protest, with Prime Minister Kim Bo-kyum urging leaders of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions to cancel it. Marchers wearing masks blocked some of the main streets in the central district of Jongno, holding up signs with slogans such as "Stop restructuring!" and "Let's go! General strike!"

The protest, which the union said drew as many as 8,000 participants, backed demands for wage hikes and measures to prevent accidents. — Reuters



**Workers march during a rally in Seoul on Saturday. — AP**

## What do Current Regulations Say

**From Page 1**

"And, now having written to RBI, they would await the regulator's response," said the banker.

"This is the first time we have to deal with such a situation of letting FDI investors buy shares as FPI. Some of the law firms we spoke to are interpreting that an FDI investor can subscribe to IPO of the same company... It's possible that the regulation was poorly drafted. But we think there is ambiguity and some clarity is needed," said an official with a market intermediary.

The subject is significant for many offshore shareholders in startups that are planning to list.

Under the current regulations, a foreign investor buying shares in a domestic company under the FPI rule must hold less than 10% of the company's equity. If the holding exceeds 10% — to, say 11% — then, the entire stake (i.e. 11%) is considered as FDI. Logically, an FDI investor with 7% stake in an unlisted company should be allowed to subscribe to the company's IPO as long as it invests in the IPO after registering itself (or its arm) as an FPI with Sebi and parks the shares received under IPO in a separate demat account with a custodian bank.

Richie Sancheti, partner at law firm Algo Legal, said if the investment in an unlisted company is less than 9.99%, such an investor may further invest at IPO or post IPO as an FPI till it holds 9.99% aggregate investment in such company. "Till such stage, the same entity could potentially hold both FDI as well as FPI (via custodian) stake. However, if the original FDI investment exceeds 9.99% stake, then such investor may not be capable to hold FPI stake in the company post its IPO and accordingly, there is an ambiguity to such participations," said Sancheti.

According to another person, since FPIs can buy depository receipts listed abroad under the FDI regime and later convert these receipts into shares, it shows regulations allow the dual route for a foreign investor. "Also the very fact that holding can cross 10% is an indication that a foreigner can step in as FDI and later buy more shares as FPI that takes the combined holding beyond 10%," he said.

# This 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Dolan-Bhai is Busy Hatching a Plot For a Comeback

For all those who are missing The Orange One, the good news is that Trumpeteers are (still) counting on dodgy voting machines – and Chinese hankypanky – in the 2020 election

## LETTER FROM WASHINGTON



SEEMA SIROHI

No one knows this. Absolutely no one. Dolan Trump could still win the 2020 election. As they say in America, 'It ain't over till it's over'.

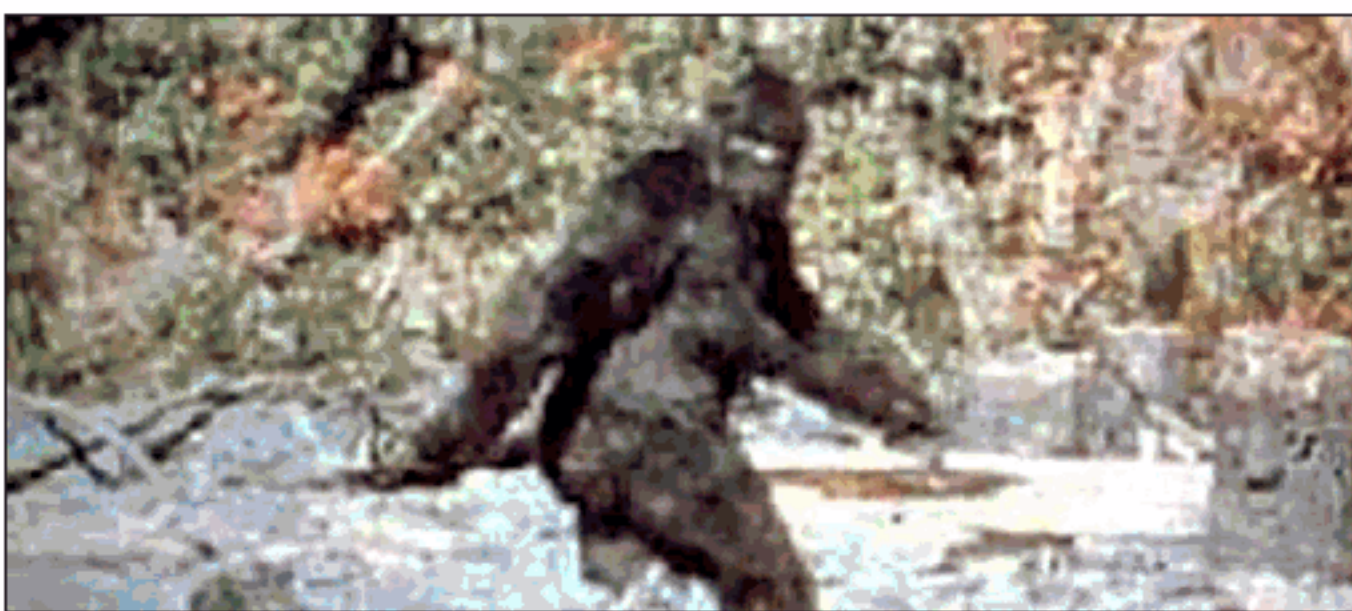
Dolan-bhai is engaged in inciting a million mutinies downstream in little counties from Arizona to Pennsylvania to Georgia. Remember them? They were battleground states. Dolan wants reviews, audits and forensics on voting machines.

Look what happened in Arizona the other

day, that remote desert state where the Canyon is Grand, the motto Ditat Deus (god enriches), and voting machines suspect. Today it's the Bhallog vs Old Fogies — and voting machines against genius hackers. Everyone wants to know if Dolan-bhai lost the 2020 election because of hanky-panky in Maricopa County.

Did the Chinese dump 40,000 ballots in Arizona to tilt things Joe Biden's way? Not to worry, the hard-working folks at Cyber Ninjas are testing the ballots for bamboo fibres to see if it was a Made-In-China operation as things mostly are these days. The audit — or 'fraudir' as some renegades call it — will get to the bottom of this lab. It's high noon in Arizona.

Doesn't matter if the whole thing has gone down a rabbit hole and no one really remembers how the circus began, and before long the pro-Bhai One America News network — Fox is out of favour — was calling for the execution of Americans involved in the 'coup' against The Dolan.



IS VOTER FRAUD REAL, OR JUST ANOTHER BIGFOOT IN MOUTH?

Basic facts go thus: Bhai's supporters demanded a review in Maricopa County, and Arizona's Republican-controlled state senate obliged. More than 2 million ballots were subpoenaed and 400 voting machines seized. No matter that two previous audits hadn't fished out anything. They were regular audits, not forensic, screamed the bhallog. Only forensics reveal errors and fraud — it takes an autopsy to find the cause of death.

Except the forensics were done by Cyber Ninjas, a company whose CEO already believes the 2020 election was rigged against Trump. Incidentally, he also thinks aliens were behind the 9/11 attacks. Just ask Google about Doug Logan and learn. When not

## Dolan-bhai likes to operate in second-tier realms where it's always summertime & the livin' is easy

plugging conspiracy theories and ninjainj sweetheart contracts his own way. Logan makes movies. His lone blockbuster is something called The Deep Rig about — you guessed it — the 'rigged election'. It's natural the \$150,000 contract to dissect voting machines should have gone to Logan.

But Cyber Ninjas may end up costing Maricopa millions of dollars more for this very Trumpian adventure. Now that those unfortunate voting machines have been touched by a private contractor, they are deemed compromised. Arizona's chief election officer Katie Hobbs, a Democrat, said she would de-certify the machines if they were not decommissioned. She is running for governor.

Meanwhile, the federal department of justice located in a galaxy far, far away in Washington began to get worried because so many Republican legislators from other states were making a beeline to Arizona to check out the audit — the live stream wasn't enough.

If they could rinse and repeat Arizona in their home states and bring on the full crazy, Dolan-bhai would be so happy.

But the country's attorney general, appointed by Biden, warned them not to catch the Arizona fever, or he would take action. Arizona attorney general Mark Brnovich told America's AG to butt out. A federal intervention is an 'alarming disdair for state sovereignty,' he shouted. Brnovich is running for US Senate and needs Dolan-bhai's support to win the seat.

State-level tandav in America is another league altogether. You can disappear journalists or voting machines, purge bureaucrats or electoral rolls, wear MAGA hats or saffron robes and keep pushing the envelope. Dolan likes to operate in second-tier realms where it's always summertime and the livin' is easy. It's easier to run a government-in-exile from Mar-a-Lago in sunny Florida and plot a return.

## FUNNY BUSINESS



ANUBHAV PAL

## A Barber, a Delivery Man, and a Slice of India Minus Papaya

Ten minutes that shook a quiet world with some neighbour-bashing and bald-shaming

One thing I've always loved about RK Narayan is that he could observe little slices of every day Indian life, without being pedantic or judgmental. Observing is something we don't do anymore as a nation — replacing it with a bombardment of Instagram reels where young people dance to 'Bongo cha-cha-cha,' or whatever is the latest trend that, if not followed, would immediately kill them.

Given that, in my mid-40s, I'm aging disgracefully, I have one of two choices with this column. Either to go in the direction of the young, and stay up with Twitter media outrage, and shout about every hashtagged injustice till I combust.

Or go in the opposite direction, and give you a gentle Narayan-ish slice of Indian life, that you can read, in your mid-50s, content after a Sunday lunch, just before a snooze that turns to snoring, from which you are woken from by a smack on the head from your wife.

If you, dear reader, are plump in a way that the morning walk doesn't help, settled in mid-life, an embarrassment to your children, certain that the years of 'Anything is possible' is replaced with 'This is enough,' then this column, from now into forever, is dedicated to you. You are my audience. You are also me.

I must confess, I have an affinity for getting haircuts from old-fashioned barbers. The word 'stylist' frightens me. This barber gent comes home, tells stories, gossips, cuts hair, takes gossip away. I don't entirely trust him and never have, but that's half the fun.

Last Sunday, while I was getting my hair cut, I was confronted by a delivery man from XBasket (name changed). I usually do it on the ground floor of my apartment building, which is both weird and frowned upon. The XBasket man looked at me strangely, and I couldn't understand why I was getting my hair cut sitting on a chair on the ground floor of my apartment building.

'Is this a salon?' he inquired.

'No,' I replied. We had no further conversation for a couple of minutes, as he processed the information.

And then, still bewildered, he asked, 'Is this a house then?'

'Yes,' I said. He pressed a few bells to the apartments. Clearly, the person that ordered had not put down a flat number.

'Do you have my OTP?' he asked me. 'No,' I replied, 'I didn't order anything.' 'Do you know who might have?' he insisted. 'There are seven flats in this building,' I explained. And then, driven by mischief, I added, 'What is the order?'

'I am not allowed to tell you that,' he said officially, and then said, unofficially, 'One chicken, one papaya...'

'I hate papaya,' I told him. 'Me too,' confessed the delivery man. 'I think Flat 501 ordered this. He seems crazy enough to eat chicken with papaya,' I said.

The delivery man laughed. The barber said, 'It is a nonsense fruit. They eat it in Thailand. That's why I've never been to Thailand.'

'What kind of third-rate person does not display his flat number?' asked the delivery man, exasperated. 'The other day, I was watching the Euro and he told me to turn down the volume,' I said, adding fuel to fire.

'You'd have to be mad to not watch the games. The French game was the best,' said the delivery man, shocked and upset at 501. One last attempt at the bell yielded no results. The delivery man turned to leave, now filled with hatred for 501.

Before leaving, he sheepishly asked me, 'If you don't mind, why do you need a haircut? You have very little hair.'

I didn't say a word. 'You want this chicken?' said the XBasket man, in a conciliatory, guilty way.

'No,' I said, hurt.

And I never saw him again. However, in those ten minutes, a mistaken OTP, Flat 501-bashing, papaya analysis, and bald-shaming allowed for a kind of bonding that only happens in India.



BHAIIYYA, JUST A LITTLE OFF THE TOP, PLEASE

## NO OFFENCE



Morparia

# WE ARE CATS AT COPYING

India is a nation of tailors that still fantasises about being Master Darzee to the world, even as China's beaten us in 'photocopying'

## ON THE LEDGE



PALASH KRISHNA MEHROTRA

There was a time in India when it was cheaper to get an item of clothing stitched than to buy it in a 'readymade garments' store. One handed in a model shirt or pair of jeans (always imported) and the tailor — king of ditto — would do a fabulous job of copying it.

I have nothing against tailors. I love sewing machines. I was my mother's COO when it came to her non-electric Singer. My grandmother owned the real thing — the one with a foot pedal, which allowed one to pretend to be a rock drummer. The rapid-fire action of the needle was mesmerising.

I use the word 'tailor' as a metaphor. As a society, we are excellent at churning out copies, but not photocopies. China is much better at that — their counterfeit market overtook India's a while back. From ideas to objects, we tailor everything to our needs. The underlying presumption is a favourite Indian line: This works there. It won't work in India. At times, we copy from each other. We are not copycats, but cats at copying.

I have thousands of Hasty Tasty outlets across the country, but are not part of any chain. It's just that the name came shorthand for Punjabi Chinese food. Similarly, we went through a phase where adding an 'n' in the middle became the cool thing to do: Lip'n'Sip, Ginger'n'Grape, Ferns'n'Petals....

England cricket's Barmy Army becomes Bharat Army. Unlike the former, we can't come up with original songs and slogans. Bharat Army remains stuck at 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'. IMFL, or Indian Made Foreign Liquor, is another classic example. On Swiggy, while searching for Domino's Pizza, one finds Dominik Pizze. One Indian version of Twitter was named Tooter. When someone tried to come up with an original, it was Gutr-

## Bharat Army, from England's Barmy Army, has no original slogan but 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'



WHAT AN (OJJINAL) IDEA, SIRJII

# Do Not Go Down the Vasectomy Way

We know that vaccination is good, that vaccination is right. But for anti-vaxxers, don't add to the mistrust Emergency-style

## RED HERRING



INDRAJIT HAZRA

There has been considerable literature on alien abduction across the world, much of which deals with anal probing. But the fear many have towards the non-consensual introduction of a foreign body into one's self stems not from concerns about aliens across our borders, but from what one man in a white kurta and with long sideburns initiated across northern India from September 1976 to March 1977, a period of roughly the same duration as from when Covid hit India to now.

I won't go as far to say that all cases of Covid vaccination hesitancy rests at the door of Sanjay Gandhi. But his Emergency-era sterilisation programme — for which chief ministers of Congress-ruled states of UP, Bihar and Haryana along with the Lieutenant governor of Delhi went into competitive hyperdrive to notch up numbers of freshly made unproductive Indians — is the reason why many are avoiding the jab today.

Vaccination is not vasectomy. But an invasive force of the Indian healthcare system is not everybody's buddy — certainly less among the rural poor whose collective memory is stronger than any government resolve. While we may rattle off Lancet reports, groan about the dangerous babble on social media, the sweet thuggery of quacks, and the dimwitted of the dimwitted masses, the fact is, trust cannot be thrust upon a people.

While you and I have been impatient about getting our Covaxins and Covishields — even Complan would have done, at one stage — there have been vaccine-hesitant beating up health workers (Malikhed village in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh), jumping into rivers (Sisaurha in Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh), or plainly hiding from vaccinators, who say their own version of 'Hasta la vista, baby'.

This isn't simple fear of needles. It's about fears of being made impotent, disrupting menstrual cycles and reducing fertility, weakening the injected, and even about killing. You don't believe it, I don't believe it. But for many people, not only is India's Covid vaccination drive a mug's game, but it's also eugenically driven — a conspiracy in the form of a strategy to remove India's poor and weak. A jhatka demographic dividend model, if you will.

## Vax-hesitants have hid from vaccinators, who say their own 'Hasta la vista, baby'

Hesitancy suggests 'Hmm, I don't know, maybe...' What is on display — and may become more visible as the 'excuse' of vaccine non-availability goes — is anti-vaccination. A fair amount of seduction in the form of patience and incentives is necessary for this anti-to-become-hesitant to become 'Ok, chalo, let's do this.'

But now, it seems that hard-knuckled tactics are working up the socio-economic pipeline. In 1976, the government had issued circulars that stated that payments and promotions to employees would be held back until they were sterilised — or completed their quota of getting people 'snipped'. Sterilisation certificates became a requisite in some



MAKE PROTECTION LESS SCARY

South Delhi, the 1950s Hollywood stars decor was replicated in café after café, until it entered the homes of upwardly mobile Indians and one just couldn't tell where home began and café ended.

It's not that different when it comes to The Big Idea. Arvind Kejriwal's odd-even scheme, the panacea to everything from Covid to pollution, is also imported. The PM's thali-banging thanksgiving routine during the first Covid wave has, a bit ironically, Italian origins. Also imported was the Congress government's doomed bus rapid transit in Delhi. As is RSS's brand of ethno-nationalism.

And yet, India, the nation of tailors, still harbours the fantasy of being Master Darzee to the world. Uttarakhand CM Tirath Singh Rawat recently said, 'Modi model is popular in the US and the entire West.' This should come as news to the hapless inhabitants of the Rust Belt, Cornwall and Limerick.

Not to say that we haven't produced any non-traditional originals at all. By non-traditional, I mean anything that is not yoga, bharatnatyam or dowry/honour killings. We have Old Monk, Chetan Bhagat, the twins separated at Kumbh Mela film formula (what Manmohan Desai charmingly called 'lots and found') and Mother Dairy.

Actual tailors themselves are far more original. In Dehradun, there is one called Rehab Tailors. Every time I pass it, I itch to climb on a ladder and paint on the signboard the legend: 'Bespoke tailoring for those in recovery.'

The writer is author of 'The Butterfly Generation'

states for renewing licences and getting free treatment in government hospitals. Earlier this week, we read about a growing number of companies 'nudging' their workers to get vaccinated by telling their staff that they would 'miss out' on increments and promotions. Some are saying part of people's salaries would also be held back until a Covid vaccination certification is produced.

True, I do feel like knocking in anti-vaxxers heads (but that would mean being in contact with them). And true, unlike sterilisation, not getting Covid-vaccinated puts everyone else at serious risk. But this 'strategy' simply heightens mistrust — this time in private organisations — not reduces it.

'Forced' returns to workplaces during Covid is a tricky thing. Not just because it runs the risk of bringing office morale down, some employees jamming photocopying machines, deleting files or spitting into the boss's coffee out of spite, but also because the actual fear, and its removal, is being sidelined.

Instead of scare tactics against those holding out, make getting vaccinated a walk in the park, roll out the welcome mat for those jabbed, give them complimentary dine-in coupons. And make WFH, for those who can work diligently from home, be seen as a branch office, not some lepers' colony or extended holiday home. The last thing we, the happily vaxxed, want is to see our work be sidetracked into a distractive and disruptive game of space invaders.

## MEME'S THE WORD



## LET'S TALK ABOUT...

## Canada Melting

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS BEYOND HEADLINES

Wait, what? Are we even talking about the same place?

The very same. Like in north-west US, parts of Canada have hit record summer temperatures.

## As hot as the brutal Delhi summer?

Worse, because Canada is not used to it. Lytton, a village in British Columbia, was breaking new records at 49.6 C and finally, about 90% of it was burnt down by a wildfire caused by the heat.



## Whoa! That's some hellish heat

It sure is. In fact, since a week ago, Vancouver police have responded to over 130 sudden deaths of many elderly and those with underlying health condition, the heat being a contributing factor.

## Why is this happening? Is it the big C?

I assume you're talking about climate change — if so, bingo. One meteorologist said this heat wave is a perfect storm that's long been in the making, after centuries of burning fossil fuel.

## I'm feeling warm just hearing all this. How are the heat-struck coping?

Not very well. Many of the houses in British Columbia don't have air conditioning since summers are usually much milder. Hotels are sold out as people have booked AC rooms.

## Phew. One hopes this passes and they get a break soon

Indeed. As someone said, they've never seen anything like this and they hope they never have to again. And let's hope the climate change-deniers get a reality check.

## If they don't, pack them off to Lytton — what's left of it!!

Text: Indulekha Aravinda

# NEW NORMAL CODE Just Plug And Run It

More companies are adopting low code/no code solutions to manage workloads quickly in the new normal post the Covid-19 pandemic. And several firms have jumped on to the bandwagon to offer these either on their own or in partnership with others *by Priyanka Sangani and Dia Rekhi*



Last year, when More Retail wanted to reduce store costs, it turned to low code platform provider Zvolv, rather than go in for a customised solution that could have taken months to design and deploy. Soon enough, the Pune-based company created a workplace optimisation solution that significantly reduced store costs through an optimisation and rostering utility.

Similarly, when Ballari, Karnataka-based cooperative bank Suco Bank wanted to move away from using Google forms and automate its processes, it turned to no-code platform Quixy.

Since early last year, there has been growing interest in low-code/no-code platforms that provide a simple, user-friendly option for enterprises to create new applications quickly. The concept of a simple plug-and-play software platform is not new, but of late demand has picked up as companies sought solutions to reach customers quickly.

"For a dynamic retail business like ours, enterprise applications need to be launched at scale and evolve rapidly," said Shyam Pal, Head HR - Supermarkets & Supply Chain, More Retail. Zvolv's flexible business process management, robotic process automation and AI/ML features and rapid deployment capabilities, combined with AWS Cloud platform's scalability and reliability, make it a potent combination to launch complex applications rapidly, Pal said.

After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, several large enterprises felt the need to quickly come up with digital solutions to manage work in the new normal.

Zvolv provides a Lego building-block model where it brings in various technologies under one unified platform.

"The solution can be remotely deployed within a few days and is two-five times faster than custom development or traditional development. It can also be up to 10 times cheaper than other solutions," said Hardik Gandhi, CEO of Zvolv, which has worked with companies like Lenskart to manage its offline retail operations, and process automation solutions for Swiggy to manage its cloud kitchen operations.

In the last few months, several IT services firms have started offering low code/no code solutions, either in partnership with technology firms, or by developing their own platforms.

However, most of these are aimed at large enterprises where a technology team will manage them eventually. They still cannot be used by citizen developers or business users with no technical skills. "One of the biggest problems, especially for smaller firms, has been that the person who uses the product doesn't have the skills to build it. Low code platforms bring power to business users and reduce the turnaround time," said Gautam Nimmagadda, CEO of Quixy, which started off by selling to customers in Hyderabad last year but has gone on to work with companies across 18 countries. That was the

*"Creating WebAR and AI experiences is expensive, not to mention how difficult it is to find highly skilled developers"*

**Prafulla Mathur,**  
Co-founder, Vossle



reason why Quixy, as Mohit Maski, chairman of Suco Bank said, became a "good option to quickly automate our internal processes and launch new applications," as Suco's core competency is banking, not tech development or coding. The low-code development technologies market globally is projected to touch \$13.8 billion this year, an increase of 22.6% from 2020, according to IT research firm Gartner. Further, Gartner expects 80% of technology products and services to be built by non-tech professionals by 2024. The adoption of low code platforms has, however, been slower in India compared to North America or Europe, said Akash Jain, associate principal analyst, Gartner. "This is primarily due to easy availability of technical resources, and the absence of an ecosystem around these solutions. However, this is changing rapidly as organizations are realizing the agility these platforms can bring to their business operations as well as large vendors increasing their direct presence in the region," Jain said. The breadth of capabilities that these platforms offer have huge potential to transform the way organizations operate, he added.

"In addition to the BFSI sector, the low code platforms can be a boon for government enterprises in India. It will enable government enterprises to rapidly prototype and develop digital solutions needed for digital governance," Jain pointed out.

#### SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL!

The pandemic led to small firms as well as retailers needing to quickly adopt technology. Mason, an AI and automation-powered no-code SaaS startup for e-commerce entrepreneurs, realised that technology was often a roadblock for smaller stores because software platforms were not always accessible.

"Low code is more user friendly in terms of it being something you can afford," said Kausambi Manjita, CEO of Mason. Beyond that though, the product also needs to provide a user experience that would be at par with traditional software and be easy enough for a non-tech user.

"You don't need another agency, you

don't need freelancers, or need to hire a heavy engineer to run your store. So, we worked in the early days of the pandemic and were building our product to actually get this no code version out," Manjita said. For several established software firms, the move into low code solutions seemed like the logical next step. "The dream for Mad Street Den, even before we started, was to make sure that people across the globe, it doesn't matter what role you're in, whether you're a product person, you're a marketing person, you're a developer, everybody will be AI native... everyone at some level needs to be a part of actually creating AI and not just consuming it," said Ashwini Asokan, CEO and founder of Mad Street Den. "And this is what we aim to do with our Blox AI platform."

Working with developers is the next step in the company's journey, followed by no code and low code tools, she said. While low code platforms have been around, the pandemic has accelerated their adoption.

"Globally, post-pandemic there will be increased interest in the digital dexterity of the user. The lines between technology complexity and business users are blurring and low code taps into this where there is no need to be a coder in order to develop an app," said Mrinal Rai, principal analyst, ISG. Enterprises have started experimenting and testing it to see if they can reduce costs and improve efficiency, he said.

The past year has also brought about a shift in thinking, with companies no longer wanting to have a different set of people to manage a new product. These platforms automate various processes so that even a business head or a non-tech person can run the solution. It was this shift that prompted EnableX to add a low code solution to its existing offerings. The company provides Application Programming Interfaces (API) to allow users to add video calling capabilities to their solution. "What we saw over the last year or so was that developers were taking a whole lot of time trying to create an interface. And even when they were able to create something, it was prone to a lot of errors and a lot of issues, because of the complexities involved," said Pankaj Gupta, CEO, EnableX.

He also realised that 80% of users needed only 20% of the features that a solution offered, which is why a drag-and-drop low code solution made sense. "This brings the development time down from three months to three minutes, it reduces the time to market, and I get my revenue faster," he said.

Opting for a low code solution also allows companies to quickly move on in case something isn't working, since the time and resources spent in adopting the

*"Even when developers were able to create something, it was prone to a lot of errors and a lot of issues, because of the complexities involved,"*

**Pankaj Gupta**  
CEO, EnableX.io



solution tend to be considerably lower than taking a customised development approach. This is also useful in emerging technology areas where finding a skilled developer who can create a solution may not be that easy. This is the reason why Vossle, which creates a web augmented reality (WebAR) solution, has opted to take the no code, DIY route. "Creating WebAR and AI experiences is expensive, not to mention how difficult it is to find highly skilled developers. Thus, only large businesses have been able to afford it so far," said Prafulla Mathur, co-founder of Vossle. The company has signed up over 500 subscriptions globally in its first six months of beta launch. Innoviti Payment Solutions said the launch of a low code platform had helped it reduce time to market for new products by 67%.

"It is a fast-moving world, especially in fintech and we need to see how we can capitalise on the opportunities we have," said Amit Ahuja, senior vice-president - data technology, Innoviti. The company built its onboarding app for merchants using its low code platform, which enables new merchants to start transacting on its terminal within 30 minutes.

There are, however, challenges. The low code platforms built by Indian companies have received mixed success in the global market, said Gartner's Jain. "Majority of the vendors need to expand their capabilities and sharpen their go-to-market strategies to compete with global vendors, especially when the large vendors are shifting their strategy to focus on India both as a potential market as well as their engineering resource pool," he said. With tech giants such as Microsoft, Google and AWS opening up their platforms and providing low code tools to developers, Indian tech firms will have to have a clear value proposition to become a viable alternative. Most Indian software as a solution firms are still moving towards an API model, and since low code is the next step in the evolution of APIs, it may take time for it to scale up.

Two new products, a smart TV and a tab both running on Android, made an entry in the home gadget space this week. Take a quick look with ET at the features and benefits.

## A Latecomer, but A Smart Choice



ILLUSTRATIONS: ANIMISHA

#### ♦ Aabhas Sharma

Philips may have been late getting into the Smart Android TV show but has made a notable entry in India with the 50PUT8215. The 50-inch smart TV is priced at ₹49,990 and comes with a slew of features.

The display panel offers 4K resolution and there is support for HDR10, Dolby Vision as well as Dolby Atmos. It offers a peak brightness of 400 nits. The colours turn out quite well and the viewing angles are sharp.

When it comes to HDR and SDR content, the TV delivers what it promises — clear picture quality. The skin tones are accurate, and there is nothing to complain about as far as brightness and contrast levels go.

The TV has a standard design — slim bezels on the side and slightly thicker bezels at the bottom. There are enough connectivity options in terms of ports — one HDMI, headphones, one USB and a service port on the side. At the back, you will find three HDMI ports, a LAN port and one USB port. The side ports are easy to access when the TV is wall-mounted but the

back ones are slightly tricky to reach. The TV runs on Android 9 with a slightly tweaked UI but it's not too complicated. The remote control is a bit of a 'throwback' device. It is not like minimalist remotes like the ones with OnePlus or Realme TVs, but a standard one with easy access to buttons. The TV comes with 16W of sound output, which doesn't impress on paper as such. However, it is good enough for small spaces — like a bedroom — and produces acceptable audio quality. While watching movies, the dialogues are quite clear, and the bass levels are reasonable.

If you are in the market for a TV with OTT content consumption or set-top box, this is quite a solid option. The picture quality is good with sufficient audio output. There are many brands competing in this price segment, but Philips has done enough with its first Android TV to perhaps be your next TV purchase.

## Multimedia Tab with Premium Specs



#### ♦ Shaurya Shubham

The P11 Pro is the latest and most expensive Android tablet from Lenovo. Priced at ₹44,900, the tablet is in the premium segment and can be considered a competent alternative to iPads and Galaxy Tabs. It includes stylus support, an octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 730 SoC paired with 6GB RAM and 128GB of storage, a massive battery pack and more.

The Qualcomm processor handles most day-to-day tasks and games with ease. The limited 6GB RAM somewhat restricts its capabilities. The overall performance is still good, but an additional 2GB RAM would have made a major difference.

Most people buy a tablet for its extra screen estate and that is where the Tab P11 Pro shines. The 11.5-inch Quad HD OLED display is well-calibrated.

The display offers deep blacks and contrast. Colour production and saturation levels are nice. We have no complaints about the viewing angles as well. It supports Dolby Vision and has 500 nits of peak brightness.

The Tab P11 Pro comes with a JBL powered quad-speaker setup which sounds rich, clear

and has a good surround sound effect, thanks to Dolby Atmos technology.

It is an all-metal body that feels premium and offers well-rounded corners for a comfortable grip. The dual rear camera setup of 13MP autofocus + 5MP fixed focus sensors offers decent quality images and are just average but serves the purpose. The front camera also does what it is expected to do.

One major issue with the tablet is its software. First, the tablet runs a two-generation old Android 10 operating system and second, the custom user interface is also rough with an odd design and a rather weird scaling. Animations are jumpy and inconsistent. This is sort of a buzzkill for a rather good Android tablet.

Thankfully, the 8400mAh battery easily manages to last for around 13 hours. So, should you buy this new tab? Well, if you are looking for a good, premium-looking Android tablet that offers a good multimedia experience, good battery life, is built to last, then you should definitely go for this.

### Global IaaS Market Grows 41% in CY20; Amazon Tops

The global infrastructure as a services (IaaS) market grew 40.7% to \$64.3 billion with Amazon retaining the top position, followed by Microsoft, Alibaba, Google and Huawei. In 2020, the top five IaaS providers accounted for 80% of the market, driven by reliance on public cloud during the pandemic.

### India's External Storage Market Falls 6% in Q1

India's external storage systems market declined 6% in the Q1 2021 to \$83 million with verticals like telecommunications, media and government registering a sharp decline. Spends in BFSI, professional services and manufacturing increased. Entry-level storage systems grew by 11.3% while mid and high-end storage systems declined.

## \$85b by FY25: Global Captives in India Aim High

Global capability centres (GCCs) in India can grow from \$33.8 billion in revenue as of FY2020 to \$60-85 billion by FY2025 according to a new report by Nasscom and Deloitte. The report, GCC Value Proposition for India, said that given the opportunity to extend scale across transactional services on the back of current service delivery and a strong case to deliver capabilities across digital, analytics, among other factors. There is also

potential to attract new companies to set up R&D or niche capability centres which would maximise value for the parent through talent arbitrage. India is now home to 1,300 GCCs of over 1,300 organisations, directly employing 1.3 million people and over 5.5 million indirectly. GCCs have moved on from seeking cost arbitrage to being a channel to bring global best practices to India and as a source of skills for the ecosystem.

#### CURRENT IMPACT ON INDIA

GCCs make considerable holistic impact across economic, human capital, innovation and ecosystem, social, environmental, and reputational dimensions

##### Economic

• Direct, indirect, and induced gross output of ~\$103 billion to India

• Direct, indirect and induced employment to ~5.5 million

##### Human Capital

• Trained ~200K+ in futuristic skills since 2015

• Represent ~27% of the best places to work for women in India

##### Innovation & Ecosystem

• Global Organisations with GCC in India, invested ~US\$ 1.5 billion in Indian start-ups in 2019

• Comprise 10-15% share in start-up leadership in India

• Generated \$250-300 million due to productivity improvement

• Paid \$5.4-5.6 billion in taxes, corporate and personal to India

• GCCs directly contribute ~\$15 million to startup revenue per annum

##### Social

• Spend ~\$100 million on CSR of which, ~40% is for education initiatives

• Impacted ~1.7 million households through women empowerment

##### Environmental

• Save 180-200K tonnes of GHG emissions through various initiatives

• Recycle 7-8 billion litres of water annually

• Generated 30-35% of their energy requirement from renewable sources

#### THE CHALLENGE LANDSCAPE

• Uncertain policy framework

• Demand-supply gap on skills

• Limited visibility to innovation ecosystem

##### Reputational

Resulted in the reputation of India as the engine room for global operations

Led to India being renowned as the global digital and R&D hub

Led to India being renowned as the global hub for scalable and frugal innovation

• 'Low cost-low value' perception of India

• Infrastructure not keeping pace with the sector's needs

A corporate deal is giving John Logan, the writer of Spectre and Skyfall, the chills – because agent James Bond has always been shielded by one family



# 007's secret weapon

The New York Times

So, Amazon now owns 50 per cent of 007. With the acquisition of MGM and its movie catalogue, the online retail giant bought into the *James Bond* franchise. Bond isn't just another franchise, not a Marvel or a DC—it is a family business that has been carefully nurtured through the changing times by the Broccoli/Wilson family. Work sessions on *Skyfall* and *Spectre* were like heavy discussions around the dinner table, with Barbara Broccoli and half-brother Michael Wilson letting all



Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson are the champions of James Bond. They keep corporate and commercial pressures outside the door

the unruly children talk. When you work on Bond movies, you're not just an employee. You're part of a family.

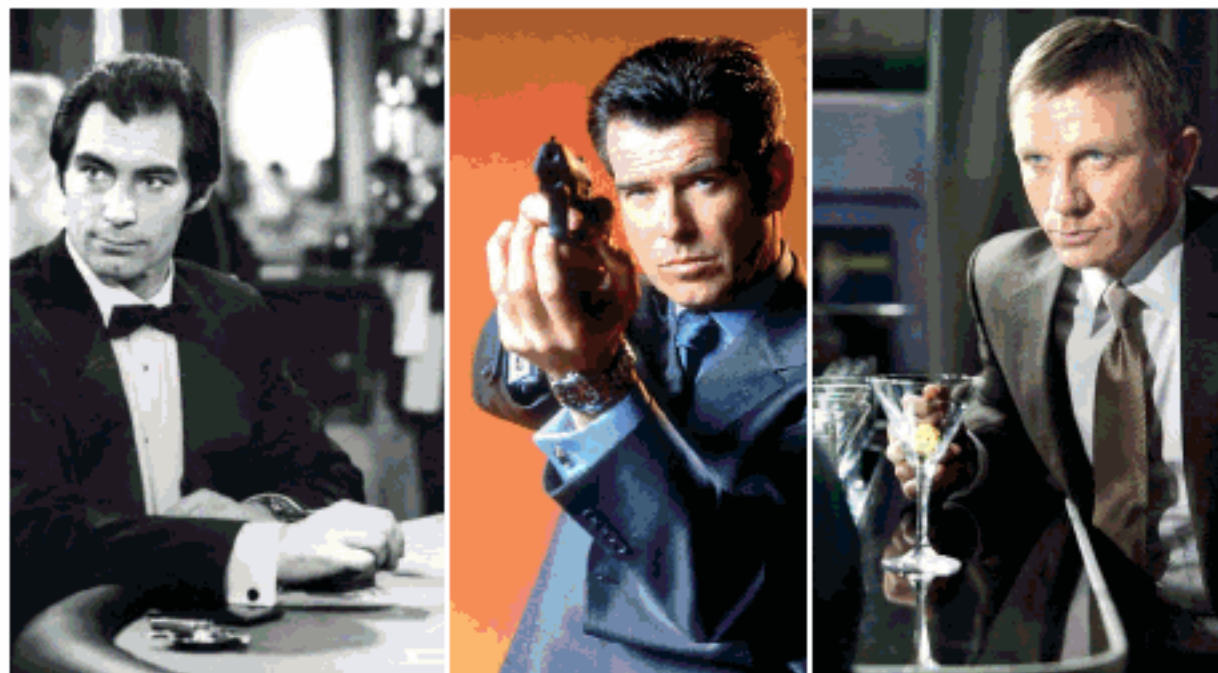
## ARTISTIC CONTROL

The Amazon deal gives Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson, who own 50 per cent of the Bond empire, iron-clad assurances of continued artistic control. But will this always be the case? What happens if Amazon begins to demand a voice in the process? What happens to the comradeship and quality control if there's an Amazonian overlord with analytics parsing every decision? What happens when a focus group reports they don't like Bond drinking martinis? Or killing so many people?

From my experience, here's what happens when such concerns invade the creative process: Everything gets watered down to the most and anyone and easily consumable version of itself. The fire and passion are gradually drained away as original ideas and voices are subsumed by commercial concerns, corporate oversight and polling data.

When big companies start having a say in iconic characters or franchises, the companies tend to want more, not better, and the quality differential can vary wildly, project to project.

When you're making a movie, you



Bond through the years: (L to R) Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan, Daniel Craig

need a champion to fight these battles. Barbara Broccoli and Michael Wilson are the champions of *James Bond*. They keep corporate and commercial pressures outside the door. Nor are they motivated by them. That's why we don't have a mammoth Bond Cinematic Universe, with endless anaemic variations of 007 sprouting up on TV or streaming or in spinoff movies. That's why they are original, thorny, eccentric and special. They weren't created with lawyers and accountants and e-commerce mass marketing pollsters hovering.

## AN AGENT WITH DARING

This is also why they can afford to be daring. Here's an example from *Skyfall*—my favourite day working on the movie, in fact: Director Sam Mendes and I marched into Barbara and Michael's office, sat at the family table and pitched the first scene between Bond and the villain, Raoul Silva. Now, the moment 007 first encounters his arch-nemesis is often the iconic moment in a Bond movie. Well, Sam and I boldly announced

we wanted to do this pivotal scene as a homoerotic seduction. Barbara and Michael didn't need to poll a focus group. They didn't need to vet this radical idea with any studio or corporation—they loved it instantly. They knew it was fresh and new, provocative in a way that keeps the franchise contemporary. They weren't afraid of controversy.

Not many big movies can work with such freedom. But with the family at the helm, Bond is allowed to provoke, grow and be idiosyncratic.

James Bond has survived the Cold War, Goldfinger, Jaws, disco and Ernst Stavro Blofeld, several times. And I hope that the powers that beat Amazon recognise the uniqueness of what they acquired and allow and encourage this family business to continue.

Bond's not "content" and he's not a mere commodity. From Sean Connery to George Lazenby to Roger Moore to Timothy Dalton to Pierce Brosnan to Daniel Craig, we all grew up with our version of 007, so we care deeply.

Please let 007 drink his martinis in peace. Don't shake him, don't stir him.

## A valuable treasure, excreted

### FOOD FABLES



VIKRAM DOCTOR

The strangest thing I ever ate was ray liver. A fisherman selling the kite-shaped fish extracted a fleshy lump which she told me to cook carefully. Pan frying it, I realised why—it was mostly fat, which suddenly melted, leaving shreds of flesh. It was incredibly rich-tasting, yet slightly repulsive, like fishy tasting ghee.

Ambergris might beat that. Recent reports about people arrested in Mumbai and Tamil Nadu for trying to sell it refer to ambergris as "whale's vomit" but, as Christopher Kemp explains in *Floating Gold*, his history of the world's weirdest luxury product, it is closer to faeces. Sperm whales feed on squid whose hard beaks they vomit out, but some occasionally reach their intestines. They form a mass there, covered by fatty secretions, which are sometimes excreted, but can build up, blocking and killing the whale. As scavengers eat the carcass, the lump is freed to float, like the excreted ones, maturing in seawater and wind till it no longer smells faecal, but partly animalic and partly marine. Eventually it can wash up on a seashore, anywhere in the world. Estimates of its value vary widely, but the Mumbai police quote a current figure of Rs one crore per kilo.

Ambergris is mostly used for perfumes, but can be eaten as well. Most of what we think of as flavour comes from aromas, and many ingredients now used in perfumery were once eaten

used for perfumes, but can be eaten too. Most of what we think of as flavour comes from aromas, and many ingredients now used in perfumery were once eaten

bark in the Nicobars to make a fortune trading with the natives for ambergris. But the Nicobarese were too smart, selling him beeswax mixed with little ambergris, and Dampier departed penniless. The Indian government now wants to develop Nicobar for the "benefit" of the Nicobarese. But couldn't people who once controlled one of the world's most prized substances be trusted to decide what really benefits them?



## The sweet spot: How to set up your nook at home



It doesn't take much to carve out a little space for yourself

glynda.alves  
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**1 Have a seat** Whether it's a long phone call or curling up with a book, a nook has to have a good chair. Wing chairs, comfortable loungers or an arm chair with an ottoman are the best choices.

**2 Surface area** Pick your tabletop. Choose between a tray table or a desk.

Whether it's to hold your cup of coffee or laptop, adding a table automatically ups the utility of the space.



**3 The little things** A luxurious throw, potted plants, art pieces—it's the details that make the space yours. Personalise your nook by adding colours and some inspiration to your surroundings. Plus, it's a conversation starter on those Zoom meetings.

**4 Location, location, location** Have your nook by a window or balcony so that you can get the best of both worlds: Indoors and the outdoors. Use furniture and accessories to demarcate the area. You can use a rug under the chair, opt for sliding doors or partitions and adaptable furniture. This allows you to create private spaces in the smallest of areas.

**5 Choose wisely** Look at comfort brands and low maintenance pieces rather than aesthetically beautiful ones.

## The masterpieces that Napoleon stole

His art seizures paved the way for the Louvre. And while some of them were returned, France still retains some important pieces

The New York Times

The spoils of war were positively magnificent.

When Napoleon Bonaparte led his army across the Alps, he ordered the Italian states he conquered to hand over artworks that were the pride of the peninsula. The Vatican was emptied of the 'Laocoön', a masterpiece of ancient Greek sculpture, and Venice was stripped of Veronese's painting 'The Wedding Feast at Cana' (1563).

The aim was to "unite the greatest masterpieces of art in Paris" and "bring together, in a nation freed from despotism, all the products of human genius", a video monitor in the huge new exhibition in Paris, 'Napoleon', says of the expropriation. He brought back enough loot from his conquests to fill what would soon

become the Louvre Museum. And his ravenous and methodical art seizures—a cultural legacy now being highlighted in 200th-anniversary commemorations of his death—paved the way for similar French excesses in sub-Saharan Africa a century later.

"Napoleon understood that the French kings had used art and architecture to aggrandise themselves and to build the image of political power, and he did exactly the same thing," Cynthia Saltzman, the author of *Plunder*, a history of Napoleon's Italian art thefts.

### FINDING A LINK

Napoleon pilfered about 600 paintings and sculptures from Italy alone, Saltzman noted, adding that he sought to "link himself to these works of genius" and justify their plunder by invoking "the aims of



Napoleon founded the Louvre Museum as we know it today



An artefact from one of Napoleon's campaigns 'The Wedding Feast at Cana' by Paolo Veronese

## A bitter aftertaste

Although a lot was given back, the Napoleonic plunder left a bitter aftertaste that lingers to this day. Italians still refer to "i furti napoleonici" ("the Napoleonic thefts"). In 2016 and 2017, masterpieces that Napoleon Bonaparte looted were showcased in a special Rome exhibition at the Scuderie del Quirinale.

Egypt regularly demands the return of the Rosetta Stone, which was excavated during Napoleon's occupation of Egypt (1798-1801), captured by the British at his defeat, and is now in the British Museum. A plaster case of it is in the Paris exhibition.

the Enlightenment".

Once Napoleon was defeated in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, his adversaries hastened to give back the Louvre's looted treasures. Roughly half of the Italian paintings that Napoleon had taken were returned,



Saltzman said. The other half stayed in France, including 'The Wedding Feast at Cana'.

Why weren't the others returned? Many were scattered in museums around the country, and French officials resisted giving them back.

Today, France retains important pieces, including a major painting by Cimabue, panels from a Mantegna altarpiece, a painting by Titian and another Veronese, she added.

### FOUNDING THE LOUVRE

Napoleon really did want to bring the world's treasures to Paris, and more specifically to the Louvre, said Vivien Richard, who heads the Louvre's department that specialises in the museum's history.

"He unquestionably founded the Louvre Museum as we know it today, with all the richness and variety of its collections," she said. In Napoleonic times, "its mission was to enrich its collections and to be encyclopedic, and that mission prevails to date".

So why is Napoleon not condemned as ferociously for his cultural expropriation as French colonial forces are for their looting of Africa?

"The one enormous difference is duration: Napoleon's occupation of Europe lasted a decade, not several decades or a century," said Bénédicte Savoy, a historian. Also, "the colonisers of Africa extracted all of the natural riches of those countries and took away all their treasures while humiliating their populations".

"Napoleon," she said, "was not as extreme."



### HEALTH SCORE

## WI Cricketers Collapse on Field, 'Conscious and Stable' in Hospital

Two West Indies women cricketers — Chinelle Henry and Chedean Nation — collapsed briefly on the field in two separate incidents during the second T20I against Pakistan and taken to hospital where they were “stable”, according to reports. Both the incidents happened during Pakistan’s run chase, which also saw rain interruptions on Friday. “(Seam bowler) Chinelle Henry and (batter) Chedean Nation were taken to hospital for medical attention. Both Henry and Nation are conscious and stable at hospital and are being assessed,” CWI said in a statement. West Indies brought on two substitutes and the game continued, with the home side eventually declared winners by seven runs on Duckworth-Lewis-Stern after another interruption. Pakistan captain Javeria Khan wished the West Indies pair a quick recovery. “The thoughts and prayers of the whole Pakistan team are with Chinelle Henry and Chedean Nation,” she said in a statement. “We wish them a quick recovery and are hopeful that we will play against them in our next match on Sunday. Such incidents are tragic and can shake whole dressing rooms. Hats off to the West Indies that they turned up and completed the match.”

**I'D LOVE TO BE PART OF THE WORLD CUP, FOR SURE. BUT FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, TEST CRICKET, THAT'S MY MAIN GOAL — TO BE RIGHT FOR THE ASHES AND TRY TO EMULATE WHAT I'VE DONE IN THE LAST FEW ASHES SERIES I'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN**

**STEVE SMITH** is recovering from an elbow injury

### 2,127 MATCHES

## India's Domestic Cricket Season to Begin In Sept

The BCCI will conduct all its domestic tournaments across age-groups with the coveted Ranji Trophy, starting on November 16, being the marquee event among the 2127 matches scheduled for 2021-22 season. Last season, the BCCI couldn't conduct any age-group tournament and was forced to cancel the Ranji Trophy due to COVID-19 pandemic. However, a full-fledged domestic season will take place this year with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 being held from October 20 and the National One-Day Championship for Vijay Hazare Trophy being scheduled from February 23, 2022.

DOMESTIC SCHEDULE			
MEN'S SENIOR			
Tournament	Start	End	
Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20)	20 Oct	12 Nov	
Ranji Trophy (multi-day)	16 Nov	19 Feb	
Vijay Hazare Trophy (one-day)	23 Feb	26 Mar	
WOMEN'S SENIOR			
One-Day League	21 Sept	22 Oct	
One-Day Challenger Trophy	27 Oct	31 Oct	
T20 League	19 Mar	11 Apr	

### RACISM AND SEXISM

## England's Robinson Free to Play Again After Ban

England fast bowler Ollie Robinson has been cleared to resume playing, after he was deemed to have served a ban over racist and sexist comments he made on social media as a teenager, a Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC) said on Saturday. The 27-year-old was fined 3,200 pounds (\$4,400) and handed an eight-game ban, five of which are suspended for two years. He missed England's second test against New Zealand and two T20 Blast games for his county during an investigation over the comments on Twitter. The initial one-game suspension was imposed by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), before Robinson withdrew himself from selection for his county side Sussex for the T20 games.



## A loss to Italy at Euro sent another star-studded Belgian team home empty-handed. But not before it offered a peek at their future

Rory Smith

Belgium's players were still, their faces blank, as they heard the clock strike midnight. At the other end of the Allianz Arena in Munich, Italy's players were being slowly consumed by their fans, released only once they had surrendered their white jerseys and their green training bibs and, in some cases, their muddled shorts for use as future sacraments. The team they had just beaten 2-1, though, barely moved. Kevin De Bruyne stared off into the distance. Thomas Vermaelen glared at the grass. The only clue that Roberto Martinez, their coach, had not been replaced by a statue was the fact that his mouth was moving, furiously chewing gum. Belgium's last chance had come, and it had gone. That was how it felt, anyway it was what the players believed, what Martinez had internalized: that this squad, this generation, “deserved” some sort of manifest reward for all that it had achieved. That it would come in the form of a trophy, a title, and that Euro 2020 was the final opportunity to grasp it. That was the bar that had been set, the challenge that had been accepted, not far off a decade ago, when Belgium was anointed as the home of European football's most recent golden generation. The country had been a backwater since the 1980s, but all of a sudden it had a great blooming of talent.

It boasted Thibaut Courtois, one of the world's finest goalkeepers; a defense marshaled by Vincent Kompany, Jan Vertonghen and Toby Alderweireld; a midfield patrolled by Axel Witsel and conducted by De Bruyne; and an attack that blended the trickery of Eden Hazard and the cold-eyed ruthlessness of Romelu Lukaku. They were just the most prominent names; behind them was a supporting cast of half a dozen more of Europe's finest players. In truth, presenting Belgium with a straight binary — glory or failure, a trophy or disdain — was always a little too simplistic, perhaps a touch brutal. That first team reached a quarterfinal in the 2014 World Cup, then was eliminated by a more experienced Argentina. It traveled to the same stage in the European Championship in 2016, only to fall to an unheralded, surging Wales side.

Two years later, at the World Cup in 2018, Martinez broke that particular ceiling: Belgium outclassed Brazil in the round of eight and fell by the most slender of margins to the eventual winner, France, in the semifinals. A frenetic loss to Italy in Munich on Friday meant a backward step, a bowing out in yet another quarterfinal.

According to the terms of the original agreement, that means that Belgium have failed. But that rather fails to take into account that success can — and

should — be relative. For a nation of Belgium's size, that record is formidable. For a nation of their recent history, it is a striking improvement. Before 2014, they had not qualified for a major tournament in more than a decade. It had not been to a quarterfinal since the 1986 World Cup.

That will be of scant solace to the players, of course, as they contemplate the end of their era. Their talent — their own expectations — warranted more, wherever they came from, whatever previous generations had achieved.

Euro 2016, in particular, will be a source of regret, the best chance the country had to win something. So, too, might the fact that this tournament was delayed by a year. Had Euro 2020 actually been held in 2020, Belgium would've been a year younger, a year fresher. Perhaps that might've made a difference. Some of its mainstays, certainly, are running out of time. Vermaelen is 35, Vertonghen 34 and Alderweireld 32. Witsel, Nacer Chadli and Dries Mertens are all in the autumn of their careers, too. Even Hazard — only 30, but plagued by injury for the past two years — may now be on an accelerated de-

scend from his prodigious peak. For some, if not all, of them, the next major tournament, in Qatar next winter, is likely a step too far.

Belgium's golden generation — this squad that has been through only the most cosmetic of alterations since that first tournament in 2014 — will never make that final leap, will never win anything, not as it was meant to, not together.

And yet there is a misunderstanding here, too, because when the clock strikes midnight, nothing stops. It just means that a new day is starting. Generations do not rise and fall in perfect synchronicity; they fold and meld and blend into each other.

Vermaelen, Vertonghen and Witsel might not make it to the next World Cup, but Youri Tielemans and Yannick Carrasco and Timothy Castagne will. So, too, will De Bruyne and Lukaku. Belgium will not disappear. The binary — win something now or be condemned to indignity forever — is and always was an illusion. Martinez, if he remains in place, will still be able to take a fearsome side to Qatar.

The New York Times

## Spain's Flaw

Steve Douglas

Spain have advanced to the European Championship semifinals as the highest-scoring team in the tournament. Don't be fooled, though. “The biggest flaw in Spain's quest for a third continental title in the last four editions lies in their shortcomings up front.

Just take the win over Switzerland in the Euro 2020 quarterfinals on Friday for example.

The Spanish had 28 shots in a match that went to extra time and penalties and in which the Swiss played about 45 minutes with 10 men. By the end, it resembled shooting practice against overworked Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

Still, Spain finished the 120 minutes having had to rely on an own-goal in a 1-1 draw, and even missed two of their penalties in an error-riddled shootout that the team won 3-1.

The problem for Spain coach Luis Enrique is he has nowhere to turn.

First-choice striker Alvaro Morata has the complete backing of Luis Enrique, yet — not for the first time in his career — looks like a player lacking confidence, having encountered abuse on social media after spurning

**The problem for Spain coach Luis Enrique is he has nowhere to turn**

AFP

## Top-scoring La Roja have concerns up front

many big chances in the group stage.

Gerard Moreno is the other striker in Spain's Euro 2020 squad, and replaced a tired-looking Morata after only 54 minutes against Switzerland. The Villarreal player, who scored 30 goals last season in Spain, was presented with at least four clear chances to score — one coming from inside the six-yard box — but squandered each one.

Of Spain's tournament-leading 12 goals so far, Moreno has none and Morata has two.

“It's pretty clear what Morata and Gerard have been through here,” Luis Enrique said.

Spain have squeezed their way through to the semifinals in an unconventional way, drawing its opening two games — scoring only one of its 29 shots on goal against Sweden and Poland — then finally finding a cutting edge in a 5-0 victory in the must-win game against Slovakia. Then came that wild 5-3 win over Croatia in the round of 16 that appeared to be a turning point for Spain's attack.

The Switzerland game showed otherwise. One thing that will satisfy Luis Enrique is that Spain has had six different scorers at Euro 2020. The midfield is performing, with a tournament-high possession count of 67.2% and the best passing accuracy of all teams at 88.4%.

According to UEFA's statistics, Spain has had 365 attacks at the tournament — 69 more than second-place Italy. Only three teams have more than 200.

That's all well and good if there are strikers there to finish them off. But that is not the case as Spain heads into a semifinal match against a defensive behemoth in Italy.

AP

**We had opportunities. After the break, possession was still in their favour, but we were better. Yes, there will be people angry and disappointed, but the supporters will have seen that we wanted to give everything**

KEVIN DE BRUYNE

## Advantage Love: Sharans' Wimbledon Dream Comes True

Divij Sharan and his wife Samantha Murray Sharan's dream of playing at Wimbledon together finally reached fruition after seven years — and to top it all they won their first round mixed doubles match on Friday.

Sharan, 35, and Murray Sharan, 33, beat Uruguayan Ariel Behar and Kazakh Galina Voskoboeva 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 in a match that had a lengthy interruption due to a ball girl being injured.

During the thrilling three-setter on Court Four they restrained themselves in touching elbows after points but at the end they allowed themselves a hug...or two.

Their restraint is in line with the husband and wife pair admitting neither of them are very outgoing.

This was clear from the outset when their doubles partners at the time — who knew each other — introduced them at a tournament in 2012.



Divij Sharan (L) with wife Samantha Murray Sharan during their mixed doubles match at the Wimbledon on Friday

“Neither of us are particularly outgoing so we still don't know how we managed to speak to each other,” said Samantha. “One of us eventually plucked up the courage to speak finally!” It took another six months before they

crossed paths again and then Cupid worked his magic.

“I was training before a tournament which he was playing in,” said Murray Sharan. “I ended up there on my own and I trained with him and his group.

**In 2014 we signed up but did not get in to Wimbledon. In the meantime Divij played with other partners as I was not ranked highly enough. It's been a long time coming!**

SAMANTHA MURRAY SHARAN

“We spent a lot of time together for the next few months and now here we are!” she added laughing.

They have been a couple for eight years and in 2019 not satisfied with tying the knot once in Manchester in July they then repeated it in India in November.

“We decided to have two ceremonies so that we were able to celebrate both of our cultures and traditions

which are important to us, with our family and friends from each side,” Sharan said at the time.

Their efforts, though, to play at Wimbledon did not meet with similar success.

“In 2014 we signed up but did not get in to Wimbledon,” she added.

“In the meantime Divij played with other partners as I was not highly enough ranked.

“It's been a long time coming!”

Both were able to fine-tune their skills together — “volleying in the back garden” said Sharan — during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown which other mixed doubles partners were unable to do as they did not live together.

“We also watch each other's games so we instinctively know our moves,” said Murray Sharan.

For Murray Sharan, Friday's victory tasted even sweeter as it was her first

### KEY RESULTS

**Men Singles (3rd Rd):** Matteo Berrettini bt Alijz Bedene 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; Hubert Hurkacz bt Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-4, 6-2. **Women Singles (3rd Rd):** Ajla Tomljanovic bt Jelena Ostapenko 4-6, 6-4, 6-2; Coco Gauff bt Kaja Juvan 6-3, 6-3; Angelique Kerber bt Aleksandra Sasnovich 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; Karolina Muchova bt Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 7-5, 6-3

ever victory at a Grand Slam tournament — Sharan has gone as far as the quarterfinals in the 2018 men's doubles at Wimbledon.

“This time round we said we would stick with each other and got in as alternates so it is very special to share the court with Sam.

“It is the first win for Sam at a Grand Slam as well so it is extra special.”

AFP

## Simone's Showcase

American star Biles, five-time Olympic medallist, bidding for history in Tokyo

Willi Graves

Simone Biles is aware of the pressure. She welcomes it. Practically invites it. Look no further than the sequined goat she's nicknamed “Goldie” that occasionally finds its way onto her competition leotard.

The symbol — a play on the acronym for greatest of all time — is both a nod to her hard-earned status as the most talented gymnast (and maybe athlete) on the planet and the outsized expectations she faces, both internally and externally.

It's a delicate dance, one that will take center stage when the 24-year-old American steps in front of the world in Tokyo. No pressure. All she has to do is somehow one-up her staggering performance in Rio de Janeiro, when she won five medals (including four gold) and entered the rarified air of Olympic royalty reserved for the likes of Michael Phelps, Usain Bolt and Nadia Comaneci.

Yes, it's a lot. Then again, whatever bar is set for her by others pales in comparison to the bar Biles sets

“So, I feel like I'd say we've reached a point where gymnastics is getting more difficult and a little bit more dangerous. So we're kind of walking on eggshells here, but it's exciting to watch.” Other things to look for in Tokyo:

### ABUSE SCANDALS

The competition floor isn't the only place the sport is treading carefully.

Gymnastics has spent much of the last five years trying to address a culture of abuse at the elite level all over the globe. The scandal surrounding disgraced former US national team doctor Larry Nassar — who sexually abused athletes (Biles included) under the guise of medical treatment — started a reckoning of sorts.

Federations from the US to Great Britain to Australia have been grappling with how to create a healthier atmosphere for their elite athletes.

Whether any real progress has been made won't be known for years, though the top American women allow the vibe is more relaxed now than it was during former national team coordinator Martha Karolyi's highly successful — and highly divisive — tenure.

“I feel like it's a lot more fun,” said MyKayla Skinner, who will compete as an individual qualifier.

**TALENT OVERLOAD**

At least for the Americans, who are heavily favored to win their third straight Olympic title. Sure, having Biles helps. But the U.S. squad is as loaded as ever.

Sun is a Lee, who actually outscored Biles in the all-around during the second day at Olympic Trials, is a revelation on uneven bars. Jordan Chiles' steadiness in 2021 turned her from a fringe Olympic candidate to a gymnast who may come back to the States with multiple medals.

There's so much wiggle room, national team coordinator Tom Foster admitted he actually potentially sacrificed a few tenths of a point by choosing Grace McCallum to fill out the four-woman team instead of Skinner.

“We're so fortunate that our athletes are so strong that I don't think it's going to come down to tenths of a point in Tokyo,” Foster said.

**ONE MORE TIME**

The Games will also serve as a goodbye for a couple of Olympic legends. Two-time Olympic champion Kohei Uchimura of Japan — in many ways, the men's equivalent of Biles — will get a chance to say take a bow in front of his homeland after qualifying as an individual.

And 46-year-old Oksana Chusovitina of Uzbekistan will compete in her record eighth Olympics.

Chusovitina has pledged she's ready to retire several times through the years. Yet this is likely her last stand. It may be for Biles, too. But maybe not. Her coaches are French, and she hasn't ruled out a third Games as a way of thanking them for helping rekindle her love for the sport. For now, however, Tokyo awaits.

“I'm very relieved that Olympic Trials is over and we still have a lot of work to put in once we get over there,” she said. “But I'm super excited.”

So is everyone else.

Associated Press

## Olympics Harder on Marijuana Than Pro Sports

Though pro leagues are slowly adjusting to the reality that marijuana is not a performance-enhancing drug, it remains squarely on the banned list for Olympic sports.

That reality will force American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson to miss the Olympics this month.

Shortly after she won the Olympic trials in Oregon last month, she tested positive for chemicals found in marijuana. Though it was acknowledged the drug was not used for performance-enhancing purposes, Richardson still had her results erased and received a one-month ban.

A few questions about marijuana policy in sports:

**Q: If marijuana isn't thought to enhance performance, then why is it still banned?**  
**A:** According to the U.S. Anti-Doping

Agency, “For something to be added to the ... Prohibited List, it must meet two of the three inclusion criteria:

a) it poses a health risk to athletes  
b) it has the potential to enhance performance and  
c) it violates the spirit of sport.”

Though WADA has increased the threshold for a positive test, it has not taken marijuana off the list because it still asserts that the drug meets at least two of the above criteria. Also according to USADA: The 2021 World Anti-Doping Code newly classifies THC as a “Substance of Abuse” because it is frequently used in society outside the context of sport.

**Q: What changed recently in the American pro sports leagues?**

**A:** All the leagues have greatly loosened their restrictions on

**Though it was acknowledged the drug was not used for performance-enhancing purposes, Richardson still had her results erased and received a one-month ban**

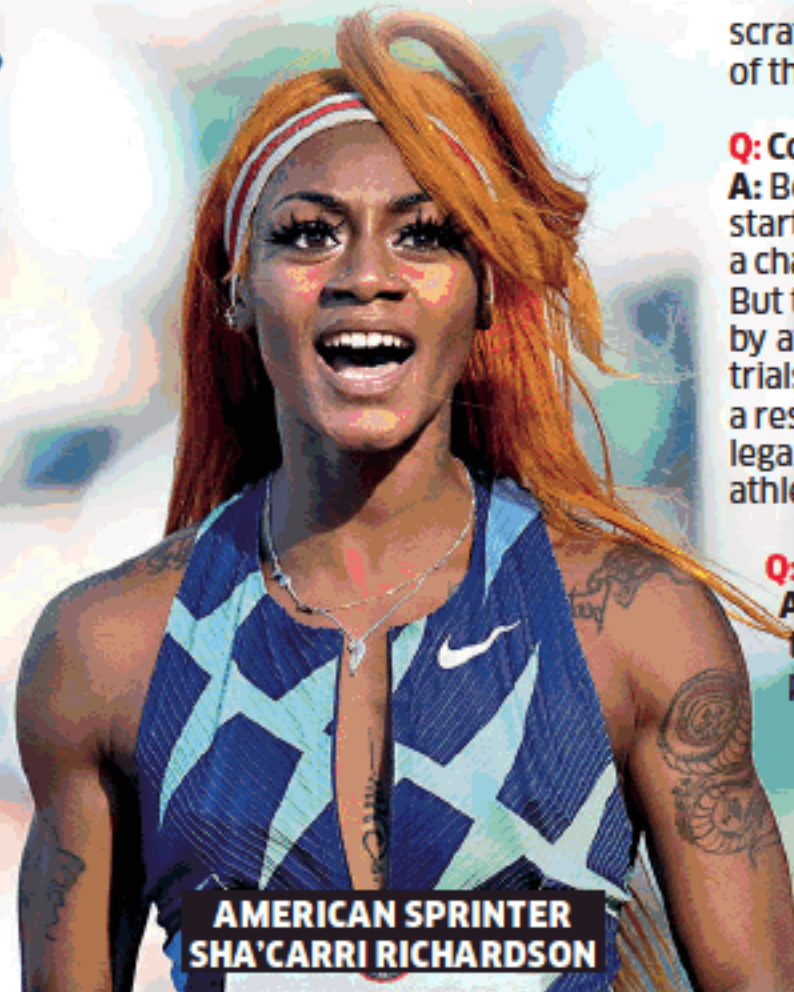
marijuana over the past years. For instance, the NFL has raised the threshold for a positive test and eliminated suspensions. And the NBA stopped random testing for marijuana in March 2020. These changes have come as laws prohibiting marijuana use around the U.S. and the world have been relaxed, and as studies that link marijuana to medicinal and pain-relief benefits have become more common.

**Q: What changes have occurred in the Olympic testing program?**

**A:** Not long after the London Olympics in 2012, international regulators increased the threshold for a positive test from 15 nanograms per milliliter to 150 ng/ml. They explained the new threshold was an attempt to ensure that in-competition use is detected, but not use during the days and weeks before competition. The sanction for a positive test when an athlete can establish the drug was not used to enhance performance is three months. That can be reduced to one month if the athlete completes counseling.

**Q: If Richardson's ban is 30 days and ends July 27, then why can't she compete in the Olympic 100, which starts on July 30?**

**A:** Because her first-place finish at trials, which is what earned her the spot, is



AMERICAN SPRINTER SHA'CARRI RICHARDSON

scratched out of the record books because of the positive test.

**Q: Could she still compete in the Olympics?**

**A:** Because her ban is over before the start of the women's 4x100 relay, there's a chance she could be named to the team. But the relay pool is presumably filled by athletes who have a result from the trials. Richardson does not officially have a result, so it would potentially take some legal wrangling or cooperation from other athletes to allow her on the team.

**Q: Could Richardson appeal the ruling?**

**A:** Although athletes have the right to appeal any positive tests, two people familiar with this case told The Associated Press that Richardson is not appealing her case. The people did not want their names used because of the confidentiality of doping cases.

AP