



# Current Affairs

**MODULE**

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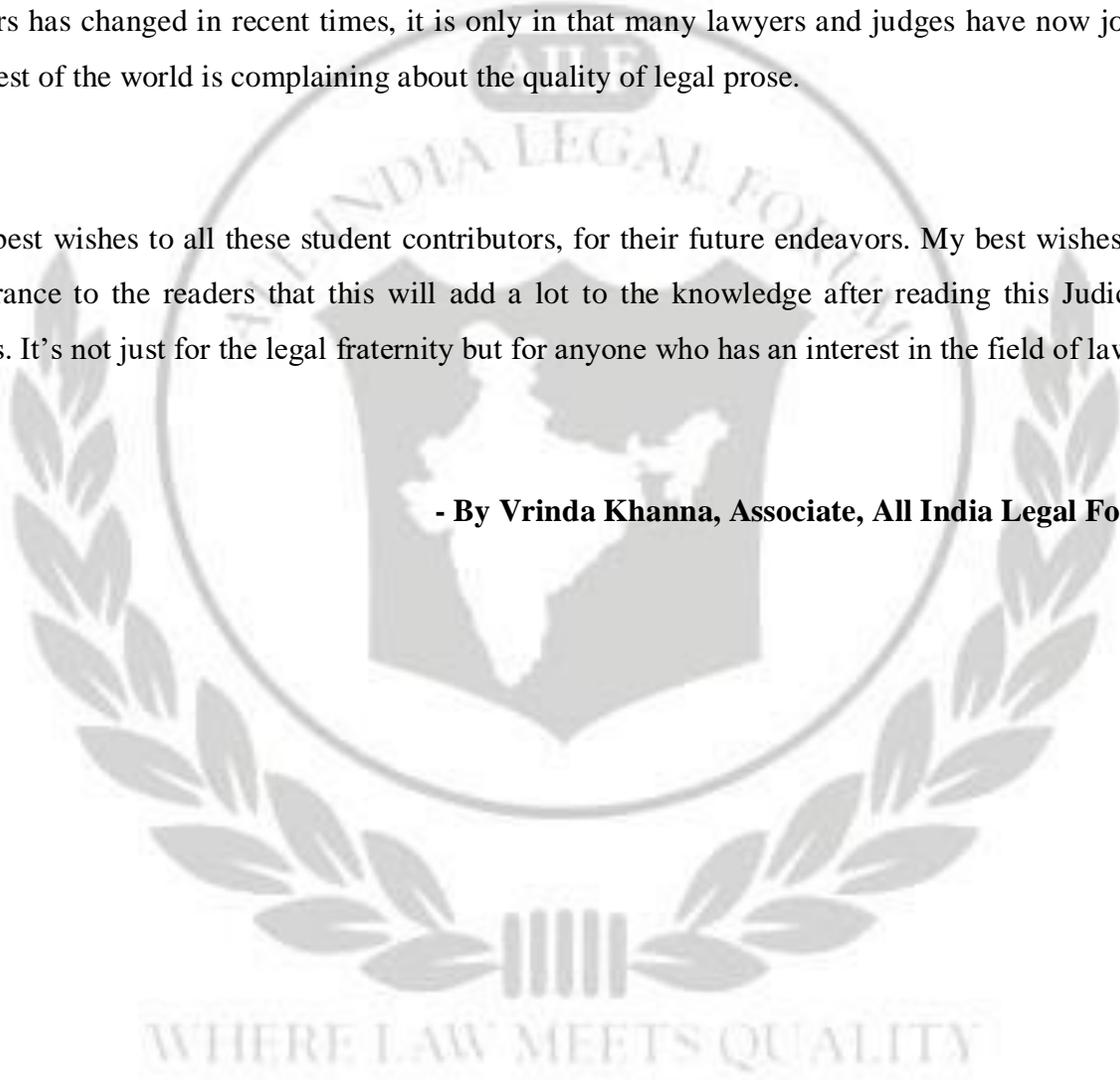


## FOREWORD

More has been said about the writing of lawyers and judges than of any other group, except, of course, poets and novelists. The difference is that while the latter has usually been admired for their writing, the public has almost always damned lawyers and judges for theirs. If this state of affairs has changed in recent times, it is only in that many lawyers and judges have now joined the rest of the world in complaining about the quality of legal prose.

My best wishes to all these student contributors, for their future endeavors. My best wishes and assurance to the readers that this will add a lot to the knowledge after reading this Judiciary notes. It's not just for the legal fraternity but for anyone who has an interest in the field of law.

**- By Vrinda Khanna, Associate, All India Legal Forum**



## PREFACE

May there be Peace in Heaven, May there be Peace in the Sky, May there be Peace in the Earth, May there be Peace in the Water, May there be Peace in the Plants, May there be Peace in the Trees, May there be Peace in the Gods in the various Worlds, May there be Peace in all the human beings, May there be Peace in All.

### **PEACE, PEACE, PEACE.**

Our age-old culture prays for peace and happiness for one and all. Family is the first and oldest social group. It has played an important role in the stability and prosperity of the civilization. Almost everything of lasting value in humanity has its roots in the family. Peace and harmony in the family are important for the all-round development of children. This Compilation of Judiciary notes by All India Legal Forum is aimed at bringing about desired sensitivity in all duty holders. We're glad to be a part of the All India Forum. Here's an introduction to my team:

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## DISCLAIMER

Team AILF India has made all efforts to summarize the Judiciary notes retrieved from AIR and SCC. In some cases, the team has tried to summarize cases from the available sources as they could not find original ones.



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## NATIONAL SPORTS NEWS

India vs England Test 2, Day 2: England's head in a spin

On a pitch helping the tweakers immensely, visitors show weak technique and resolve as India take full control.

Wickets fell in a heap in the first session on Sunday. India lost their last four wickets for 29 runs to be all out for 329. England took lunch on 39/4. A total of eight wickets for 68 runs in the first session of the second day of a Test wasn't easy on the eye. The Chepauk pitch didn't hold itself in good stead.

This pitch is certainly not ideal for Test cricket. It's not a stinker either. India scored in excess of 300 in their first innings, although they had the advantage of batting first. A magnificent hundred and two half-centuries were scored in that innings. Even on Day 2, Rishabh Pant treated England spinners with disdain on his way to a fine, and very important, 58 not out off 77 balls. For England, Ben Foakes showed that adversity could be countered through right technique and application. He stayed low and played straight for his 42 not out. The majority of his teammates, though, gave a 'cat on a hot tin roof' kind of impression. They didn't show the technique and temperament to get the better of the conditions.

Unlike the England teams of the past, this side doesn't consider an Ashes win as the be-all and end-all of cricket success. The Ashes remains their Holy Grail, but there's a refreshing change in England's perspective – a wholesome approach has been taken under the present cricket establishment. Joe Root's England now takes pride in winning matches in any conditions and as their chief selector Ed Smith said ahead of the second Test – over the last three years, the team's success rate across formats has been over 70 per cent.

And yet, away from home, especially on subcontinental turners, England remain overly reliant on Root. The England captain had scored a daddy hundred and a double hundred in his team's 2-

0 series win in Sri Lanka. In the first Test against India, his double century in the first innings was the difference between the two sides. On Sunday, he departed for six and England's batting collapsed like a pack of cards.

### Skipper falters

The sweep has always been Root's go-to shot against spin. He plays it beautifully because he picks length early, gets to the pitch of the ball and rolls the wrists. But on Sunday, even Root seemed to have allowed the conditions to get into his head. In the first Test, for the first 15 overs that Ravichandran Ashwin had bowled during England's first innings, Root didn't sweep once. But on Sunday, his first scoring shot was a sweep, a single against the Indian off-spinner. He appeared to be following Rohit Sharma's batting template on this pitch, where the ball was turning, going up and down and puffs of dust becoming even more prominent with time.

On the first day, during his sumptuous 161, Rohit swept with authority. The England batsmen, it felt like, were sweeping in desperation. That their batting coach Graham Thorpe described the surface as "the most challenging second-day pitch against spin" somewhat encapsulated the tourists' uncertainty. England's inability to gut out the odds became their bugbear. To be fair to them, the Indian spinners led by Ashwin asked far more difficult questions. Root attempted a sweep against Axar Patel but was done in by the extra bounce. The top edge went to Ashwin at short fine-leg, giving the left-arm spinner his maiden Test wicket. England didn't keep a short fine-leg for Rohit, allowing him to sweep with more freedom. Virat Kohli was smarter.

England were wonderfully disciplined in their bowling efforts, taking extras completely out of the equation during India's first innings. But their spinners, Moeen Ali in particular, bowled far too many boundary balls. Ali got four wickets, but giving away 128 runs in 29 overs on this pitch was pretty average. And if England struggled for the lack of a top-quality off-spinner, India revelled in Ashwin's world-class off-spin. The 34-year-old collected his 29<sup>th</sup> five-for in Test

cricket. He teased Dan Lawrence before getting his scalp. He dismissed Ben Stokes with a beauty.

### Speed matters

On a deck with uneven bounce, bowling quicker through the air was important. TV stats showed that Axar's average speed was in the early 90s (kph). Ashwin went along in the late 80s and early 90s. But his delivery to dismiss Stokes was a lot slower that drew the batsman forward. Only Kuldeep Yadav bowled in the late 70s and looked ineffective in a six-over spell. The chinaman bowler has returned to the Test fold after a gap of more than two years and some rustiness was expected. But Kuldeep needs to regain his zip to stay in the mix.

A few 'bonus' wickets made India's job easier. Rory Burns was unlucky to be out leg-before to Ishant Sharma on an umpire's call. But Ollie Pope, after a decent 35-run sixth-wicket partnership with Foakes, nicked a loosener from Mohammed Siraj down the legside. Pant took the catch on second attempt, diving to his left and Siraj had a wicket off his first ball on home soil. But after applying himself so well against the spinners, Pope let himself down. Olly Stone chipped a half-volley from Ashwin straight to Rohit at short mid-wicket. Jack Leach edged a straight ball from Ishant to Pant, who took another excellent catch. More than the nature of the surface, England's 134 all out reflected their technical paucity. Complaining about the pitch would be futile, for Chepauk was never expected to be like Rose Bowl.

### Umpiring errors continue

India resumed their second innings with a lead of 195 runs and once again, Rohit looked to be in control despite the odd uncomfortable moment. On 21, however, he lived a charmed life, when the on-field umpire adjudged that Rohit attempted to play a shot to an Ali delivery that hit the front pad outside the line of the off-stump. Ball tracking showed the delivery was going to hit the

middle stump, but the leg-before appeal wasn't upheld on the on-field umpire's interpretation. The decision bordered on the atrocious, for Rohit's bat was well behind the front pad.

India finished the day on 54/1, a lead of 249 runs in their bank.

From the paddy fields of Shoranur to the sand dunes of Dakar, Noah charts an upward arc

Excited on getting a bike for his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, Harith Noah, on a lark, had entered a local amateur race for beginners in the paddy fields close to his home in Shornur, a town in Kerala's Palakkad district. He would finish last.

Now 28, Noah is back with his bike on the same patch of land on the banks of the river Bharathappuzha, planning to negotiate slippery sandy terrain. A lot has changed in the last 12 years. Once the worst among the beginners is among the best in the world now.

Last month, he completed the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia, a feat so arduous that bikers compare it to scaling Mt Everest. He rode more than 7,500 kilometres, in less than a fortnight over sand dunes, rocky roads and valleys for nearly 55 hours for a 20<sup>th</sup>-place finish, the best by an Indian.

Happy happenstances have defined the life of this accidental biker. Years back, his German mother, Susanne KV, had landed at Kalamandalam in Cheruthuruthy to learn Carnatic music. One fine day, she would step out to buy bread. In a coincidence mostly seen in rom-coms, she would meet her soulmate, baker Mohammad Rafi KV. The two would get married and settle in Germany.

“My father owns a bakery in Shornur town. My parents met for the first time when my mother visited the bakery opposite the bus stand for a loaf of bread. They moved to Germany for a while

but we returned to Kerala when I was about two years old,” says Noah, who is looking forward to riding along the banks of the river behind his home since he fully recovered from surgery needed to remove a metal plate that had been holding his fractured collarbone.

In contrast to the rough and tumble of Noah’s life in the fast lane, his parents inhabit an idyllic world. “My mother is a painter and also a farmer. She takes care of cows, the paddy fields, banana and coconut plantations and vegetables. We don’t sell them. It is for us and the people who work on the farm,” Noah says.

#### Accidental biker

If not for the roar of the bike engines he heard as a teenager, the daredevil would have settled for a less adventurous life. “When my father gifted me a bike, I still didn’t know how to ride well. I was studying in a boarding school in Kodaikanal. I was down for the holidays. I could hear the sound of bikes in a paddy field nearby. Bikers were training for a race. They asked me if I wanted to ride. I said ‘ok’. Next week, I entered in the ‘beginners class’ at a race held over paddy fields and finished last.”

His journey from the backwaters to the Dakar has seen him risk life and limb.

Before making a name at the Dakar this year, Noah, a TVS Racing rider, won seven supercross national championships. In his first attempt at the Dakar last year, he had to retire during the third stage. This year, there was a setback when TVS Racing decided not to participate in the Dakar. The racing arm of the Indian manufacturer, however, sponsored him as a privateer with the Sherco Rally Factory team.

“This year, compared to last year, the navigation difficulty increased tremendously. Last year, I got lost once in a place where everybody got lost. This year, I got lost so many times,” Noah says.

He has lost count of the number of times he crashed or tipped over the Sherco TVS RTR 450 rally motorcycle over the two editions of the Dakar.

Tough race

Last year, he rode with a swollen left eye after a crash. This year, during Stage 4, full of high-speed corners, he hit a rock and busted his rear fuel tank. He continued to ride with a torn quadriceps muscle and a sore knee. When he ran out of fuel, he borrowed some from other riders, to complete the stage.

He lost his way in Stage 11 and went round and round mountains before spotting local camel-herders. Thankfully for him, they pointed in the direction other participants went.

“I think in the Dakar, you need the skills, fitness, mental toughness and navigational skills. It is about the days where you have to get up early and some days ride for 200 kilometres,” he says.

But after the back-breaking hours on the two-wheeler negotiating deadly curves, Noah looks forward to his parents and comfort zone.

“After the Dakar, you start to appreciate life much more. Even things like a soft bed to sleep on and sleeping as long as I want.”

India vs England: R Ashwin overtakes Harbhajan Singh as second-highest wicket-taker at home in Tests

R Ashwin now has 266 victims at home in the longest format of the game in just 45 Tests at an outstanding average of 22.64.

Chennai's local lad Ravichandran Ashwin joined an elite list on Sunday when he went past former India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh to register the most number of wickets on home soil on Day 2 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Test between India and England in Chennai.

Ashwin, who bagged the wickets of Dom Sibley, Dan Lawrence before lunch returned after the break to outfox Ben Stokes and overtake Singh's tally of 265.

Ashwin now has 266 victims at home in the longest format of the game in just 45 Tests at an outstanding average of 22.64.

Former India captain Anil Kumble leads the list with 350 wickets from 62 matches in India.

Earlier, Indian spinners had England reeling on an exploding pitch, reducing them to 39 for four at lunch on day two of the second Test on Sunday.

India, who resumed the day at 300 for six, could only score 29 runs in the morning session with Rishabh Pant (58 not out of 77 balls) running out of partners.

At the break, England were trailing India by 290 runs and face a herculean task in getting close to India's first innings score of 329 on a dustbowl.

Pacer Ishant Sharma (1/15) provided the first breakthrough for India when he had left-handed opener Rory Burns LBW for a duck with a ball that nipped back and beat his defensive push.

The other opener Dom Sibley (16, 25 balls, 3X4) was the next to go, caught by Virat Kohli at leg-slip off Ashwin, which was given by the third umpire after India chose to review as the on-field umpire turned down the appeal for a catch.

Australian Open 2021 Results, Day 7: Dimitrov upsets Thiem to reach QFs, Serena down but not out

Australian Open 2021 Results, Day 7: The No. 18-seeded Dimitrov was down a break in each of the first two sets but rallied to keep up the pressure on his tiring opponent.

Grigor Dimitrov beat third-seeded Dominic Thiem 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 to reach the quarterfinals of the Australian Open for the fourth time.

The No. 18-seeded Dimitrov was down a break in each of the first two sets but rallied to keep up the pressure on his tiring opponent.

Thiem won the U.S. Open and was the runner-up at the Australian Open last year, but he was coming off a tough third-round match when he had to rally from two sets down to beat local favorite Nick Kyrgios in five.

Dimitrov, who has a career-high ranking of No. 3, will next play 114-ranked Aslan Karatsev, who upset Felix Auger-Aliassime to become the first man since 1996 to reach the quarterfinals on his Grand Slam debut.

The 27-year-old Russian qualifier dropped the first two sets but lifted his level and cut down his error-rate to beat the 20<sup>th</sup>-seeded Auger-Aliassime in five.

#### Serena Williams down but not out

Serena Williams tumbled to the ground, her heavily taped right ankle turning, her body contorting, her racket flying.

This was early in the second set of a competitive-as-can-be matchup in the Australian Open's fourth round against a younger version of herself — stinging serves, huge groundstroke cuts, a fierce streak — and during a stretch Sunday (Saturday night EST) when things seemed to be slipping away.

Williams quickly put up a hand to indicate she was OK, retied the laces of her right shoe and, while it took her a bit to regain control, she did so, just in the nick of time. Grabbing the last two games, Williams pulled out 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 victory over No. 7 seed Aryna Sabalenka to reach the quarterfinals at Melbourne Park.

Two years ago at this tournament, Williams was on the verge of a quarterfinal win when she hurt her ankle and ended up losing.

“Well, my first thought was, ‘Not another ankle sprain in Australia.’ But I knew immediately that it wasn't. Then I was more embarrassed than anything. I was like, ‘Oh, my goodness.’ I don't like falling,” Williams said. “But I was fine. I mean, once I realized I didn't twist my ankle, like at all, I was like, ‘OK, I'm good, let me just get up.’”

Williams, who wore a black T-shirt with “Unstoppable Queen” in capital gold letters to her news conference, moved closer to an eighth Australian Open championship and record-tying 24<sup>th</sup> Grand Slam singles title overall.

Her most recent came in 2017, while she was pregnant.

On a cloudy day with the temperature in the mid-60s Fahrenheit (high teens Celsius), both Williams and Sabalenka dismissed much in the way of subtlety or nuance.

“I was OK with it, really,” Williams said. “If she wants to play power, let’s go.”

These two hit the ball hard, over and over again in Rod Laver Arena, and Williams was barely better. She ended up with more winners, 30-24, and more aces, 9-4, while cranking up her best-in-the-game serve to as fast as 126 mph (202 kph).

When Williams needed to volley, she did, rather well, claiming 13 of 15 points when she went to the net. More importantly, she covered the court much in the way she did in her younger days, when opponents’ apparent winners were rendered mere fodder for her own strikes.

And she showed no signs of trouble from the left Achilles tendon that hampered her in a U.S. Open semifinal loss in September and forced her to withdraw from the French Open before the second round later that month.

“I’ve worked really hard on my movement. Yeah, I like retrieving balls. I mean, obviously I like to be on the offense, but I can play defense really well, as well,” the 39-year-old American said. “I didn’t think about my Achilles. It’s so good to not think about it. Oh, my goodness.”

Sabalenka — a 22-year-old from Belarus playing in only her second fourth-round Slam match — was visibly and audibly frustrated. She frequently would scream after lost points. She spiked her racket, too.

With the high quality of the match, the only shame was that no fans were there to see it in person. That’s because this was Day 2 of the five-day lockdown imposed by the Victoria state government after some COVID-19 cases emerged at a local hotel. (Any cheering or chatter TV viewers heard at home was being piped in to broadcasters’ feeds).

Up next, Williams is assured of facing another Grand Slam champion: Simona Halep or Iga Swiatek, who were scheduled to meet Sunday night.

The other quarterfinal on that half of the draw will be Naomi Osaka against unseeded 35-year-old Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan.

The first man to win Sunday was completely unexpected: Aslan Karatsev, a 27-year-old Russian qualifier who is ranked 114<sup>th</sup>, is the first player in a quarter-century to reach the quarterfinals in his Grand Slam debut. Karatsev eliminated 20<sup>th</sup>-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime 3-6, 1-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

Osaka barely advanced, saving two match points and grabbing the last four games to top Garbiñe Muguruza 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

The third-seeded Osaka returns to the quarterfinals of a tournament she won in 2019 for one of her three major trophies. Osaka ran her winning streak to 18 matches — a run that included a U.S. Open title in September.

“She’s playing great. Big shots, big serve,” Muguruza said. “That gives her a lot of free points.”

The key moment came when Osaka was serving at 15-40 while trailing 5-3 in the final set. Muguruza could not convert either chance to end things: Osaka delivered one of her 11 aces at 118 mph (191 kph) on the first; Muguruza missed a groundstroke on the second.

Fifteen minutes later, the match was over.

The 71<sup>st</sup>-ranked Hsieh’s 6-4, 6-2 victory over 2019 French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova made her the oldest woman to make her major quarterfinal debut in the professional era.

This is the 38<sup>th</sup> major for Hsieh, who beat 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu

in the second round.

The secret to Hsieh's success?

"I try to pretend," she joked, "I'm only 18 years old."

Lionel Messi nets 2 in record-tying 505<sup>th</sup> Liga match

Messi scored two screamers in his record-equaling 505<sup>th</sup> Spanish league appearance for Barcelona.

Twice a pack of Alavés defenders thought they had Lionel Messi under control. Twice Barcelona's all-time leading scorer proved them wrong.

Messi scored two screamers in his record-equaling 505<sup>th</sup> Spanish league appearance for Barcelona to help them stay in touch with leader Atlético Madrid on Saturday.

Messi struck twice from well outside the area as Alavés was beaten 5-1. Messi matched former teammate Xavi Hernández's club record for the most league appearances by starting the match at Camp Nou.

Forward Francisco Trincão also scored twice in Barcelona's win before it hosts Paris Saint-Germain in their highly anticipated Champions League clash on Tuesday.

"The game comes at a good time," coach Ronald Koeman said. "We are on a good run and creating lots of scoring chances. They are a strong team, but so are we."

Atlético got goals from Marcos Llorente and Ángel Correa to win at Granada 2-1 and bounce back from a draw against Celta Vigo in the last round, which ended a winning run of eight consecutive rounds.

Diego Simeone's side, which has lost only once in 21 rounds, is eight points clear of Barcelona and titleholder Real Madrid.

#### PREPARING FOR PSG

Koeman said his team is ready for PSG, especially with Messi playing like he is.

"Leo is decisive," Koeman said. "When we find him with our interior passing lanes, and have players on the flanks giving him options, we make it easier for him because his vision is extraordinary. But to win this tie, we need Leo and all our players playing at their best."

In preparation, Koeman rested some first-choice players and debuted midfielder Ilaix Moriba, aged 18, and started Trincão, Riqui Puig and Junior Firpo.

Moriba made an immediate impact when he provided an assist for Trincão to score in back-to-back league matches. Right back Óscar Minguez found a hole in Alavés' disciplined defense when he reached the end-line and crossed to Moriba at the far post. Instead of shooting, Moriba laid off for Trincão to rifle home the 29<sup>th</sup>-minute opener.

Messi took his first goal just before halftime when he cut back from the right flank and unleashed a powerful shot between two defenders that ricocheted in off the bottom of the upright.

Moriba's inexperience showed in the 57<sup>th</sup> when a poor pass was intercepted by Alavés' Luis Rioja in Barcelona's half, and he charged forward for 2-1.

Trincão got his second goal in the 74<sup>th</sup> by picking off a rebound of goalkeeper Fernando Pacheco's save of Messi on the break.

Messi was not to be denied a minute later with another rocket from outside the box. He looked well tracked by five Alavés players as he approached the area, but a quick change of pace and a move to put the ball on his favored left foot was all he needed to drive an unstoppable shot into the corner.

Messi has eight goals in Barcelona's seven-game winning run in the league.

Firpo rounded off the rout in the 80<sup>th</sup>.

## MARCHING ON

Alético was stymied by Granada's defense until Llorente struck in the 63<sup>rd</sup> from the edge of the area.

Yangel Herrera equalized three minutes later after Atlético's only defensive letdown when it failed to clear a corner kick.

Correa put the front-runners back on top for good in the 75<sup>th</sup> with a shot that deflected off defender Jesús Vallejo and looped in over goalkeeper Rui Silva.

Coach Diego Simeone praised Yannick Carrasco and Mario Hermoso after recovering from the coronavirus.

“Carrasco and Hermoso spent 14 days at home without playing. Do you know how difficult that is?” Simeone asked. “I had the coronavirus and I know all the work they had to do.”

Atlético was still without infected forwards João Félix, Thomas Lemar, Moussa Dembélé, and midfielder Héctor Herrera.

## STRONG SEVILLA

Sevilla earned a ninth consecutive win across all competitions and strengthened its hold on fourth place after Munir El Haddadi’s second-half header downed Huesca 1-0.

Borussia Dortmund comes to Sevilla in the Champions League round of 16 on Wednesday.

Also, Eibar was held by Valladolid to 1-1.

## India vs England: TV umpire’s decision making in focus

TV umpire for the second Test, Anil Chaudhary, had a forgettable day at the office. If his decision to rule a very tight stumping decision in Rohit Sharma’s favour was debatable, the call to adjudge Ajinkya Rahane not out was a clanger.

Jack Leach bowled the 75<sup>th</sup> over of the day and his second ball looped off Rahane’s pad to Ollie Pope at short leg, brushing the glove on its way through. On-field umpire Virender Sharma declared not out and England instantly went for the DRS, absolutely certain that Rahane had gloved it. India’s vice-captain was batting on 66 then.

Chaudhary, the TV umpire, checked the Ultra-Edge and bereft of a spike, told his colleague, Sharma, to stay with the on-field decision. Root wasn’t convinced. He insisted that the glove part

be checked. This time, though, Chaudhary checked if it were a valid case for a leg-before, which England never appealed for. Later, after replays showed the full sequence, England's review was reinstated, confirming that the TV umpire made a bad mistake.

“We were trying to get the third umpire to roll it through, they were checking the LBW. We knew that would have been not out. We were just trying to get them looking at what happened after the ball hit the pad,” Leach said after the day's play.

Rahane was castled by Moeen Ali in the next over, adding just one more run to his tally. But in the context of the game, the umpiring error could have been costly for England.

The visitors were also unlucky, when the TV umpire decided a very tight stumping call against Rohit (on 159) in India's favour. The opener probably was given the benefit of the doubt, although replays from different angles didn't ascertain any part of Rohit's back foot behind the line.

Umpiring so far has been good in this series. Nitin Menon, who was an on-field umpire in the first Test as well, has been on top of his game.

On Saturday, on a tricky surface, both Menon and Sharma were first-class. Chaudhary, though, has not been having the best of days. In the first Test also, where he was an on-field umpire, he made a couple of errors – meaty edges from Jos Buttler and Washington Sundar weren't spotted, in a closed-doors game. DRS overturned Sundar's decision during India's second innings, but Buttler survived during England's first dig, for India had exhausted their reviews.

WHERE LAW MEETS QUALITY

## INTERNATIONAL SPORTS NEWS

Indian Sportswoman of the year award

Indian hockey team skipper Rani Rampal will compete with chess ace Koneru Humpy and young shooter Manu Bhaker for the BBC 'Indian sportswoman of the Year' Award. The winners will be decided by public voting. The organisers have introduced a new category this year, it is 'Emerging Player of the year' and the winner to this title will be decided by jury and not by voting.

Indian tennis legend Akhtar Ali passes away.

A former Davis Cup coach and a legendary figure in India passed away. His coaching style emphasised on playing aggressive serve and volley game, shaped many careers, including that of the legendary Leander Paes apart from his own son Zeeshan. His coaching also influences Vijay Amritraj and Ramesh Krishnan.

Ajay Singh re-elected as President of boxing Federation of India.

The elections took place in the presence of AIBA and IOA observers Yury Zaystsev and Rakesh Gupta. Hemanta Kumar Kalita was elected secretary general and Digvijay Singh was elected treasurer. Ajay Singh said that focus will be on training of Tokyo Olympics-bound boxers, grassroot development and women personalities.

Ashwin becomes second highest wicket-taker.

Ravichandran Ashwin , senior off spinner, surpassed Harbhajan Singh to become the second highest wicket-taker in tests played in India. Ashwin got past Harbhajan, who took 265 wickets in India at an average of 28.76, by dismissing Ben Stokes with a perfect off-spinner on the second day of the second test against England here.

## POLITICAL NATIONAL NEWS

Uttarakhand glacier burst: Rescue teams recovered 50 bodies out of the 204 missing

New Delhi: A week after the Uttarakhand disaster, authorities have recovered 50 bodies so far out of the 204 missing persons. Rescue teams on Sunday recovered five bodies from the Tapovan tunnel with the help of machines and drones. It is the first time that bodies have been recovered from the tunnel, where 30-35 persons are feared to be trapped. They have also recovered five bodies from Raini village.

Uttarakhand police have so far ascertained the identity of 25 recovered bodies. Police said 23 severed limbs have also been recovered from different parts of Chamoli district.

Kerala: NCP faction quits LDF coalition, to join UDF

KOCHI: Ahead of the Assembly polls in Kerala, the opposition UDF on Saturday got a shot in its arm with a faction in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), a constituent in the ruling LDF, announcing its decision to part ways with the CPM-led alliance and join the Congress-led Front. Mani C Kappan MLA, who is heading the faction, said he would attend the 'Aiswarya Kerala' Yatra led by senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala when it reaches his constituency Pala in Kottayam district on Sunday.

Congress MP gives notice for privilege motion against finance minister for 'Doomsday man' remark

Congress MP Prathapan gave a notice for a privilege motion in Lok Sabha against finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman for her "Doomsday man of India" remark against Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi during her response to the budget debate on Saturday in Lok Sabha. Speaking on

the matter, Congress MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, said Sitharaman should not indulge in such unparliamentary activity inside the House.

Farmers give a call for 'rail roko' on February 18

After organising a tractor rally in the capital on Republic Day and a road blockade earlier this month, the farmers on Wednesday announced a four-hour nationwide 'rail roko' protest on February 18 to mark their protest against the three farm laws. Besides, they have also decided to stop the toll collection in Rajasthan from February 12. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in the Lok Sabha that the changes made by way of the new farm laws are optional besides the wholesale markets and minimum support price (MSP) have not been discontinued. The opposition Congress replied that the PM did not satisfy the concerns of the farmers.



## POLITICAL INTERNATIONAL NEWS

(1) 'Democracy is fragile', Joe Biden says after Donald Trump's acquittal.

US President Joe Biden has said that the Senate's acquittal of his predecessor Donald Trump for inciting a mob to storm the Capitol on January 6 was a reminder that democracy was "fragile" and every American had a duty to defend the truth.

While the final vote did not lead to the conviction of Trump, the substance of the charge is not in dispute, Biden said on Saturday in his first reaction, hours after the US Senate acquitted the former president on a charge of inciting the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol.

The 100-member Senate voted to impeach Trump by 57-43 votes, 10 votes short of the two-thirds majority needed for conviction.

(2) Myanmar amends law on protecting citizens' personal freedom, security.

Bloomberg

Myanmar's new military-led State Administration Council led by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Sen-Gen Min Aung Hlaing issued an order amending the Protection of the Citizens for the Personal Freedom and Personal Security Law.

According to the order issued on Saturday, Sections 5, 7 and 8 of the law will be suspended during the state of emergency declared on February 1, reports Xinhua news agency.

(3) US Speaker Nancy Pelosi rules out censure after Trump's acquittal

After The Senate voted to acquit Donald Trump, Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Saturday (local time) said that she was against the possibility of censuring the former US President in the Senate as that would be just a "little slap on the wrist".

“Censure is a slap in the face of the Constitution. It lets everybody off the hook, it lets everybody off the hook,” Pelosi said.

She further said that people are not censured for inciting the Capitol riot but on “people for using stationery for the wrong purpose after.

(4) Italy's new PM Mario Draghi announces composition of government.

Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese, and Health Ministers Roberto Speranza retained their mandates in the new government formed by Mario Draghi.

Former head of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi officially accepted the post of prime minister after the meeting with President Sergio Mattarella, to whom he presented the list of ministers of the new government. The new cabinet will be sworn in on Saturday noon (11:00 GMT).

(5) Mario Draghi wins backing of the largest party in Italian parliament

Biggest party in Italy's parliament swung its weight behind Premier-designate Mario Draghi, assuring him broad cross-party support as he prepares to form a government.

Members of the Five Star Movement, which has anti-establishment roots and has long denounced bankers and technocrats, voted online by 59% in favour of backing the former head of the European Central Bank. They were asked whether they wanted the movement to support a Draghi-led government which would place strong emphasis on green policies.

## MISCELLANEOUS

### **PS Vinothraj's 'Pebbles': An effective portrait of India told through what has become of its inhabitants**

In PS Vinothraj's singularly arresting *Pebbles* — currently competing at the Tiger Competition of the 50th edition of the International Film Festival Rotterdam — a man seethes with anger on not finding his wife at her maternal home. He pledges to kill when he sees her. His son stands as a mute bystander to his father's histrionic rage. Fearing bloody eventuality, the child runs at a distance and in a wild heroic gesture, takes money from his pocket and tears it. If they cannot board the bus, his mother may be saved. Then he runs some more. The film documents the bare feet journey of the father and son (Ganapathy and Velu) to their village. One following the other. Much like Arun Karthick's urgent *Nasir* (which won the NETPAC Award for the best Asian film at IFFR last year), *Pebbles* (presented by [Nayanthara](#) and Vignesh Shivan) is an effective portrait of a country told through what has become of its inhabitants. But unlike Karthick, who depicted the growing intolerant India, Vinothraj trains his lens elsewhere, providing a snapshot of the other India, left so far behind and so carelessly like it does not exist.

A pervasive feeling of parchedness runs through the entirety of the film. Water, in this part of southern India, is found only in plastic containers. This aridity is aggravated with the unrelenting motion of the father and the son as they trudge along 13 kilometres stopping only at the sight of a broken mirror or a nail. But Vinothraj is preoccupied with the barrenness of the land as well. The camera always trails the two lone figures but, shot at wide angles, they seem part of the whole and not whole of the part. Even though it is the length they have to traverse, the film keenly emphasises on the vastness they are in. The distance covered is highlighted by the change in the landscape around them: giant rocks give away to wild trees till a snake appears. Their unfaltering pace remains, depicting their familiarity with it all.

Stories about hinterlands are mostly understood through events. Plight of inhabitants register only in manifestations. Extent of their maladies is revealed through the depths of perverse acts. Vinothraj departs from such episodic linear arrangement in his directorial debut, portraying instead a circularity peculiar to life. In an interview prior to the premiere, he had spoken about *Pebbles* and the characters with affecting ownership: "It is a film about my people and my place, their anger, their frustration, their hunger and their thirst."

Throughout its course, his familiarity — but mostly awareness — about people whose lives he is documenting is on full display. At several points he teases our gaze, trained to gauge affliction through action, egging us to deduce a statement out of a scene. When Ganapathy breaks into a fight with a stranger in a bus, the abrasiveness of men is felt in the horror on Velu's face. The only one to get down from the bus is a woman with her infant. The rest remained as if the noise which frightened her and woke up the sleeping child was regular din for them. Later, when Ganapathy barges in at his wife's maternal house and unleashes a fresh fit of rage on not finding her there, he gets involved in another scuffle with his brother-in-law.

It is tempting to imagine *Pebbles* to be about an unremorseful abuser posited in a land of men who know no better. This feeling is pronounced by the sense of foreboding the film opens with, making us anticipate a resolution in the form of a brutal climax. As Ganapathy and Velu keep walking under the scorching sun, the rising heat serve as a constant reminder of his flying temper. And yet, as we navigate with them noticing another family catching and eating rats at the side, a couple riding a bike —the man hesitant to be driven by his wife in public view— our markers of understanding this story through a definitive theme falls through. All of them are part of a story and the story is about all of them. They are not included to be exploded into motifs later. They just exist like the father and son do. Like they do in life.

*Pebbles* then is about a day in a village where the events are not recreated to be driven to a conclusion. They are captured the way they are and Vinothraj showcases the gift of his craft and assuredness of his original voice by asking for our participation and not sympathy in return.

But it is the concluding shot, haunting in the way Vinothraj refuses to look away, and in extension, forcing us to see that comes closest to providing a reason for the running emotional sterility in the characters: the desiccation of the land has seeped into the people, withering them from the insides. This is also where he perforates our cover of judgment with pointed shards of circumstances, revealing the anger, frustration, hunger, and thirst of his people with touching empathy.

The laborious, primal sound of their sustenance lingers long after the end credits roll, as if suggesting their story may have ended but their lives will continue even after we stop looking. Only the pebbles will keep count.

## **A play by Sunil Shanbag, *Stories in a Song*, completes 10 years**

A decade ago, when February was much cooler than today, an audacious theatre experiment opened at the Baaja Gaaja festival in Pune. Titled *Stories in a Song*, it had music as the main protagonist. The play explored traditions such as khayal, dadra, kajri and thumri from sociological and historical perspectives as a piece of theatre. In most urban theatre of the time — and even now — music is an element that lends a layer, impact or nuance. In *Stories in a Song*, it was the theme.

Mumbai-based director Sunil Shanbag and the team of the play expected this to be a one-time performance. “The next morning, we said our goodbyes to one another and everybody left,” he said. But, the rousing response of the audience to the play forced a change of plan. “We thought it would be ridiculous not to do more shows. Four months later, we started performing it again, this time at the Prithvi theatre in Mumbai, and it hasn’t stopped,” says Shanbag. On February 5, exactly 10 years after the premiere in Pune, *Stories in a Song* will open a new season at Prithvi theatre. We look at how it became one of the most critically acclaimed plays of recent times:

### **Mind of the maestros:**

Behind the show are two well-known musicians of the country, Shubha Mudgal and Aneesh Pradhan, who had been collecting anecdotes, stories and narratives from various writing and books on music that they felt could be dramatised. “Though the idea of telling stories about music in India through theatre and music came from us, we were aware that it would have to be a theatre specialist who could actually bring the idea to life,” says Mudgal. Shanbag’s theatre melds political storytelling, performances and music and his most famous production, playwright Ramu Ramanathan’s *Cotton 56, Polyester 84*, was marked by live music. “You use a lot of music in your plays. Can we do a play about music?” Mudgal asked Shanbag after he had made a musical, an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*, in 2007. As they began to talk, the director was fascinated. Mudgal had a story to every song she talked about, peppering her anecdotes with historical and sociological contexts. Shanbag came on board, and the process of creating a play about music began.

### **Seven notes:**

*Stories in a Song* unfolds through short narratives exploring facets of the history of music in the country. Among the seven stories in the play, the piece, titled *Songs of the Nuns*, is based on

poems by Buddhist nuns that form, possibly, the oldest anthology of women's literature in India. Another shows the strength and inspiration that a tawaif in Varanasi received from the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, and a third is based on an Urdu novel by Qurrat-ul-Ain Haider, Chandni Begun, and highlights the struggles of a family of folk performers. In a story about a young British woman trying to learn Hindustani classical music, one glimpses the meeting ground of colonial and Indian cultures — “We have to strip it down to make it simpler,” says the former. “It seems Madam will turn this nagma into a lullaby,” responds the latter. Shanbag says that a few more stories have been added to the play for its current showing.

### **The actor as a singer:**

While live playing and singing have been integral to folk theatre of India, the urban stage, in the early part of the millennium, had, largely, opted for recorded soundtracks. It was a series of auditions that resulted in *Stories in a Song* finding a cast that could sing and act. “I had already done two plays with live music, so I was also quite confident about being able to work with people who could sing. The actors worked very hard. The singing has become much more skilled over the years,” says Shanbag. He adds that, in 2007, Prithvi had done a festival of musicals. “That’s when I did *Threepenny Opera*. A few years later, came *Stories in a Song*. “I would say that these two things helped set off a huge live trend in theatre, at least in Mumbai. Now, we see that a lot of actors are training in live music. Today, it is not as difficult to cast a play as it was 10 years ago,” adds the director.

### **Age and the Stories:**

With its core of live performance and audience participation, *Stories in a Song* has had more than 100 shows before the pandemic shut down halls. “The first shows of *Stories in a Song* had seven episodes strung into a single production, but, later, we worked on more episodes, featuring a greater variety of musical forms. Sometimes the actors also change in different shows, but, otherwise, the music remains the same that Aneesh and I had both curated or created for each of the episodes,” says Mudgal. The majority of the cast is the same as 10 years before, which is a testimony to the commitment and interest of the artistes to the show. “The audience participates actively in the show and there is a sense of enjoyment in the way the play is staged. ‘Liveness’ is a very important part of *Stories in a Song*,” adds Shanbag.

### **India’s first Museum Biennale to take place in March**

At a time when prominent art festivals across the world have either been postponed or have gone digital, India is readying for its first ‘Museum Biennale’. Organised by the Bihar Museum, the biennale will be held from March 22-28 in a hybrid avatar – physical and digital. It will see the participation of 12 primary national museums, including City Palace Museum, Udaipur; Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; Museo Camera, Gurgaon; and Museum of Art & Photography, Bengaluru.

“The Bihar Museum is a cultural hub dedicated to the spirit of enquiry, exploration and creativity of the people of Bihar and the world. The soft power of art and culture has a special space of engagement in our development strategy for Bihar. The Bihar Museum Biennale is a step forward to highlight the rich heritage of India and bring alive the extraordinary history of Bihar and also celebrate the cultural narratives from various parts of the world,” said Chief Minister of Bihar, [Nitish Kumar](#), in a statement released.

Didarganj Yakshi sculpture at the museum

While the biennale was initially envisioned as a three-month-long event last year, in the wake of the Covid [pandemic](#), the seven-day event will see specially curated virtual tours of participating national and international museums. Two curated exhibitions will be held at the Bihar Museum in Patna – one on the ‘Making of the Bihar Museum’ by its architect Rahul Gore, and another on the rich collections of 19 local state museums of Bihar.

“As an art historian, I can say that the soul of India, the heart of India in many ways is Bihar, whether it’s [Pataliputra](#) or Magadha. The Bihar Museum Biennale will be an opportunity to bring out a compendium of Indian museums, and celebrate their respective collections, each telling its own story,” said Alka Pande, project director of Museum Biennale.

A two-day international virtual conference, to be held on March 23 and 24, will see the participation of eminent personalities, including British art historian Neil MacGregor; Hilary Knight, Director of Digital, Tate Galleries, UK; Dr Souraya Noujaim, Scientific, Curatorial and Collections Management Director at Louvre Abu Dhabi; Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Director-General of CSMVS, Mumbai; and Spanish researcher Javier Baron, among others.

### **Painting looted by Nazis to be returned to Jewish heirs**

Heckel's *Geschwister* or *Siblings* was owned by Jewish historian Max Fischer until 1934, the year before he fled Germany to avoid Nazi persecution, according to Baden-Wuerttembergs state commission on Nazi-looted art

A commission in Germany has ruled that a painting by expressionist Erich Heckel that is in a German art museum was likely unlawfully obtained under the Nazis and should be returned to the heirs of a Jewish historian who once owned it, officials said Tuesday.

Heckel's *Geschwister* or *Siblings* was owned by Jewish historian Max Fischer until 1934, the year before he fled Germany to avoid Nazi persecution, according to Baden-Wuerttembergs state commission on Nazi-looted art.

The 1913 oil painting ended up back with Heckel, and the artist donated it to the Kunsthalle Karlsruhe museum in 1967.

The state commission said it could not be determined when and under which circumstances Heckel came into possession of the piece sometime between January 1934 and January 1944.

The commission said that given the circumstances, however, it had to be assumed that Fischer, who immigrated to the United States, lost possession of the painting due to Nazi persecution. It ordered the artwork returned to his heirs.

The heirs, who weren't identified, have said they plan on donating the painting to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the commission said.

Heckel, a founding member of Die Bruecke (The Bridge) group of expressionist artists, died in 1970.

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