

OPINION 6
BEING
HUMANE

WORLD 8
NEGLIGENCE OR MISSILE MAY HAVE
CAUSED BLAST: LEBANON PRESIDENT

SPORT 12
INDIA TO HOST 2021
T20 WORLD CUP

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16 die as AI plane breaks into 2

Plane overshoots Kozhikode runway, plunges into valley, both pilots killed

PNS/PTI ■ KOCHI

Sixteen people — pilot, co-pilot and 14 passengers — were killed and several others injured when a Dubai-Calicut Air India Express flight with 191 passengers and crew on board overshoot the runway at Kozhikode airport and fell into a valley, breaking into two portions, on Friday around 7.41pm, police sources said. There were 184 passengers, including 10 infants, and five-member cabin crew when the flight approached the airport. The Civil Aviation Ministry said the flight IX 1344 operated by B737 aircraft from Dubai overshoot runway at Kozhikode at 7.41 PM on Friday. "No fire reported at the time of landing," it noted.

"As per the initial reports rescue operations are on and passengers are being taken to hospital for medical care. We will soon share the update in this regard," it stated.

While the aircraft broke into two, nearly 50 ambulances were seen coming out of the airport with the injured persons. Kozhikode airport is designated as a table top aircraft (airport atop a hill). Capt Sathe was a wing commander in the Indian Air Force before he switched over to Air India.

"AI Exp flight overshoot Kozhikode runway in rainy conditions, went down 35 ft into slope, split into 2. Formal enquiry will be conducted by Aircraft Accident Investigation



Rescue work in progress as an Air India Express flight with passengers on board en route from Dubai skidded off the runway while landing in Kozhikode on Friday PTI

Bureau," said Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

The injured include one of the cabin crew members. Sources in Kozhikode airport said at least 40 passengers have been admitted to various hospitals in and around

Kozhikode. The front portion of the aircraft had to be cut open to take the body of the pilot from the cockpit.

According to information coming out of the airport, the aircraft crash landed on the runway from where it skidded

off. The first visuals shown by local TV channels were that of a totally damaged aircraft, the front side of which has been damaged totally. It was raining heavily when the aircraft touched the ground. Most of the passengers were heard cry-

ing in pain.

The co-pilot has been injured seriously while some of the passengers in the aircraft suffered injuries. The flight was part of the Vande Bharat Repatriation Mission operated by the Government of India.

ED grills Rhea for 8 hrs for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood actor Rhea Chakrabarty was on Friday questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Mumbai in connection with a money laundering case relating to film star Sushant Singh Rajput's alleged suicide. Her request to put it off the interrogation was rejected by the agency.

Chakrabarty arrived at the agency's office minutes after the 11.30 am deadline. Rhea Chakrabarty left the ED office after 8 hours of interrogation.

Her father Indrajit Chakrabarty and brother Showik, both accused in the abetment to suicide case lodged by Patna Police, were also seen with her.

Chakrabarty's statement was recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Rajput's father Krishna Kumar Singh had in his complaint before Patna Police alleged financial irregularities in the late actor's bank accounts.

In the complaint, Singh alleged ₹15 crore was siphoned off from Rajput's bank account in one year to accounts of persons not known or connected to the late film star.

Two companies linked to Rajput and some financial deals involving Chakrabarty, her father and Showik who are stated to be directors in these companies, are under the scanner of the ED, officials said.



Bollywood actress Rhea Chakrabarty arrives at Enforcement Directorate office for questioning in connection with a money laundering case in Mumbai on Friday PTI

Bihar seeks in SC dismissal of plea to transfer case

PN RAGHUNATH ■ MUMBAI

New Delhi: The Bihar Government on Friday sought in the Supreme Court dismissal of Bollywood actress Rhea Chakrabarty's plea for transfer of the Patna FIR against her to Mumbai in actor Sushant Singh Rajput death case, terming it 'premature, misconceived and non-maintainable'. The 28-page affidavit of Patna SP Upendra Sharma, filed through Bihar's advocate Keshav Mohan, said the state police has the jurisdiction in the case as the consequences of the offence are in Patna as well.

where the old father of the deceased actor resides. PTI

Rhea's call details spark up debate

PN RAGHUNATH ■ MUMBAI

Coming ahead of and during her questioning by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) team in the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case — with the late actor, Bollywood personalities, a senior Mumbai police official and her own family members — on Friday sparked a new debate in the media in connection with the probe into Rajput's death.

She spoke 287 times with the late actor's domestic help Samuel Miranda during a year time. PTI

SC: Full damages for victims before Italian marines' case closure

'Won't pass order without hearing victim families'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court made clear to the Centre on Friday that it would not pass any order on the plea seeking closure of cases against two Italian marines, accused of killing two Indian fishermen, without hearing the victims' families who should be given adequate compensation.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde allowed the Centre to file within a week an application making the victims' family members as parties to its plea seeking closure of Italian Marines case. Solicitor General Toshar Mehta informed the bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, that Italy has assured the Indian Government that it would prosecute the Marines there as per law.

When the bench insisted that adequate compensation

should be paid to the kin of victims, Mehta said Centre will ensure that maximum compensation is given to them.

The bench said it appreciates the steps taken by Italy to prosecute these marines but the court is on the issue of adequate compensation. "We want that adequate compensation be paid to the victims' family".

The SC referred to the case against the marines pending before the special court and said that without applying for withdrawal of prosecution of case how the Centre can come and seek its closure.

Mehta replied that the top court had earlier said that proceedings on the special court be kept in abeyance. The bench said, "You can apply for withdrawal of prosecution. The victims' families will have the right to oppose it. The victims' families are not even a party here. We will not pass any order without the victims' family being heard," and allowed the Solicitor General to implead family members of the victims as party in its closure application.

16 die in Idukki landslide as heavy rain batters Kerala

PNS ■ KOCHI

Torrential downpour and landslides across the hilly regions of Kerala early Friday claimed 16 lives while 52 persons were washed away by the fury of the nature. The mishap occurred at Munnar in Idukki district on the slope of the Kerala side of the Western Ghats.

All 16 who died in the landslide were workers of tea plantation in Munnar of Idukki district and were sleeping in their company quarters (known in local parlance as laayam) when the mishap happened. Though the landslide and the disaster occurred early morning, the outside world came to know about the mishap after five hours. The NDRF from Tamil Nadu reached the site by 4.30 pm and was engaged in rescue operations when reports last came.

Cooking utensils buried in mud, asbestos and tin sheets strewn around were all there to be seen at the area, which was the habitation of around 80 odd workers near a tea plantation about 30 km from the tourist town of Munnar.



Rescuers work at the site of a mudslide triggered by heavy monsoon rain in Idukki, Kerala on Friday AP

Priest among 5 missing in Karnataka landslide

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Five people, including the priest at Talacauvery, the origin of river Cauvery, have gone missing due to massive landslide at Bramhagiri hills triggered by heavy rain in Kodagu district.

According to Kodagu district administration officials, heavy rain at Talacauvery in Bhagamandala late Thursday night led to landslides at Bramhagiri hills, in which two houses of the temple priests were buried.

Ganesh Utsav, Moharram, Janmashtmi not to be celebrated publicly: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that in view of the Covid infection, the Ganesh Utsav, Moharram, Janmashtmi and other festivals will not be celebrated publicly. Ganesh idols will not be installed at public places and procession of Ganeshtmt as well as Moharram and Tazayis will not be allowed.

Chief Minister Chouhan urged the citizens of the State to celebrate these festivals at home itself. Gathering of more than 5 people at a time at places of worship will not be permitted. The Independence Day will also be celebrated at a limited scale this time. Gathering of people will not be allowed at any place, he added.

Chief Minister has said that home isolation should be promoted among the corona patients without symptoms, who voluntarily wish to remain at home with sufficient arrangement. Good arrangement of regular treatment and monitoring should be made during the 'Home Isolation'. Currently, 42

people have been placed under Home Isolation in Bhopal.

The Minister for Home Narottam Mishra, Minister for Medical Education Vishwas Sarang, Minister for Health Prabhuram Chowdhary, Minister for Urban Development and Housing Bhupendra Singh, Chief Secretary Iqbal Singh Bains, Additional Chief Secretary Health Mohammad Suleman and other officers took part in the video conference.

The Chief Minister has said that the recovery rate is continuously increasing and the fatality rate is declining in the state, which is a good sign. The recovery rate has reached 74.1 percent and fatality rate has come down to 2.52 percent in the State.

During the review of Singrauli district, the Chief Minister Chouhan instructed that the health screening of people, moving in and out from the borders of our state should be done mandatorily. Without this, movement of people should not be allowed. New 20 cases have been found in Singrauli.

Continued on Page 3

Two cops suspended for beating Sikh men in Barwani

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Two police personnel have been suspended for mercilessly beating and disrespecting Sikh men in Barwani district of Madhya Pradesh. The matter came in the spotlight after Union Minister for Food Processing and Industries Harsimrat Kaur tweeted the video of the incident.

"Beastly attack on Giani Prem Singh Granthi and other Sikh men in MP is an outrage against humanity. Utterly reprehensible and unacceptable! ₹Sikhs all over the world are deeply shocked. I urge CM Shivraj to take immediate and exemplary action against all those guilty of this brutality (sic)," Kaur tweeted. Swinging into action, Assistant Sub Inspector Sitaram Yadav and Head Constable Mohan Janme have been suspended with immediate effect for handing out barbaric treatment to Sikh men in Barwani, tweeted Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

"I am pained to learn about the barbaric incident of Barwani. Such barbarism and erratic behaviour won't be tolerated at any cost."

Continued on Page 3

Trump cites India's action, bans Tik Tok

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump, citing India's recent ban on Chinese social media apps, has signed executive orders that would prevent TikTok and WeChat from operating in the US as they threatened America's national security and economy.

The ban comes into effect in 45 days, Trump said in two separate executive orders signed on Thursday.

India was the first country to ban TikTok and WeChat, citing national security concerns. India has banned 106 Chinese apps, a move welcomed by both the Trump administration and US lawmakers.

ASHA workers on strike over paltry payment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's Covid-19 fight has hit a major hurdle with around six lakh ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) workers going on a two-day strike on Friday, protesting late and paltry payment besides lack of protection equipment from infection. There are around ten lakh ASHA workers across the country who have been playing a key role in contact-tracing, conducting surveys, and organising of awareness schemes for the pandemic.

They have also been involved in screening interstate passengers, migrant workers, and others in the community for symptoms of the virus in their respective States.

SII plans ₹225/dose Covid-19 vaccine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major development, Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, has entered into a partnership with Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to accelerate the manufacture and delivery of up to 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine for India and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) by as early as 2021.

Created in 2000, Gavi is an international organisation, a global Vaccine Alliance, bringing together public and private sectors with the shared goal to improve access to new and

underused vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries.

As per pact, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will provide \$150 million in at-risk funds towards helping the Serum Institute to develop the candidate vaccines, including those from AstraZeneca and Novavax, to be priced at USD 3 per dose (around ₹225). It will be made available in 92 countries in GAVI's COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), the company said in a statement.

The collaboration, which involves GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance, will provide SII with "unfunded capital" through the Foundation's Strategic Investment Funds.

Govt OK's OCIs from Germany, US, UK, France to visit India

New Delhi: Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card holders from the US, UK, German and France, with whom India has signed "air bubble" arrangements, will be allowed to visit the country, the Home Ministry announced on Friday.

Other foreigners from these countries have also been allowed to avail Indian visa facility for business, medical and employment purposes. "Ministry of Home Affairs has permitted to enter India OCI card holders who belong to countries with which 'air bubble' arrangements have been finalised by Ministry of Civil Aviation," a Home ministry spokesperson said.

Whopping over 61K cases in a day

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 20,86,483

DEATHS: 42,564

RECOVERED: 14,25,717

ACTIVE: 6,17,744

Hockey captain

Manpreet, 3 other

players test +ve

New Delhi: The Indian men's

hockey team captain Manpreet

Singh and three other players

have tested positive for Covid-

19 ahead of the national camp's

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	4,90,262	17,092	3,27,281
Tamil Nadu	2,85,024	4,690	2,27,575
Andhra Pradesh	2,06,960	1,842	1,20,464
Karnataka	1,64,924	2,998	84,232
Delhi	1,42,723	4,082	1,28,232
Uttar Pradesh	1,13,378	1,981	66,834
West Bengal	89,666	1,954	63,060
Telangana	75,257	601	53,239
Bihar	71,794	400	46,265
Gujarat	68,885	2,604	51,792
Assam	55,497	132	37,225
Rajasthan	50,159	767	36,195
Odisha	42,550	292	28,698
Haryana	40,054	467	33,444
Madhya Pradesh	37,298	962	27,621
Kerala	31,700	103	19,147

resumption in Bengaluru, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Friday.

Besides Manpreet, defend-

er Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh and drag-flicker Varun Kumar have also tested positive for the deadly virus. PTI

MP to set example in development: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh will set a different example in the country by being ahead in every field in the country. A more systematic form is being given to the efforts made in the last four months for Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Atmanirbhar Bharat.

With this objective, on Friday the webinar series has been started.

In the coming three years, a better roadmap is required to make Madhya Pradesh more self-reliant which will be prepared on the basis of the suggestions and brainstorming of experts in the webinars. The people of the State will be apprised with the features of

the roadmap this week itself. The common man will be able to know about the detailed strategy prepared for Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh on Independence Day. With our resolve, we shall be able to achieve the target of Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh in three years. A three-tier plan will be made in the State to achieve the goal of Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh.

Chouhan was inaugurating the first webinar on Friday to create a road map for the development of the State for Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh. Chief Minister Chouhan addressed senior officials of NITI Aayog, subject matter experts, central and state government officials, state ministers and about 150 delegates participating in the webinar. On the first day of the webinar,

discussion was held in various areas under physical infrastructure today. Prominent among them are NITI Aayog, World Bank, Tata Power, Adani Logistics Limited, National Investment and Infrastructure Fund, IIT Chennai, Water Aid India, Narmada Valley Development Authority, Atal Behari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and MP Power Management. Chief Minister Chouhan welcomed all the participants.

The Chief Minister said that efforts have to be made so that Madhya Pradesh is ahead in every sector. Madhya Pradesh has actively implemented the Atmanirbhar Bharat package of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. For example, Madhya Pradesh is a pioneer in welfare of street vendors in the country. A lot of

work has been done in Madhya Pradesh to give interest-free loans to small traders. Efforts have also been made to ensure that some large companies may invest in the country despite Covid-19 infection. Investment by these companies will change the economic scenario of Madhya Pradesh.

About 1.29 crore metric tonnes of wheat procurement was achieved in the state. This was the highest wheat procurement in the country. Mandi law was amended to make it more farmer-friendly. Attempts have been made for value addition of products. Madhya Pradesh is fighting the battle to get GI tag for Basmati Rice. Farmers Production Organization (FPO) is being promoted for the welfare of farmers. Efforts have also been made to make local vocal.

Women of self-help groups have been encouraged to enhance their creativity. Attempts have been made to develop the skills of other artisans also. Chief Minister Shri Chouhan said that Prime Minister Modi has addressed the new education policy today. Efforts are being made for employment oriented education in Madhya Pradesh. Efforts are being made in the direction of imparting the culture of citizenship with knowledge and skills.

Chouhan said that there is a large area of ?rugged land in Gwalior Chambal region. The Chambal Expressway will become a Progress way for this area. The distance from Delhi to the national capital Delhi is only three-four hours, which will be reduced even further.



Contractual health employees stage a demonstration demanding regularisation of their jobs, in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

Heer Ranjha screened on MPTM's You Tube channel

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Under 'Abhinayan', a weekly series of drama, Play Heer Ranjha was performed at Madhya Pradesh Tribal Museum's You Tube Channel. Heer Ranjha, the love saga was presented in Chamota style on Friday.

The play was directed by Khushi Mohammad (Punjab). The story is about two lovers, Heer a beautiful village girl from a rich and noble family, and Ranjha, a poor farm boy. He looked after Waterbuffaloes belonging to Heer's father. They both fell in love but Heer's parents were

against their marriage. Heer was married by force to a rich young man.

The play begins with Ranjha, who runs away from his home and comes to the village of Heer and starts working with Heer. After some time, the people of Heer come to know about the love of Heer and Ranjha. Therefore, Heer's family marries Heer elsewhere.

When Ranjha learns all this, then Ranjha takes the form of a yogi and goes to the in-laws of Heer. Where he meets Heer and then both leave the village and run away. On one side, Heer and Ranjha run away and on the other side,

they are searching for the Heer. One day the king's soldiers capture Heer and Ranjha and both were presented before the king.

But Heer tells Ranjha to get married. Having said this, Ranjha goes to her house and Ranjha goes to her village to bring a procession. Meanwhile, the family of Heer mixes milk with poison and when he discovers this, he also dies along with Heer.

With this, Heer Ranjha in Chamota style ends the theatrical performance. The time limit of this theatrical performance was about 1 hour 30 minutes.

3-day online theatre festival to start in city from today

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The old charm of theatre festivals will be back in city, but virtually. A three day virtual online festival 'Rang Triveni Theatre Festival' will be held in city from Saturday. The plays will be featured on YouTube Channel.

The theatre festival is being organized by Sagan Society for Cultural and Welfare Bhopal. The theatre fest will continue till Monday.

On the first day of the theatre fest i.e. Saturday Hindi play 'Havaldar Mahavir Prasad' will be presented under the direction of Manoj Mishra. It is written by Sunil Mishra. It will be performed by the artists of Mandap Sanskritik evam Kala Kendra, Rewa.

On August 9 i.e. Sunday, Hindi play 'Khaderegauri Ka Sanskritik Drama' will be performed. It is directed by Vishal Acharya and is written by Durgesh Singh. The play will be performed by the artists of Sagan Society of Art and Culture, Bhopal. Marking the grand closure of the fest, Tatyat Bhopal will be performed. The play is directed by Anand Mishra and will be performed by Sagan Society of Art and Culture, Bhopal. The play is written by Sunil Mishra.

This festival will be full of comedy and artists. performed by the artists of Mandap Sanskritik evam Kala Kendra, Rewa. On August 9 i.e. Sunday, Hindi play 'Khaderegauri Ka Sanskritik Drama' will be performed. It is directed by Vishal Acharya and is written by Durgesh Singh. The play will be performed by the artists of Sagan Society of Art and Culture, Bhopal. Marking the grand closure of the fest, Tatyat Bhopal will be performed. The play is directed by Anand Mishra and will be performed by Sagan Society of Art and Culture, Bhopal. The play is written by Sunil Mishra.

Vishnu Shridhar Award conferred on archaeologist Prof Vidula Jaiswal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Culture Minister Usha Thakur, today, awarded national and international acclaim to archaeologist Prof Vidula Jaiswal with the Vishnu Shridhar Wakankar National Award 2015-16 through video conferencing in Varanasi.

This honour established by the Directorate of Archaeology, Archives and Museums was presented by Archaeological Officer Ramesh Yadav, on behalf of the Minister of Culture. An amount of Rs 2 lakh cash and a citation was given to Prof Jaiswal at his residence in Varanasi.

Thakur said that the Ramla temple at Ayodhya is the latest example of the way the archaeologists have taken that she is grateful to Madhya Pradesh government for giving distinct identity to archaeology. She said that she had the privilege of working with Late Wakankar during the Bhimbetka excavation. Wakankar used to engage in work without waiting for any facility, which is an example for the officers of today.

Born in the year 1947 in Varanasi, Prof. Vidula Jaiswal's grandfather, Kashi Prasad Jaiswal, was also a well-known archaeologist and historian.

brought to the fore. Archaeologists have yet to travel long and difficult distances. Prof Vidula Jaiswal said that she is grateful to Madhya Pradesh government for giving distinct identity to archaeology. She said that she had the privilege of working with Late Wakankar during the Bhimbetka excavation. Wakankar used to engage in work without waiting for any facility, which is an example for the officers of today. Born in the year 1947 in Varanasi, Prof. Vidula Jaiswal's grandfather, Kashi Prasad Jaiswal, was also a well-known archaeologist and historian.



A woman selecting Lord Krishna's dress for kids at a shop ahead of Janmashanti festival in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

2 senior officials sacked after police beat locals

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Taking prompt action, Madhya Pradesh Government on Friday removed two senior officials in Khargone district in connection with beating of some locals by police who were celebrating Ram mandir bhumi puja on Aug 5.

Tweeting the video of the police action, BJP senior leader Kailash Vijayvargiya had couple of days ago had demanded action on the guilty officials.

State Government issued an order on Friday removing Joint Collector Abhishek

Gehlot and SDOP Gladwin Edwardkar attaching them to Mantralaya and Police Headquarters respectively.

Commenting on the action, Home minister Naritram Mishra said that this kind of high handedness is not acceptable.

The two officials have been removed as prima facie they seem responsible for the incident, added Mishra.

On Aug 5, when bhumi puja was underway in Ayodhya, some local youths had gathered in Khargone market and used firecrackers to express their joy and beat non-Brahmin officials reached he spot

shortly and not only prevented them but the police personnel beat them up.

Anguished by the administrative action, locals had announced to close the bazaar.

BJP senior leader Kailash Vijayvargiya had taken strong objection to the incident tweeting the video of the Khargone incident and saying that such behaviour of the police is against the whole country is celebrating the Ram temple bhumi puja, action on Khargone youths is unjust.

As the anguish intensified in Khargone, the (Shivra) Government decided to book down on the officers guilty.

Courier boy found murdered at Ratanour

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 25-year-old youth employed with Madhur Courier was found brutally murdered at Ratanour house in the morning on Friday; his co-worker who has allegedly killed youth went absconding. Misrod police has started investigation.

Police said that Sandeep Madhya was found murdered at Ratanour warehouse owned by Madhur courier services in the wee hours on Friday when Sandeep Patil had gone to take keys for closing the warehouse.

The face of the deceased was smashed with a wooden plank, he was attacked in the

face with the wooden plank and was found lying in a pool of blood while his aide Sahil Charar was found missing.

Sahil was absconding on his bike bearing registration number MP04UM7589 which he used in commuting to the warehouse. Sandeep used to work as supervisor with the warehouse and was a resident of Bairaghar Chichli. The body was sent for the post mortem after the preliminary investigation and the police have registered a case under section 302 of the IPC and have started further investigation. The deceased was found in an unconscious state when he was declared dead when checked by the doctors.

Principle secretary inspects colleges

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Principal Secretary Higher Education Anupam Rajan conducted surprise inspection of Government Sarojini Naidu Girls College and Government M.L.B. College on Friday. During the visit, he informed that under the Higher Education Department, the E-Pravesh process is underway in colleges of the state; so far, about 50 percent of the students have got their database verified online.

Remaining students, who did not or unable to get the

documents verified online, they can get their documents verified by visiting the nearest government colleges till August 20. In wake of Covid-19 pandemic, students have been urged not to return to the last date and get the documents verified at the earliest. SMS is also being sent to the students in this regard.

During the inspection, Shri Rajan instructed that number of counters for verification of documents should be increased in colleges to facilitate students to get their documents verified following complete

social distancing. Each room should have one counter only. Thermal screening arrangement should be made at the entrance of the colleges and token related to verification room number should be given to the students. On their turn only, students should enter room and get their documents verified. Rajan further mentioned that students are required to wear face masks mandatorily and follow the social distancing completely. During the inspection, Shri Rajan was accompanied by the Commissioner Higher

Education Mahesh Shukla.

Rajan has directed all collectors to make nodal officer in each college of their districts for this work. Principal of the leading college of district will coordinate this work.

Additional Directors Education will ensure that the work of verification should be completed with convenience in every college of their respective areas with adherence to all corona related precautions. Two helpline numbers 0755-2545572 and 0755-6720201 have been set up for this work.

New collection of books to be exhibited at SVL

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

There will be a book collection launch of New Arrivals at Swami Vivekananda Library on Monday.

This kind of special collection library is included for its members. Most of the books in this collection are New Arrivals Books. Most of the titles in this collection have been released in the month of July itself. Library launch collections on different themes every Monday for maximum goodwill and book members for library members.

Swami Vivekananda Library endured. Manager

Yatish Bhatle told that total 25 books have been included in this collection in the library. Which will be put on the library's display on Monday. Books on the subject of history / non-fiction / fiction / biography, etc. have been included out of these 25 books.

Some of the new arrivals include, Overdraft by Ujjit Patel. It is a book written by the former governor. In this book, he has mentioned about the banking system of India, Raylouts and the problems arising out of it. In the year 2014, RBI for the first time after becoming the Governor,

he began to understand the problem of uninsured banking sector loans and tried to solve this problem by using the strategy of '9R' using his thirty years of macro economics experience. In this book, he has reviewed this problem in detail and has also told about its solution.

Another one is An Extraordinary Life a Biography of Manohar Parikar. This is a biography of former Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parikar, written by Rajaguru Patil and Mayabhushan Nagwankar. Both authors have been journalists in Goa and have spent

a lot of time with Manohar Parikar.

He did it in IIT The former Chief Minister of Goa, who studies from Mumbai, has told about the extraordinary achievements of the last twenty years. This book has been composed by collecting information from his relatives, friends, officers working with him. His story of becoming a politician starting with the son of a grocery store owner is depicted in this book. Swami Vivekananda Library Manager Yatish Bhatle told that these books will be put on display on Monday.

Police book property dealer for duping man of ₹22.50L

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Kukhieswania police have booked a property dealer involved in duping victim to the tune of ₹22.50 lakh in the name of providing two constructed houses accused has been booked for duping several victims. According to the police, victim Kamran Siddiqui lodged a complaint after the accused Rahul Chouhan failed to provide two constructed duplex houses at Imalia. A complaint was filed regarding the fraud and after completion of the investigation the police have registered a case against the fraudsters. The

accused is serving jail for fraud committed in the past related with frauds of land and property. The police have started further investigation in the matter.

Police found that the Kamran had provided Rs 22.50 lakh for providing two duplex houses at Imalia in the year 2014 and after the agreement was done for the work, accused failed to start the work and used to escape with excuses regarding the houses.

Later he provided cheque to the victim of bank account which was found to be closed. After the confirmation the police have registered a case under sec-

tion 420 of the IPC and have started further investigation.

Meanwhile, Kotwali police have nabbed a shopkeeper involved for selling duplicate lower pants using tags of renowned brands in Kotwali area on Thursday. According to the police, acting on a tip-off, raid at shop run by Mukesh Advani was conducted and lower pants of renowned brand Nike were seized from the shop. The field officer Amit Jaggi of United Overseas Company complaint with the Kotwali police and based on the complaint against accused of Copyright Act was registered.

Police solve murder case of 67-yr-old man, accused held

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chhola Mandir police have solved a murder case of a 67-year-old man killed and nabbed the accused who was found to be neighbour, man was killed in the night on May 11 at his house in a bid to stop miscreant from burgling.

The accused identified as Saurabh Dubey lives in the neighbourhood of the deceased Rajendra Prasad who was stabbed by a sharp edged weapon in his house late in the night on May 11 this year.

During the investigation it was found that the accused had fight with the deceased and his family but the reason was not strong enough to kill the deceased. The accused was detained and quizzed during which he spilled the beans and revealed that in the evening on the day of the murder he spotted Rajendra counting money and he decided to burglar the money but things went other way and he stabbed Rajendra.

Before the arrest, the accused recorded his statement stating that he woke up to answer nature's call but found someone inside his house hiding and when he went to check the miscreant attacked him in his stomach and escaped the spot. He raised alert and family and neighbours rushed for his rescue and took him to hospital.



Theatre students of Madhya Pradesh School of Drama (MPSD) hold a silent protest against the management demanding completion of their due courses affected due to coronavirus pandemic, in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

Tomar: Sarpanch responsible for overall village development

PNB ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar has said that the role of Sarpanches and the elected representatives of the Panchayats is not limited to just arrange for drains and roads in the villages. They should perform their responsibility for the overall development of villages.

Panchayat representatives should also come forward to work on subjects like education, health and nutrition so that every village in the country can move forward on the path of complete development.

Tomar was speaking at the Chief Guest on the occasion of National Panchayat Awards distribution function held virtually from New Delhi on Friday. The whole function was webcast live.

Panchayat and Rural Development Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Virendra Kanwar and Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Sunil Kumar also participated in the program through web-cast. Two categories of

Rashtriya Panchayat Awards - Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Panchayat, Sashatikanar Puraskar and E-Panchayat Puraskar were also announced.

On the National Panchayati Raj Day on April 24, 2020 Prime Minister Narendra Modi had direct interaction with the panchayat representatives of the country through a webcast.

The winners of three categories of National Panchayat Awards - Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar, Child Friendly Gram Panchayat Award and Gram Panchayat Development Plan Puraskar were also announced on that occasion.

Tomar said that Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has started a Self-Reliant India campaign to give a new direction to the country amid the circumstances arising out of the Corona infection. At the core of Self-Reliant India is a village and agro-based economy. In Panchayat, the role of the people's representatives of the panchayats increases further that to realize the dream of the Prime Minister, that is why he should first work with full potential towards making his village a self-reliant village. Tomar said that every child of the village should go to

school, all programs from vaccination to nutrition should run smoothly, farmers should get information about every technique of the farming, so to make it a reality the sarpanches will have to work in coordination with the local government.

Sarpanches should keep a watch on the benefits of every scheme of the government to the villagers.

Congratulating the victorious Panchayat Representatives, Tomar said that taking inspiration from the winning panchayats, other panchayats should also do better so that they too can receive these awards next year.

Tomar said that for the development of Panchayats in the 13th Finance Commission, only a provision of 65,000 crores was made.

But after the formation of NDA government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, more than Rs 2 lakh 292 crore were released to the Panchayats in the 14th Finance Commission.

The recommendation of the 15th Finance Commission is yet to come, but in the interim recommendation for the current village, more and more cases would be reported. The victim Kanta Prasad Nath met Hindu Singh who

Gang duping men through marriage busted by crime branch



STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Crime branch Bhopal have busted eight-member gang including three women which used to dupe men by marrying and escaping with valuables. Four victims have been duped by the gang who have lodged complaint.

The victims who were men and in search for brides were trapped by luring to marry and would collect hefty amount by the accused and after few days the gang members used to escape with different reasons.

The kingpin of the gang Dinesh Pandey. The gang members used fake identity like 1227, SAS Nagar have organised. They would switch off mobile phones after they could escape.

In the investigation till date four cases have surfaced and more cases would be reported. The police have met Hindu Singh who

arranged meeting Dinesh, Pooja alias Riya and Reena alias Sultana and took Rs 85000 after Kanta agreed to marry. After around two weeks Dinesh took Riya in the name of operation of sister-in-law and later he found that he was duped.

Using the same modus operandi the gang duped Prem Singh Rajput, Rinku Kushwaha and Jagdish Meena.

The nabbed accused apart from the main accused and Pooja alias Riya were identified as Tejpal(60), Virendra Dhakad(35), Salman Khan(35), Vikram(35), Seema Patidar alias Sheeba Khan and Reena alias Sultana.

All the women gang members are married which was found in the investigation and were paid Rs 30000 for every marriage.

The accused are involved in the fraud for long. The police registered a case under sections 419, 420, 468, 471 and 120 B of the IPC.



Minister for Public works, Village and Cottage Industries Gopal Bhargava inaugurates an outlet of Mignayani showroom at State Mantralaya on National Handloom Day in Bhopal on Friday

Pioneer photo

Three deaths, 47 fresh cases reported in Chandigarh

PNB ■ CHANDIGARH

Three more city residents succumbed to COVID-19 while 47 fresh positive cases were reported in Chandigarh on Friday. The COVID-19 toll reached 23 in the city and the total case tally stood at 1374. There were 530 active cases till the evening.

"The residents including an 82 years old male from Sector 7, 77 years old male from Sector 45 and 62 years old male from Sector 39 died due to COVID-19," stated Chandigarh Health Department's evening bulletin.

Among 47 fresh cases, 36 were detected through RT-PCR while 11 were detected through rapid antigen testing. The fresh cases were reported from Sector 15, 16, 17, 20, 24, 32, 35, 37, 40, 41, 52, 56, Dhanas, Bapu Dham colony, Maloya, Manimajra and Burali, according to the bulletin.

A senior assistant in Accounts Branch of Chandigarh Administration was also tested positive for COVID-19 following which the office of CP Division no 2 (roads) was closed in the second half on Friday.

43 patients also recovered from COVID-19 taking the total number of recoveries to



820 in the city, the bulletin added. Meanwhile, 16596 samples of city residents have so far been tested for COVID-19.

ODD-EVEN SYSTEM INTRODUCED IN SEVERAL MARKETS

Keeping in view rapid increase in COVID-19 positive cases in the city, the Chandigarh Administration on Friday re-introduced odd-even system in several markets and ordered closure of few shops in Sector 22 till August 14. The decision was taken during the meeting held under Punjab Governor and UT Administrator VP Singh Badnore to ensure that the social distancing norm is being followed in the markets.

"The odd-even system will

More than 1000 cases for second consecutive day in Punjab

PNB ■ CHANDIGARH

Reporting more than 1,000 fresh cases for the second consecutive day, Punjab on Friday reported 1,063 fresh coronavirus positive cases — the highest single-day spike — along with 23 deaths, pushing the state's COVID-19 tally to 21,930 and death toll to 539. The state had reported 1,049 cases and 26 deaths on Thursday.

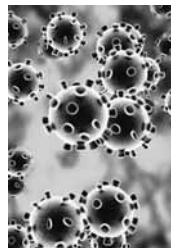
Punjab has reported a total of 5,811 cases in the first week of August — amounting to 27 percent of the state's total cases. Among districts, Ludhiana has been witnessing a constant surge reporting infections in triple digits since July 25.

Continuing to register a high number of cases along

with deaths, Ludhiana once again reported nine of 23 coronavirus deaths and 296 fresh cases — the highest number of deaths and fresh infections any district has reported in the state.

Other than Ludhiana, three districts were reported from Amritsar and Jalandhar, two each in Fatehgarh Sahib, and SBS Nagar (Nawanshahr), and one each in Fazilka, Kapurthala, Patiala, and Sangrur.

Patiala reported the second highest number of infections in the state at 122, followed by Mohali (SAS Nagar) and Jalandhar both reporting over 70 cases, Amritsar (67), Gurdaspur (53), Bathinda (49), Pathankot (41), Barnala (37) Sangrur and Ropar (32), Tarn



Punjab's all 22 districts reported fresh coronavirus cases. While two districts — Ludhiana and Patiala — reported cases in three-digit figure, except Ferozepur, all remaining districts reported infections in double digits.

Among the fresh cases are 11 policemen, three troopers of the Border Security Force (BSF), six healthcare workers, seven jail inmates, and five frontline workers, among others.

In a district-wise breakup of Punjab's cases, Ludhiana stood at the top with 4,720, Jalandhar with 2,907 cases, Amritsar (2,185), Patiala (2,380), Sangrur (1,227), SAS Nagar (1,157), Hoshiarpur (607), Gurdaspur (794), Ferozepur (624), Pathankot (522), Tarn

Taran (443), Bathinda (737), Fatehgarh Sahib (451), Moga (529), SBS Nagar (335), Faridkot (373), Fazilka (359), Kapurthala (382), Ropar (318), Pathankot (279), Barnala (421) and Mansa (107).

In the past 24 hours, as many 381 patients—including Amritsar-71, Patiala-108, Sangrur-15, SAS Nagar-57, Hoshiarpur-19, Ferozepur-11, Pathankot-18, Fatehgarh Sahib-17, Faridkot-16, Kapurthala-24, Ropar-22, Muktsar-1, Barnala-12 — were discharged after recovering from the deadly contagion.

With this, the total recoveries stood at 14,040, and the state still has 7351 active cases of which 117 patients are on oxygen support, and 29 are critical and on ventilator support.

Haryana's Covid-19 tally crosses 40K mark

PNB ■ CHANDIGARH

The Covid-19 tally in Haryana surged further on Friday with the State health department reporting 751 patients of the disease, resulting in a jump in the number of cases as the patient count mounted to 40,054 in the State, while the death toll climbed to 467 with nine people succumbing to the disease in a 24-hour span. According to State's health bulletin, the recovery rate in the State is now at 83.50 per cent with 5.66 per cent of total samples tested positive for Covid-19.

The health authorities on

the day discharged 804 patients from different hospitals of the state after their complete recovery which increased the number of recovered patients of the disease to 33,444. The doubling rate of the disease in the state was 27 per cent.

In Faridabad, the infection of the Covid-19 is continuing to surge over the last few days with the patient count in the district hitting the 8807 figure in a week with 1,159 fresh cases on Friday. The health authorities in the district discharged 185 patients of the disease from different hospitals.

Other districts where new cases were recorded include

Gurgaon (54), Ambala (79), Rohtak (43), Sonapat (60), Panchkula (30), Rewari (49), Fatehabad (63), Palwal (41), Panipat (38), and Mahendragarh (23).

As per report, there were 6143 active cases in the State while the fatality rate was at 1.17 per cent. According to a Health department bulletin, out of nine, three fatalities were reported in Rewari while two in Panipat and one each in Ambala, Karnal, Kurukshetra and Fatehabad. The health authorities have so far collected swab samples of 7.13 lakh suspected patients for Covid-19 test.

8 SBI staffs test positive for Covid-19 in Bokaro

PNB ■ BOKARO

Eight bank employees of State Bank of India main branch Sector 4, contracted coronavirus in the city raising concerns among the fraternity. On Thursday night, 12 new cases of COVID-19 infection surfaced in the district including eight bank employees, informed Rajesh Kumar Singh Deputy Commissioner Bokaro.

The new positives cases include a 23-year-old man who caught by the police for illegal selling liquor under B S City Police Station; a 55-year-old staff from Sadar Hospital, 44-year-old woman from Camp 2; 51-year-old staff from Chas

Block office and 8 staffs (six male and two female) of SBI main branch Sector 4. All have been shifted to COVID Hospital, he said.

Following the positive report of the bank staffs, their colleagues were worried now. Though employees are wearing masks, gloves and sanitizers, over 200-300 people visit the bank branch every day and so, the risk always exists. Anybody visiting the bank could be an untested carrier of coronavirus, says an employee on anonymity. Meanwhile, 11 more patients including a 65 years elderly man were discharged from district COVID Care center after they tested negative for the Sars-

Cov-2 virus for the second time and sent back to their home after recovering fully, said the DC.

Congratulating the doctors and his team for this glorious achievement Singh said, Coronavirus infection can be avoided only by social participation. All the workers are doing better. We are proud of all of you, he said. "It's a very happy moment for everyone, that all the patients are cured and back home. But it's no time for relaxing," added the DC.

District administration provided medical kits and infection-free certificates to the patients who were discharged and they were instructed to stay in their homes for 14 days in quarantine.

Two cops suspended for beating...

From Page 1

"The guilty will be punished for the misdeeds," affirmed Chouhan.

MPCC chief Kamal Nath too had tweeted the matter. "In MP's Barwani, police beat up a Sikh man Prem Singh Granthi, who runs a small shop close to police chowki and also removed his turban. Police also beat him up mercilessly pulling him by hair."

It's atrocious and hooliganism and insult to sacred tradition of Sikh religion, added Nath demanding action and justice to the victim. The incident took place couple of days ago and a video went viral on Friday.

Two policemen are seen beating up pushing a Sikh man in the video and the man is seen without turban. The men in khaki also seen pushing other men who intervened. The man, Prem Singh Granthi is heard calling for help, alleging that police is not letting him run his shop and is torturing him.

Granthi later told media persons that he runs a small shop for years close to police chowki and deals in old locks and keys.

Police however claimed that the man was inebriated and created ruckus as he was asked to show his driving licence during a checking of the licence.

Barwani SP however issued a statement on Friday claiming that two policemen involved in the incident have been suspended and SDOP rank officer has been asked to probe into the incident.

The Chief Minister has ordered a probe by Indore DIG Police into the matter.

Punjab CM meets victims of Hooch tragedy, SAD dubs it photo op-cum-joy ride



PNB ■ CHANDIGARH/TARN TARN

Declaring that guilty of hooch tragedy would not be spared and properties of those responsible for this tragedy to be confiscated, besides deputing special prosecution teams for pursuing these cases; Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Friday announced to enhance the compensation being given to the victim families from existing Rs two lakh to Rs five lakh.

The Chief Minister, who visited Tarn Tarn to share his sympathies with the bereaved families hailing from the district, said that perpetrators of this heinous crime would not

be spared at any cost and severe action would be taken against them. During interaction with the families, Capt Amarinder announced that those victims who have lost their eyesight in the tragedy would also get a financial assistance worth Rs five lakh.

Handing over a cheque of Rs 2.92 crore for 92 victim families of Tarn Tarn to the Deputy Commissioner, Capt Amarinder Singh unequivocally said that anyone, however affluent he might be, responsible for this atrocious crime would not be spared at any cost.

Pointing out further, the Chief Minister said that investigations are already underway in this case and Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta has been directed to further expedite the same.

Termining these deaths as murder, Capt Amarinder categorically said that the perpetrators of this heinous crime deserve no leniency since it is a man-made tragedy.

"To ensure that culprits get exemplary punishment, special

UNDERSCORING THE NEED TO REFRAIN FROM POLITICKING OVER THE SENSITIVE ISSUE AT THIS JUNCTURE, CAPT AMARINDER SINGH REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO STAND BY VICTIM FAMILIES IN THIS HOUR OF GRIEF BY EXTENDING A HELPING HAND IN PROVIDING JOBS, EDUCATION, AND OTHER SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS TO THEM

prosecution teams would be deputed to vigorously pursue these cases," he said adding that the properties of those responsible for this unpardonable act be confiscated.

The Chief Minister said that the State Government was duty-bound to ensure strictest punishment to the culprits so that it acts as a deterrent for others in the future.

Underscoring the need to refrain from politicking over the sensitive issue at this juncture, Capt Amarinder Singh reiterated his government's commitment to stand by victim families in this hour of grief by extending a helping hand in providing jobs, education, and other social security benefits to

them. Punjab Congress president Sunil Jakhar, without mincing any words, said that this tragedy was an outcome of criminal negligence and merited exemplary punishment to the perpetrators of this crime.

SAD TERMS CM'S TARN TARN VISIT AS A PHOTO OP-CUM-JOY RIDE

Termining Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh's visit to Tarn Tarn police lines as a mere photo op-cum-joy ride, the SAD condemned him for failing to visit the hooch tragedy victim families besides sharing the stage with Congress MLAs who were accused of being responsible for the

tragedy. Demanding immediate dismissal of Congress Government during a protest while proceeding towards Raj Bhawan before being arrested, senior SAD leaders Balwinder Singh Bhundir and Bikram Singh Majithia said that the Chief Minister made a show of visiting victim families when the truth was that he paid a 20-minute visit to the police lines in Tarn Tarn which were turned into an army Cantonment as the Congress Government feared a backlash from the people.

"People were summoned to be present like they are in a Durbar due to which a large number of them refused to

come despite intense pressure from SAD and BJP deputies specifically for this purpose. The Chief Minister also refused to visit Amritsar and Batala — the two other sites of the hooch tragedy — making it clear that he was just going through the motions and that poor and dalit didn't matter to him," they said.

The two leaders, who were flanked by relatives of victims from Muchal village in Amritsar, said that it was reprehensible that the Chief Minister should have visited them when their families were being pressed for being responsible for distributing spurious liquor, sit on the stage.

"How can a free and fair inquiry be held into horrific tragedy if the Chief Minister is himself shielding the accused in this manner?" the leaders asked.

They said instead of humiliating victim families by behaving like a feudal lord, the Chief Minister should have visited them and announced a compensation of Rs 25 lakh and a government job for each family.

Ganesh Utsav, Moharram, Janmashtmi not to be celebrated publicly...

From Page 1

In the district wise review, it was found that the highest 145 new cases of corona have been found in Indore. New 131 cases in Bhopal, 63 in Jabalpur, 44 in Khargone, 26 in Gwalior and 24 in Morena have been found. The Chief Minister Shri Chouhan instructed to take safety precautions in these districts.

FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA
Regional Office, Chetak Bhawan, Maharashtra Pratap Nagar, Bhopal (M.P.)-462011
Phone: 0755-2573444, Fax: 0755-2573418 E-mail: mrmp@fcil.coic.in

No. SAC/FCV/NTS/MP Region/2020/02 Date: 07.08.2020

CORRIGENDUM

Reference is invited towards this office NIT of even no. dated 18.07.2020 wherein last date of bid submission is 07.08.2020 at 04:00 PM. In view of requests received from the prospective bidders, the last date of bid submission is hereby extended till 22.08.2020, 04:00 PM. Technical Bid(s) shall be opened on 24.08.2020 at 11:00 AM.

Other terms & conditions of NIT dated 18.07.2020 and MTF remain unchanged.

General Manager (MP)

Congress, BJP slug it out over 'you love China'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress and the BJP on Friday continued to spar publicly levelling 'you love China' allegations against each other.

The Congress on Friday maintained its pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the 'Chinese incursion' by directly attacking him besides the BJP for just crafting an image and spending millions of rupees to win elections. The party also questioned the influence China wields on Indian establishments and why the BJP took Beijing's help in the Lok Sabha elections by shoring up votes of Indian citizens with it.

The Congress said Modi's love for China is now visible to the world and this dates back to his tenure as the Gujarat Chief Minister in Gujarat. The party also quipped that foreign policy does not mean that the Prime Minister is constantly on aeroplane mode.

Why did you compromise the data security and privacy of crores of Indians by involving Chinese companies linked to the PLA, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said at the AICC press conference.

The party shared documents about BJP having partnered with those Chinese com-

panies who have now been banned by the Government for their links with the Chinese establishment.

"UC Web Mobile got banned in July this year. In 2019, according to the expenditure report submitted by the BJP to the Election Commission, they hired this very company to run their campaign. It is the same Alibaba-owned company - UC Web Browser - which was also red-flagged by the Modi govt in 2017 for sending crucial data of Indians to China. What was the compulsion of involving the same company for elections which you had red-flagged two years ago," Khera questioned.

There is another company called Gamma Gaana Limited (incorporated in China). Po Seng Yung, one of the directors of this company is also the director in 10c India Pvt Ltd. Gamma Gaana Ltd is funded by Tencent. Last month, the government banned it saying it was a threat to national security.

According to the Congress, the third company called ShareIT Technology has been called ShareIT. It was banned by the Government last month

Cong had MoU with China in 2008, BJP hits back, asks Sonia to explain



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Congress attacking the Prime Minister, BJP president J P Nadda on Friday took to the field again to direct his volleys at his Congress counterpart Sonia Gandhi and her predecessor Rahul Gandhi. Nadda sought an explanation from Sonia about their party's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China in 2008 saying even the Supreme Court has expressed surprise at the MoU.

The BJP's attacks on the Congress have heightened with Rahul's continued questioning of Chinese "incursions" on

the Line of Actual Control in East Ladakh.

Nadda in a tweet cited the observations of the Supreme Court on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and sought an explanation from Sonia and Rahul.

"Even the SC is surprised at the MoU signed by the Congress party with the Chinese Gov., Mrs Gandhi & her son, who led the signing, must explain. Does this explain donations to RGF and opening Indian market for the Chinese in 2008, which affected Indian businesses?" he tweeted.

Nadda's remark came after the Supreme Court refused to entertain a PIL seeking NIA probe into the alleged 2008 agreement between the Congress and the Communist Party of China.

The apex court asked the petitioner to file his plea before

the High Court, but expressed surprise how a political party could enter into an agreement with China.

BJP's national spokesman Sambit Patra who referred to his party president's tweet also asked Congress leaders to explain the nature of the MoU and the alleged dealings with China.

He alleged that even during the Doklam border standoff with China, Congress leaders' conduct was suspect. In line with Nadda's assertions, Patra said the Congress was not ready to clarify their dealings with Beijing.

He also wondered whether a national party could sign an MoU with a political party of a foreign nation.

The BJP spokesman said according to the MoU, both the parties were to exchange information on all regional and international issues.

Congress charged.

Our Prime Minister crafted an image for himself - an image of a leader who before

2014, roared on issues of border security. Several companies were lined up, spending crores of rupees to create this image

SC refuses to hear PIL for probe against Congress over China pact

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a PIL seeking NIA probe into the alleged 2008 agreement between the Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of China.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, asked senior lawyer Mahesh Jethmalani appearing for PIL petitioners Shashank Shekhar Jha and journalist Savio Rodrigues, to withdraw the plea and approach the high court.

"Every relief which you are seeking can be granted by the high court. Secondly, high court is a proper court. Thirdly, we will have the advantage of high court order also," said the bench, which also comprised Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian.

The top court, in the hearing conducted through video conferencing, allowed the petitioners to "withdraw the petition with liberty to approach the high court."



At the outset, Jethmalani alleged that it was an "agreement between a political party of this country with the only political party in that country (China)" and the issue pertained to national security.

"We find that there is something which appears to be, what might be called, unheard of and absurd in law. You are saying that China has entered into an agreement with a political party and not

the Government. How can a political party enter into an agreement with China," the bench observed.

On being stressed by the lawyer that this was the case, the bench said, "We will allow you to withdraw this and file a fresh petition. We will examine what you say in the petition and if we find any false statement, we may prosecute you."

PTI

Modi: NEP has potential to transform entire nation



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Outlining that there has not been any allegation of bias against the New Education Policy (NEP) unveiled by his Government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that it has the potential to not only change the education system but to also transform the entire nation. He said the NEP will be the foundation of the 'New India, one that focuses on "how to think" rather than "what to think" that was being stressed upon till now.

Addressing a conclave on "Transformational Reforms in Higher Education under National Education Policy", Modi also spoke on the contentious issue of mother tongue as the mode of teaching in the initial years. Justifying it, the PM said, "We need to make our students global citizens and yet be rooted in their culture. The learning power of students will

improve if the language they speak in and the language in which lessons are taught in school is the same. That is why we have recommended teaching in the mother tongue as far as possible - at least class 5. This will strengthen their foundations."

Lauding the NEP, he said the fact that there was no allegation from any region or segment that it had any kind of bias or inclination is an indicator that the "changes people wanted to see for years in the education system, they have got to see".

Asking all stakeholders to discuss the ways to implement the new policy, the PM said: "In recent years, there have not been major changes in education and thus the values of curiosity and imagination were not given the thrust. Instead, we moved towards a herd community. The mapping of interest, ability, and demand were not aligned. We tried to do such on critical thinking and innovative thinking abilities in our youths. It will be possible if we have purpose, philosophy, and passion of education."

The PM said students should get a chance to follow their passion. "We are also try-

ing to ensure that the talent of India stays in India and works for the development of generations to come, said PM.

"With changing time, a new global system has risen. Thus, it was essential for India to change its education system accordingly. Creating a 5+3+3+4 curriculum, and replacing the 10+2 structure was a step in this direction."

"Often students find that what they have learned is not in line with their job. Thus, to give flexibility to students we have given multiple entries and exit points."

We have also freed education from the stream system. Students will have the flexibility to change their course if they do not like it. It is right for us. We are moving from thinking when a person is not glued to one profession for the entire lifetime and hence s/he needs to skill, re-skill and up-skill. These issues are part of NEP. The NEP said about the main features of the NEP. He added that NEP shifts focus from what to think to how to think.

"Till now, we have focussed on what to think but NEP 2020 focuses on how to think," he pointed out.

LoR launched to benefit street vendors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to give access to street vendors who do not have Identity Card (ID) and Certificate of Vending (CoV), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on Friday launched a Letter of Recommendation (LoR) module to provide benefit to street vendors under the PM SVANidhi scheme. Those who are not included in any survey list also get benefitted from the LoR module.

The module provides for an end-to-end digitally-enabled process wherein an eligible vendor can request for a Letter of Recommendation from the Urban Local Body and on receipt of the same he/she can apply for a loan under PM SVANidhi. Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, launched the module.

According to the ministry, for applying for the LoR from ULBs through the online module on PM SVANidhi portal, a vendor needs to possess any one of the documents: Proof of availing one-time assistance, provided by certain States/UTs, during the period of lockdown; or the membership details with the vendors' asso-

ciations; and any other documents to prove that he is a vendor. Further, a vendor can also request ULB through a simple application on white paper to conduct local enquiry to ascertain the genuineness of the claim as vendor. ULBs will have to dispose of the request for issue of LoR within a period of 15 days.

The vendors possessing LoR will be issued Certificate of Vending / ID Card within a period of 30 days. This provision will help in extending problems with concentration and memory - and a general decline in quality of life.

Since commencement of online submission of loan applications on PM SVANidhi portal, more than 4.45 lakh requests for loan under PM SVANidhi, Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, launched the module.

This scheme targets to benefit over 50 lakh Street Vendors who had been vending in the period 24 March, 2020, in urban areas including those from surrounding peri-urban/ rural areas. Under the Scheme, the vendors can avail a working capital loan of up to Rs 10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments in the tenure of one year.

Do not let your guard down: Researchers warn Covid patients who have recovered

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Do not let your guard down, is what researchers have warned patients who have recovered from the coronavirus infection. For, they said, the road to recovery for infection-recovered patients may take months and need vital specialist rehabilitation to ensure quality life.

The researchers found that infection-free patients faced one or many health issues like fatigue, breathlessness, psychological distress - including problems with concentration and memory - and a general decline in quality of life.

The research team - involving multidisciplinary specialists from the University of Leeds, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust and Leeds Beckett University - had followed 100 Covid-recovered patients four-to-eight weeks after being discharged from hospital.

The findings, "Post-discharge symptoms and rehabilitation needs in survivors of COVID-19 infection: a cross-sectional evaluation, have been published in the Journal of Medical Virology."

It holds importance also for India where the



Government has been maintaining that the recovery rate is on the high side after focussing on life after Covid-19 that is not the same for infection-free patients.

The researchers identified a pattern of longer-term symptoms likely to be experienced by people who were hospitalised with the Covid-19 infection.

Some patients, particularly those who had been in intensive care, had symptoms associated with cases of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). PTSD symptoms are a well-recognised component of post-intensive care unit syndrome caused by a variety of factors including fear of dying, invasive treatment, pain, delirium, inability to communicate, weakness,

immobility, and sensory problems and sleep deprivation.

Dr Manoj Sivan, Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Leeds and a Consultant in Rehabilitation Medicine at Leeds General Infirmary, who supervised the research project, said: "The emerging evidence is that for some, the road to recovery may take months and it is vital that specialist rehabilitation is on hand to support them. This research gives an important insight into patient needs, and what we can help shape services in the community."

More than two-thirds (68.8 percent) of patients in the intensive care group and just under half (45.6 percent) of the other group said their overall quality of life had deteriorated.

India opens to and fro travel with 4 countries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday opened international travel to and from the USA, the UK, Germany and France.

The Union Home Ministry said that Indians can also go to these countries and foreigners including OCI holders with valid visa can now travel to these nations and come to India. India's Civil Aviation Ministry has entered into an "air bubble agreement" with the USA, the UK, Germany and France. The Ministry said that soon more countries will be in this bilateral agreement of air travel known as 'air bubble agreement' in the wake of Covid-19 situation.

In the order, Union Home Ministry said that allowing travel will be subject to health checks and only applicable to those who are not having Covid-19 and other norms stipulated by the Civil Aviation Ministry. The MHA also said that the travellers must have valid visa. Ministry of Home Affairs has permitted OCI cardholders to enter India who belong to countries with which "air bubble" arrangements have



been finalised by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Other foreigners from these countries have also been allowed to avail Indian visa facility for business, medical & employment purposes. Indian citizens have also been allowed. We need to such countries on any type of visa," said MHA in a statement.

The Civil Aviation Ministry, for its part, said that Delhi Airport has developed new features in their portal for international travellers for "contact-less declarations". The Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) announced that it has developed a first-of-its-kind portal where India-bound international arriving flyers can fill the mandatory self-declaration form and also apply online for exemption from mandatory institution quarantine process.

EC settles matter over Baldev Singh appointment as SEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Disposing of a complaint of Maharashtra Congress leader Sachin Sawant questioning procedures for appointment of State Chief Electoral Officer Baldev Singh in 2019, the Election Commission on Friday said no action is needed in the matter as the appointment was done after consultation with the State Government. "Singh had been rated outstanding in his performance appraisal records during the five years of his service prior to his appointment," the EC said.

"The Commission having duly considered the matter, does not find any reason for taking any action in the matter. The CEO's appointment is done in consultation with the concerned state government/union territory wherein a panel of officers is furnished to the poll body," the EC said in a letter addressed to Sawant.

The EC further said that Baldev Singh, a 1989 batch IAS officer of Maharashtra cadre was appointed by the



Commission following due procedure wherein the State Government had clarified that he was clear from the vigilance angle and as per records, he had been rated outstanding in his performance appraisal reports during the five years of his service prior to his appointment as CEO, Maharashtra.

Sawant alleged that Singh was facing an inquiry initiated by CVC and the ministry of industry and commerce in an alleged irregularity in SEEPZ SEZ. Sawant questioned why the credentials of the CEO were not cross-checked while appointing him to the post and whether the Election Commission of India was working under pressure of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

J&K Bank loan fraud case: ED raids 17 locations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches at 17 locations in Delhi, Ludhiana, Jammu and Srinagar in connection with the J&K Bank loan fraud case involving Hilal Ahmed Rather in a money laundering case worth Rs 177.68 crore. Hilal is son of former Minister Abdul Rahim Rather, who served as Finance, Agriculture, Rural Development, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister under the National Conference-led government in the erstwhile State.

The investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act was initiated on the basis of an FIR registered by the Anti-Corruption Bureau, Jammu.

Investigation conducted by ED revealed that a loan of Rs 177.68 crores was sanctioned by the J&K Bank, without verifying documents and in violation of guidelines of RBI, to Paradise Avenue for construction of a residential housing project in Jammu. The agency said in a statement.

A substantial part of the loan was siphoned off by Hilal Rather by transferring the



funds from the loan account of Paradise Avenue to various entities and rerouting the funds back to the firms controlled by Rather from where it was further withdrawn and transferred for purchase of movable/immovable assets in India, Dubai and USA, the ED said.

The residences of Abdul Rahim Rather in Srinagar and Hilal Rather in Jammu were among the premises searched by the ED. Several incriminating documents and digital evidence have been seized during the search operations, the agency added.

Purchase of 75 Pilatus basic trainer aircraft for IAF: ED raids multiple locations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted searches at multiple locations in various cities in connection with a money laundering case relating to alleged corruption in the purchase of 75 Pilatus basic trainer aircraft for the Indian Air Force (IAF) in 2009.

The searches were conducted at 14 premises including a dozen in the national capital and one each in Gurgaon and Surat, officials said.

The ED had initiated a money laundering case to probe the deal and is carrying out the search operation to gather evidence under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The case involves absconding arms dealer and alleged middleman Sanjay Bhandari, who is already facing separate ED and CBI probes for corruption and alleged possession of undeclared assets in the country and abroad.

Bhandari is suspected to be staying in the UK at present and the ED is in the process of initiating extradition proceedings against him.

The PMLA case was lodged by the ED after taking cognizance of the CBI FIR to probe the money laundering angle in the case and alleged creation and generation of illegal assets by the accused.

The CBI had named Bhandari as an accused in the case along with unidentified officials of the Indian Air Force, the Defence Ministry and Switzerland-based Pilatus Aircraft Limited in the case. The Swiss company was one of the bidders for the contract floated in 2009.

The CBI has alleged that Pilatus had entered into a criminal conspiracy with Bhandari and Bimal Sareen, both directors of Offset India Solutions Pvt Ltd, and dishonestly and fraudulently signed a Service Provider Agreement with Bhandari in June 2010 in violation of the Defence Procurement Procedure, 2008.

The deal was allegedly done to get the contract for supply of 75 basic Trainer Aircraft to the IAF.

The agency had alleged that the company made a payment of CHF 1,000,000 in the account of Offset India Solution Private Limited with the Standard Chartered Bank, New Delhi in two tranches in August and October, 2010.

Big win for Mahinda

With the pro-China Rajapaksa clan in full control, India has to work on strategic engagement and economic alliances



The Sri Lankans have chosen stability over liberalism, performance over democracy in returning the Rajapaksa clan to power with a massive mandate in the nation's parliamentary elections. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's ruling party, the Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP), won 145 of the 150 seats, that would now allow him to amend the Constitution, expand his executive powers and ensure that his elder brother, Mahinda, continues as Prime Minister. In short, the dynastic hold on Sri Lanka's politics is now absolute. And the brothers could overturn any reformatory attempts that have been made by previous Governments to consolidate their

position. Sri Lankans, much like other nations around the world, including India, have voted for nationalist pride and muscular leadership in tough times. The Government's smart COVID-19 management has scored big with the voter, the island nation reporting just 11 deaths and managing the elections without any cluster outbreaks during the polling process. The Rajapaksa brothers are seen as strongmen and deliverers and seem to have consolidated their hold among the Sinhalese Buddhist majority in the aftermath of the Easter bombings, which showed how scattered IS modules were choosing virgin targets. And no matter how militarist Gotabaya may seem, the Sinhalese trust him to tackle terrorism as he cleaned up the Tamil movement ruthlessly, an operation that had earned him the moniker of the "terminator." For India, though, the return of Mahinda Rajapaksa is worrying as he has a harder approach to Tamils and has welcomed Chinese strategic interests and investment at our expense. In the past, he accused New Delhi of intervening in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, propping up his own protégé Maithripala Sirisena against him and ensuring he lost the elections. Sirisena's SLFP and ally UNP, whose leader Ranil Wickremesinghe became Prime Minister, formed a coalition Government which was pro-India. The Indian establishment was also too overt rather than being covert about its interventions. So a hurt Mahinda never settled down, his party scoring on local elections till he forced a coup, subduing Sirisena, getting him to sack Wickremesinghe and becoming Prime Minister for 51 days. Gotabaya took charge of Defence and Security, kept the Tamil-majority areas under strict military vigil and put Indian diplomats under surveillance. It is this distrust that needs to be healed now for geo-strategic reasons if we don't want China to run ahead.

Little wonder then that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was one of the first dignitaries to wish Mahinda, with whom he has been in touch over regional COVID-19 management. India's diplomacy in the neighbourhood has to factor in the pragmatism by lesser neighbours, who have successfully played on its anxieties with China and are negotiating the best of both worlds given the competitive muscle-flexing by two Asian majors. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are all happily walking the trajectory of "trade ties" with China and "historical linkage" with India to buttonhole both nations into giving concessions. Mahinda, too, seized the moment by calling India a "friend" with whom he had a "long-standing cooperation." The Modi Government is pushing proactive participation over historical assumptions in its Lanka policy. Yet, the Chinese are way ahead in Lanka. They have a 99-year lease on the Hambantota port after Sri Lanka's failure to repay loans and are using it to enhance their military arc in the Indian Ocean region for the way to east Africa. The Chinese have even created an island off Colombo, a new financial hotspot and a key conduit to East Africa, besides controlling the island nation's infrastructure sector, hospitality and supply chains. And while we may have halted Huawei's 5G technology, Sri Lanka has no security fears about the new-generation mobile telephony technology. India has, therefore, to do a very tightrope act with Sri Lanka if it wants to protect its strategic interests amid a Chinese swamp. That, too, without compromising too much on Tamil interests. We need to work on investment and project partnerships, encourage soft diplomacy via people-to-people contacts and strengthen an institution like BIMSTEC to ensure continuous communication. And we must take care to not appear exploitative or patronising.

COVID spiral

As the virus spreads, India must ramp up its testing capacity, focus on the hinterland and come up with a standard protocol



The dreaded community spread has India well and truly in its grip because, from the time the pandemic began in the country, we had recorded 1.5 million cases till July 28 but have added a whopping 5,00,000 infections in just nine days. This is an average of 50,000 fresh cases recorded each day. India has breached the 20-lakh barrier and fatalities have touched the 41,000 mark. The country that has been fighting to rapidly ramp up its poor healthcare infrastructure is now snapping at the heels of Brazil, which has more than 2.8 million cases, and the US, which is leading the list of worst-hit countries with five million cases. And if the

experts are to be believed, the community spread has only just begun and the next million cases may take just a little over two weeks if infections continue to spread at the same rate at which they are now. Expert opinion has it that the country needs to shift its focus on the war against the pandemic to rural India, which has multiple challenges of a high population density, patchy administration and a tottering healthcare infrastructure.

Another area where the country needs to improve its performance is testing that has been dismally slow. Till August 5, the country had just tested 16,617 people per million, which is a paltry 1.66 per cent of the population. Compare this to other nations like the US, which has tested 18.8 per cent of its population, Russia 20 per cent, South Africa five per cent and the UK 25 per cent. The Government's excuses of overpopulation and being a poor country hold no water as even a country like Brazil, which has a much lesser GDP than ours, has tested 6.3 per cent of its population. Moreover, a small country like Iran has tested three per cent. If we are to beat the pandemic, we have to ramp up our testing and take it up to five per cent at least, which is around 32 million more people. Testing also helps us map the trajectory of the disease and prepare containment strategies or it would look like we are just flying blind as some Western experts are suggesting. Right now, while the urban centres are bending the curve, unexpected hotspots are emerging, which need to be contained lest they set off a ripple effect that can lead to a "viral" blast. Also, what is needed is a national protocol for a standardised response, better guidance and a balanced allocation of resources. The silver lining in the dark cloud is that the recovery rate in the country is continuously rising and the fatality rate has remained much below the global average. If the figures being bandied about by the Health Ministry are anything to go by, the recovery rate has risen from 51.08 per cent on June 15 to a record high of 67.98 per cent on August 7, while the fatality rate has gone down to 2.05 per cent. These two in tandem have enabled a higher and rising difference of more than 7.7 lakh between the number of recovered patients and active cases in the country, claims the Ministry. Of course, there is still a problem of unaccounted deaths and cases that may completely change the picture. Plus, we have come a long way from the time we faced a shortage of simple things like hand sanitiser to the more complex PPEs and ventilators. Now, after four months, we are actually exporting these to other nations. The two indigenous vaccines are showing promise and developers are preparing to begin simultaneous phase 2 trials that study immune response and additional safety in a large population. In some more good news, pharma major Lupin has launched its Favipiravir drug at a very reasonable price. So, while we may not yet be winning the COVID war, all is still not lost. India can live to fight another day. But we must stick to a mapping and tracking plan and not get complacent. More importantly, not let up. Given our population, we will have recurring waves.

Being humane

Following the pandemic, there has been a resurgence of hatred against stray dogs who are left to fend for themselves. Not many understand how their lives have turned upside down



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected human behaviour throughout the world, causing new, either by choice or compulsion, created by lockdowns. Moods marked by irritation and anger intensify old animosities and create new ones. An example is the resurgence of hatred towards stray dogs, who have been an integral part of India's urban local point of view since the time of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, if not earlier.

Directly or indirectly, animals and creatures that live in water or the sky feature prominently in the philosophy of the *Upanishads* and the narratives of the *Vedas*, *Brahma Sutra*, the *Puranas* and the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Examples are many, but two well-known ones merit a mention. In *Mahabharata's* *Mahaprasthanika Parva* (The Chapter of the Great Departure), a small brown dog began to follow the five Pandavas and Draupadi as they began their final journey out of this world. One by one, Draupadi and four Pandavas fell dead as they climbed Mount Meru. Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava, and the dog marched on. Yudhishthira, the king of gods, appeared in his flying chariot and said that he had come to take Yudhishthira to heaven in his mortal body. Assured that Draupadi and his four brothers were already there and well, he asked whether the dog could come with him. On his way, he told that heaven had no place for a dog, he refused to go without the latter. It was then that the dog appeared in his true self as Dharma, the God of Virtue, and said this was Yudhishthira's final test. He would not have been able to enter heaven alive if he had agreed to abandon the dog.

This account is widely known and cited. Another incident is found in the Bengali translation of the *Saptakanda Ramayana* (The *Ramayana* in Seven Parts) by Krittibhava Ojha. It happened when Ram, after defeating Ravana and sending Sita to save Valmiki's hermitage, was holding court in Ayodhya with Lakshman guarding the entrance. A white dog with red eyes, lame in one leg and limping, with thick patches of congealed



blood on his head, indicating that it has hit with a stick, came and touched Lakshman's feet. Asked why he had come, he said he would relate the cause of his sorrow to Ram if the latter granted him an audience.

Told of the dog's request by Lakshman, Ram asked for the dog to be brought before him forthwith. Arriving in Ram's presence, he began to sing the former's praise with folded hands and head bowed. Asked about the reason for his coming, he said, "A *sanaysi* (a mendicant ascetic who has renounced the world) has hit me for no fault of mine. Distressed and hurt after being hit, I have come to your court after starving for three days. The court should please ask the *sanaysi* what was my fault that he should have hit me with a stick?" Ram said that the *sanaysi* should be brought immediately before him so that the court could judge. How could a *sanaysi* be cruel to an animal? (All quotations are from *Saptakanda Ramayana* translated from Bengali to English by this author.)

The dog, who accompanied Ram's messenger, identified the *sanaysi* as he was brought before Ram, who asked, "Why have you abandoned your *dharma* and are cruel to animals? One who perpetrates *adharma* has to live in hell. What kind of renunciation is yours when your body is so full of anger? Castigation of others and malevolence towards others are grave sins. A terrible hell is the punishment for a cruel and malevolent *sanaysi*. A sage who has

given up greed, illusion and desire, is respected in this world. And, though a *sanaysi*, you suddenly burst into anger! What was the fault of the dog that you hit him with a stick?"

The ascetic replied, "I went to the town for alms after reciting prayers on the banks of the Ganga during the whole day. Begging for alms, the whole body burning with hunger, I found the dog lying in front occupying the whole road. I loudly asked him to give way but he pretended not to hear. He was asleep with one eye closed and looked at me with the other. I became angry and hit him on the head with a stick. Now that I have said all this before the court, you decide what punishment to give me."

On being asked by Ram about the punishment, the courtiers said that the *sanaysi* should be buried from bathing in the Ganges. At this, the dog said that he should not be punished but made the ruler of the kingdom of Kalinjar. The courtiers laughed as Ram made the *sanaysi* the king of Kalinjar. Climbing onto the back of an elephant, his splendour enhanced by the royal sceptre, the *sanaysi* began travelling happily towards Kalinjar as people laughed at his attire — a loin-cloth — with the royal umbrella over his head.

Asked by the courtiers as to why was the kingdom given to the *sanaysi* when the idea was to punish him, Ram directed them to the dog, who said, "Under a curse by Lord Shiva, death does not alter the king's destiny to be

reborn as a dog...I was the king in the previous birth and now I have been reborn as a dog and suffered much. But having seen you, I will now escape from my torment." While everybody said that the *sanaysi's* worldly possessions have now increased, the dog said, "Have no doubt, whoever becomes the king of Kalinjar becomes a dog in his next birth." He then did *namaskar* to Ram and walked slowly to Varanasi where he fasted to death and attained heaven because he had seen Ram.

Ram's statement that a "terrible hell is the punishment for a cruel and malevolent *sanaysi*" has an echo in a passage in Skanda V, chapter 26 of *Srimad Bhagavata: The Holy Book of God*. It reads, "God has given different forms of livelihood to creatures. Some of these may go against the interests of man. But man should not retaliate against these creatures for two reasons. They are not endowed with the capacity to know that they are doing injury to man; and next, man knows that they will be injured if he retaliates. A person who injures lower creatures for selfish purposes goes to a purgatory called *Andhakupa* and there he will have to live in a low type of body, attacked by the creatures he had injured. In darkness, without sleep, and restless, he will have to drag on a wretched existence."

(Translated by Swami Tapasyananda). The passage quoted from *The Srimad Bhagavata: The Holy Book of God* applies especially to those who inveigh ceaselessly

about the "menace" posed by stray dogs. They can neither see the role the latter play as sentinels, whose barking alerts people against the arrival of thieves, robbers and terrorists/insurgents. Precisely for this reason, terrorists in some areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Maoists in parts of central India have asked villagers to kill all dogs in their areas.

In the present situation, how many of India's stray dog haters have tried to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the lives of these canines completely upside down? It has been said often enough to become common place knowledge that the closure of hotels, *dhabas* and restaurants have deprived vast numbers of them of their food. It is not just the left-overs thrown into garbage bins that they miss. Many of them, who had been fed regularly by the staff and owners of these eating places, have now to fend for themselves — something to which they have grown unused.

Finally, how many haters of stray dogs have any idea of the love and loyalty that most dogs unconditionally lavish on people? Not surprisingly, Konrad Lorenz writes in *Man Meets Dog*, "The whole charm of the dog lies in the depth of friendship and the strength of spiritual ties with which he has tied himself to man." Author of the landmark book *On Aggression* and perhaps the state, religious affiliations should remain confined within the four walls of his home.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, *The Pioneer*, and author)

SOUNDBITE

I would have wanted more opportunities to play Test cricket. In those days, it was difficult to get a spot among star players like Sachin and Rahul who started opening.

Former cricketer
—Yuvraj Singh

From what I can tell you is that the equation of the industry has not changed. It's an equal playing field. You've to have a huge amount of luck and then things will fall in place.

Actor
—Chunky Panday

What China did is a terrible thing. Whether it was incompetence or on purpose, it was a terrible thing that they did... not only to the US, but to the world.

US President
—Donald Trump

PM Modi congratulated 130 crore Indians during the *bhoos m puja* but India's population is over 138 crore. The omission of 8 crore people is wrong after CAA/NRC.

Congress leader
—Shashi Tharoor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stand firm

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Now Pak in map war" (August 6). Close on the heels of Nepal's issuance of a map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura under its territory, Pakistan has released a territorial map of its own, which includes the former princely state of Junagadh (Gujarat) and Kashmir. This prompted a quick response from India's Ministry of External Affairs, which termed it an "exercise in political absurdity."

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed that the map represented the aspirations of the whole nation and all its political parties. It is likely that Pakistan has China's blessings in producing the map given similar border claims by Nepal recently. Pakistan has expressed its frustration through a series of steps that coincided with the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370. It had announced that August 5 would be observed as "day of exploitation" even as the Khan Government again failed to persuade the UN Security Council to come up

Gold smuggling gets murkier

It is common knowledge that gold is smuggled into the country by land, sea and air. The Department of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 4,000 kilograms of gold worth ₹1,300 crore that was illegally brought into Gujarat. In February, DRI officials found about 15 kg of gold valued at over ₹6 crore on the sea bed at Mandapam off the Tamil Nadu coast. There are unspoken such instances. More recently, an influential gang smuggled nearly 230 kg of gold into Kerala, tucked stealthily in the diplomatic parcel bags couriered from Dubai to the Consulate General of the UAE in Thiruvananthapuram. On July 5, Customs officials intercepted the passage of a diplomatic bag, stated to be the 21st in line, which led to the seizure of 30 kg gold. The probe was assigned to the NIA as suspicion of illegal money being used for nefarious activities gained strength. However, the Opposition chose to focus on the association of M Sivasankar (IAS), the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister of Kerala, with the accused, Swapna Suresh, and underplayed the issue through the diplomatic channel. In fact, it chose to harm the Chief Minister. Even after days of interrogation by both the Customs officials and the NIA, it remains unclear if the officer was a victim of misjudgment or had even the remotest role in the murky affair.

And the role of the consulate in the gold smuggling, particularly the attaché, is still shrouded in mystery. An argument doing the rounds is that the attaché is not bound to reveal his travel itinerary to the Government, he being a diplomat. The question here is: Can a diplomat aid terrorism and still leave the country quietly under the cover of diplomatic immunity from prosecution? Politically, the Opposition efforts to besmirch Vijayan's reputation have not registered much success. Meanwhile, the sleuths are preparing to travel abroad for investigations.



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Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

Tough questions

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "After Ayodhya" (August 6). The pomp and show displayed at a simple event such as the *bhoos*

m puja at Ayodhya was avoidable. The event has raised several questions. Was it correct for the PM to lay the foundation of the temple, one which remained embroiled in a long history of disputes? In a secular democracy, the PM is not expected to represent any particular religion or organisation. For a head of the state, religious affiliations should remain confined within the four walls of his home.

Sritama
Via email

Crisis within crisis

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Monumental apathy" (August 7). The massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon could not have come at a worse time for Lebanon when the country has been battling one crisis after another. Nations across the world as well as international institutions must offer help to Lebanon so that it can overcome the catastrophe.

Prathna
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Transparency is long overdue

The Centre has rolled out a robust and much-desired architecture for the online audit of Panchayati Raj Institutions



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

Transparency and accountability in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been hanging fire for long. After much reflection, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has launched an AuditOnline application for scrutinising the accounts of over 2.50 lakh gram panchayats (GPs). To begin with, the accounts of at least 20 per cent or 50,000 GPs would be audited online for 2019-20. This was long overdue as the GPs have been endowed with substantial powers, authority and responsibilities with the enactment of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. Following the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission (FC), ₹2,00,292 crore was transferred to the PRIs during 2015-16 to 2019-20. The 14th FC, and many others before it, had underlined the need for auditing panchayat accounts as the wisdom, faithfulness and propriety of expenditure were a matter of nagging concern. Guidelines were issued by the Finance Minister in 2015 to the effect that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) would examine the release and transfer of the grants-in-aid and expenditure in Panchayats and municipalities.

The 15th FC, while recommending allocation of ₹60,750 crore for 2020-21 to the three tiers of the PRIs, comprising the district panchayats, block panchayats and GPs, laid emphasis on ensuring timely availability of audited accounts online so as to strengthen their financial management. Hence, AuditOnline facilitates online and offline checking of accounts of the PRIs with a view to improving transparency and accountability in the utilisation of public money. The accounts of 20 per cent GPs would be audited on a pilot basis and scaled up to 100 per cent in the financial year 2021-22. Owing to the online digital payment mechanism, now integrated with eGramSwara, the GPs were able to make online payments out of the 14th FC grants. In fact, 1.52 lakh GPs were on the platform and 1.04 lakh GPs made online payments during 2019-20.

Notably, AuditOnline will ease up access to records which can be monitored at the district, State and Union level. It can enable uploading of photos of the work done and geo-tagging of projects to facilitate physical inspection and remote verification of the assets. This will help reduce costs, ensure quicker reviews and sound documentation and enhance environmental sustainability. The timely availability of records was a major issue in the offline system but in the online audit system, the auditors will be able to see all documents related to work approval and payments.

AuditOnline also facilitates online and offline scrutiny of accounts and maintains the past records of the auditee. Plus, the information would be available in public domain. Fully configurable, it is capable of depicting any type of workflow and mapping seamlessly the auditor/auditee engagement and interaction and audit observation tags. Further, its Dynamic Form Designer allows drawing of the forms for case record and fact sheet easily and generation and download of various graphical reports for analysis and monitoring, based on customisable report templates. Another and yet more significant advantage is the fact that the monitoring authorities would get notified instantaneously via e-mail/SMS/System-based alerts at various trigger points, enabling concurrent analysis, mid-course correction and better monitoring. A greater responsibility has been given to the State Accountant General (AG) under AuditOnline rules. The AG, representative of the CAG, shall identify the District Local Fund Auditor (DLFO) for each area. The entire audit process — starting with the identification of the DLFO, audit planning, recording of entry and exit meetings by the auditor, concurrence and approval of the meetings, communication of the draft audit to the auditee, generation of audit report, review of the response and action taken there on, by the auditee with clear timelines — are all unambiguously outlined. The audit report shall be provided to the GP by December 31 every year for consideration and corrective action.

Despite numerous accruable benefits, there are apparent hurdles and technical glitches. How will the online audit take off if the books of accounts are not complete, leaving aside the issue of high-speed internet and uninterrupted connectivity? It's only when the money is spent, brought on account and the accounts closed, a prerequisite for any audit, that the online audit can be undertaken. However, the Union Government has rolled out a robust and much-desired architecture for the audit of PRIs. In fact, 11 States (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Telangana, Tripura, and Uttarakhand) have already provided their configuration details and others will follow suit. Extensive online training and hands-on sessions are being carried out with the States. With the successful operation of AuditOnline, hopefully, the image of PRIs will improve with the expanded reach of accountability, encompassing all the three tiers of India's multi-layered and now expanding digital democracy.

(The writer is former Additional Secretary Lok Sabha and an author)

MOBILE APPLICATIONS DEVELOPED AND OWNED BY COMPANIES IN CHINA CONTINUE TO THREATEN OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, FOREIGN POLICY AND ECONOMY.
—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

POINT COUNTERPOINT



CHINA URGES THE US TO CORRECT ITS WRONGDOINGS, STOP POLITICISING ECONOMIC ISSUES AND CRACKING DOWN ON RELATED FIRMS.
—CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON WANG WENBIN

Embrace the circular economy

As nations move towards a post-pandemic fiscal recovery, they must adopt strategies for long-term sustainable development and create resilient economies



SHILPI KAPUR BAKSHI PRAHLAD TEWARI

The pandemic and the response to it by various governments around the world have posed unprecedented challenges, the effect of which would be felt for decades to come. People and economies are suffering not only due to the huge loss of lives but also from the slowdown of economic activities during the lockdown. According to the Union Minister of Road Transport Nitin Gadkari, the contagion is expected to cause a loss of over ₹10 lakh crore to India's economy. The World Bank, too, estimates that 12 million people in India could be pushed into poverty. While initially, the most visible impact of the crisis was on the healthcare sector due to shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators, critical medical supplies and healthcare professionals trained in the handling of a contagion, its impact is now being felt on the free movement of people, goods and services, too.

A circular economy is based on the principles of reducing our waste and pollution throughout the lifecycle stages, keeping products and materials in use for long and regenerating natural systems. Circular economy-based concepts, such as cascaded reuse of resources to design reusable masks to substitute single-use masks, supported by Government-formulated guidelines and awareness about the same, are steps in the right direction.

The global market for refurbished medical devices is also predicted to witness significant growth. Recently, fuel cell manufacturer Bloom Energy started to refurbish ventilators to meet the supply gap in hospitals in the US. Due to COVID-19, organisations preferred work from home (WFH) and educational institutes preferred to learn from home using virtual platforms for meetings and online classes, which led to an unprecedented surge in demand for refurbished laptops. This cascaded reuse of resources would also be critical in filling the void that has emerged in supporting online education to rural and urban poor students. Measures like these will create new market opportunities, increase the use of existing assets and reduce the pressure on the environment created by the demand for virgin raw materials.

Integrating circularity in various governments' recovery agenda and strategies thus assumes importance. In April, the City of Amsterdam launched its Circular 2020-2025 strategy, which outlines the actions it would take to cut down the use of new raw materials to half by 2030. The local government also considers this strategy to be the basis for scaling recovery from the effects of COVID-19. Similarly, the European Union (EU) and South Korea have both adopted 'Green Deals' as central pillars to their economic recoveries, both leveraging regenerative models and circular economy principles. The deployment of idle railway coaches by Indian Railways as isolation wards during the surge of Coronavirus infection is adapting the approach to use existing infrastructure to an extent possible. This provides an opportunity for other governments to integrate resilience, low carbon and sustainable growth thinking into their recoveries by avoiding short-term emission-intensive projects.

Rebuilding the moribund global supply chain systems by adopting a circular economy as a mode of production can help economies withstand supply disruptions like those experienced in the current pandemic. This was particularly visible in the case of stressed food production and distribution, which was experienced during the hastily-implemented lockdowns. By creating new and shorter supply chain connections between producers and con-

“THE TIME IS RIFE FOR US TO RETHINK OUR CONSUMPTION PATTERNS, TO BUILD IN RESILIENCE, CIRCULARITY AND AN EFFICIENT RURAL-URBAN CONNECTION TO REDUCE THE VULNERABILITY OF OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND MOVE TOWARDS AN ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT



sumers, we can ensure a continuous supply of essential goods in vital sectors and help improve resilience through stock availability and competitiveness without giving up the commitment to achieving the UN-set Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In order to support the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, newer ecosystems need to be envisaged that are based on local, shorter and more distributed supply chains via localised material sourcing. At the start of the pandemic in India, the availability of PPEs was critically low, owing to non-availability of local manufacturers, long gestation period to import their machines and the high cost. In line with the spirit of 'Vocal for Local' and with various Government initiatives, India is today the second-largest manufacturer of PPE body overalls within a short span of four months. There is also a need to engage in collaborative consumption to share resources by replacing traditional ownership of products with lending, borrowing and the availability of repair services to facilitate reuse. This would help reduce panic buying. For instance, the assurance of the Delhi Government to provide 'Pulse Oximeters' for monitoring oxygen levels of patients undergoing home isolation is a positive step in this direction. Acceptance of such 'pay for services' rather than 'owning facility options' would gain momentum if hygiene is ensured. Local waste sites can be turned into resource centres that undertake recovery and recycling of plastics.

Circular innovations can address manufacturing and supply chain shortages with the healthcare sector. Two examples: circular knitted fabric (washable and reusable) can be used to produce non-medical protective face masks. The need for investment in technology for designing responsible packaging solutions that maintain food safety and quality standards and prevent contamination can enhance the sustainability of the home delivery ser-

vices that people are increasingly relying upon. Such solutions could also help continue efforts to reduce the usage of plastics and styrofoam. Several initiatives by various Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies and collaborations involving various stakeholders have been done across the globe to minimise single-use plastics.

In addition, enhancing material productivity also plays a significant role in addressing the diminishing cost competitiveness of industries (such as the Indian automobile sector in comparison to China, Singapore, Indonesia, and Bangladesh) due to high material cost. The circular economy emphasises reuse, and through this has the potential to generate not only environmental benefits but cost benefits, too, and create new revenue opportunities. For example, the focus on manufacturing durable goods would help them to generate income from rentals, repairs and refurbishment while reducing the environmental footprint.

In the COVID-19 crisis, digital solutions have promoted virtual workplaces, a mobile Government and a multitude of platforms to monitor and trace infections. Digitalisation has not only been limited to medical solutions or WFH set-ups but has been an instrument in supporting online education modes, too. Digital technology can play a role in creating city and village systems that are regenerative and restorative by offering dematerialisation opportunities, increasing our knowledge and understanding of data on the lifecycle of materials, people and external conditions, allowing for more informed decisions based on accurate data. This would help close the loop of material cycles and contribute to keeping products/materials in use for a longer period of time.

For example, digital technology can help aggregate local marketplaces dealing in secondary and alternative materials and formalise the informal sector waste-pick-

ers. Real-time tracking technologies provide information on where a product ends up and how it will be reused or recycled.

However, despite the many opportunities that circular thinking presents, ongoing efforts in this direction have been hit due to the pandemic. For example, in the waste management sector where significant work was done to manage plastic waste, many efforts have been halted during the lockdown, particularly in the private recycling space.

Recycling plants are mostly shut or are operating at limited capacity with a lot of the informal sector workers, who played the role of aggregators (such as the junk collectors) leaving urban centres for their native places. Procurement of recyclable waste has also become a challenge. Among plastics, virgin plastic may have been hit due to the pandemic. For example, in the waste management sector where significant work was done to manage plastic waste, many efforts have been halted during the lockdown, particularly in the private recycling space.

As countries step towards economic recovery after COVID-19, they should undertake circular economy strategies for long-term sustainable development and for creating resilient economies. The BRICS nations recently acknowledged the heightening of social vulnerabilities and job losses due to the pandemic and have emphasised on the need for improving the environment and promoting the circular economy in national plans as steps towards recovery. The time is ripe for us to rethink our consumption patterns, to build in resilience, circularity and an efficient rural-urban connection to reduce the vulnerability of our economic and social systems and move towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

(Bakshi is Senior Fellow and Tewari is Fellow and Area Convener, TERI)

Maintain a healthy digital diet

During this period of social distancing, we should use technology to increase our independence and harness our inner potential



PRAKRITI PODDAR

The Coronavirus pandemic has made social distancing the new normal and the majority of us are becoming increasingly dependent on digital technology. Pushed into an uncertain future, we are spending more time to digitally connect with people, work, shop, keep ourselves informed and even entertained.

While a digitally-mediated daily life can keep us safe from the risk of infection, too much exposure to it can harm our mental health. There has been a lot of awareness raised about the impact of exposing oneself to negative influences on social media and the news. The more information we receive

the more insufferable the pandemic becomes. We have seen people feel hopeless and helpless as a result of all the information they absorb and unfortunately, sink into deeper mental health issues.

Fake news and conspiracy theories can induce fear and lead us to either fight, freeze or fold up. If you are one of the fighters, the information on digital feeds will help you take action in serving others, hence, limiting your online time.

You may also minimise the understanding of the situation and label all those people, who err at the side of precaution, as hysterical and not abide by the safety rules. Thus, putting yourself and others in danger. If you freeze, then you will lock yourself down and if you fold, you will need support to uplift your mental health.

At all costs, people must keep their digital activity healthy during the outbreak. Let us take a look at three evidence-based tips for a healthy digital diet during the outbreak.

Take control: It is natural to feel

powerless and scared in the face of a pandemic but people can use digital technology to regain control and give themselves a degree of autonomy over their life.

This is critical as having control promotes emotional well-being. So, people must think about ways in which they can use digital technology to help them do it. It can be something as simple as using the technology at their disposal to make plans, manage their schedule, organise activities with others and even do online shopping at websites where they get to exert greater choice.

The key is to use digital technology actively instead of letting themselves get passively guided by algorithms. People must think of digital technology as a tool that allows them to extend their autonomy and makes it possible for them to develop strategies to cope better. For instance, people can consider limiting passive screen time and passive viewing with more interactive screen time — playing educational games, making

YouTube videos, coding a website — where they are in control.

Nurture relationships: While social distancing is good for our physical health, isolation is not good for our mental health. So, we must use this opportunity to digitally connect with old friends, family members or acquaintances that we somehow lost touch with. We must also nurture our existing relationships by scheduling regular chats online and using digital devices to spread positive news, express gratitude to the people serving us and helping others.

For instance, people can order food and groceries online for friends, family members and neighbours who are not digitally-enabled. Helping others can give life more purpose and allay anxieties. Organise group chats and regular virtual meet-ups — seeing a familiar face, even on a phone screen, can be reassuring. People must use this time as an opportunity to rebuild affiliations with those who matter.

Be smarter: Our well-being is also influenced by our competence, ability

to rise above challenges, take smart decisions and experience a sense of accomplishment and success.

Hence, people must use this opportunity to take online courses, learn new skills and do things that engage them. People must consider using digital technology to look after their body and mind during this period of confinement. They may not be able to hit the gym but they can use digital reminders and prompts to move and exercise more — even if they are confined inside a restricted environment. People can consider downloading a nutrition app, exercise, mindfulness or relaxation app. They must think about how they can use digital technology to improve exercise, sleep and diet regimes.

People can use digital technology to be smarter about their information diet, too. Use fact-checking services to counter conspiracy theories, unfounded rumours, urban legends and misinformation. Reduce information intake to one or two trustworthy sources. Most importantly, get infor-

mation from reputable sources instead of regurgitating what they read on social media.

The way towards digital well-being: Our increased digital dependency can be of benefit to our well-being instead of a hazard. We need to use our screens positively and promote greater autonomy, relatedness and competence. To be balanced, people must schedule their downtime, off-screen time, exercise time and fun time. This will form the core of their emotional well-being and hold them in good stead.

People must remember not to reach for their phone as soon as they wake up. They must give themselves the time to get ready, eat and then get to their device. We should use technology to increase our independence, further our well-being and harness our inner potential. Doing so will not only help us get through the pandemic but will also ensure that we emerge stronger from it.

(The writer is Director of a Wellness company and heads a foundation)



FOREIGN EYE



YETI A BOON TO TOURISM

Taunting anthropologists and researchers, the elusive Yeti continues to confound science. Ecologist Daniel Taylor found a trail of footprints during a 1983 search of the Barun but eventually concluded that it was more likely to be a bear. Yetis still court controversy as we saw recently with the aborted Visit Nepal Year 2020 sculptures, but they also boost tourism. (Nepali Times editorial)

LANKA PARLIAMENTARY POLLS

Rajapaksa registers landslide victory

Gets two-thirds majority

Colombo: Mahinda Rajapaksa will be sworn in as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister for the fourth time on Sunday after his party registered a landslide victory in the general election, securing two-thirds majority in Parliament needed to amend the Constitution to further consolidate the powerful Rajapaksa family's grip on power.

The Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP), led by prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, won in 145 constituencies, bagging a total of 150 seats with its allies, a two-thirds majority in the 225-member Parliament, according to the results announced by the election commission on Friday.

It won all but four of the 22 electoral districts on offer, polling 6.8 million votes (59.9 per cent).

The 74-year-old Prime Minister Mahinda thanked the Sri Lankan people for putting their faith in the SLPP and said that the country will not stand disappointed during its tenure.

"Heartfelt gratitude to all



Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa greets Buddhist monks following his election victory in the general election at his residence in Tangalle Sri Lanka on Friday

Sri Lankans for placing their trust in President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, myself and the Podajana Party and voting for the 'Saubhagya Dakkama' election manifesto in overwhelming numbers. We will ensure Sri Lanka will not stand disappointed during our tenure," he said.

Mahinda will be sworn in as the new prime minister for the fourth time on Sunday at a ceremony at the historic Buddhist temple of Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, according to an official statement.

He created a record in polling over 500,000 individual

preference votes, the highest ever recorded by a candidate in the history of elections.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first world leaders to congratulate Mahinda on the outcome of the elections and said the two sides will work together to further advance all areas of bilateral

cooperation and to take their special ties to ever newer heights.

"Thank you PM @narendramodi for your congratulatory phone call. With the strong support of the people of #SriLanka, I look forward to working with you closely to further enhance the long-standing cooperation between our two countries. Sri Lanka & India are friends & relations," Mahinda tweeted.

The Rajapaksa family has dominated Sri Lankan politics for two decades. Mahinda was previously president, from 2005 to 2015. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had won the November presidential election on the SLPP ticket.

In the parliamentary election, he was seeking 150 seats mandatory to execute constitutional changes, including to repeal the 19th Amendment to the Constitution which had curbed the presidential powers while strengthening the role of Parliament.

Activists, already alarmed by the diminishing space for dissent and criticism in the island nation, fear such a move could lead to authoritarianism. PTI

POWER TUSSELE WITH OLI INTENSIFIES

Nepal: Prachanda tells party workers to prepare for worst

Kathmandu: Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has asked the party workers to prepare for the 'worst' as the ongoing power tussle between him and Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has intensified with no solution in sight.

Oli and Prachanda have held at least ten meetings in recent weeks to sort out the differences between them. But, as the Prime Minister did not accept the condition of a one-man-one-post, the talks failed. Oli has refused to give up his post as prime minister as well as chairman of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP).

A bitter internal feud has been brewing in the ruling NCP since the last few weeks after top party leaders, including Prachanda, demanded Oli's resignation, saying his anti-India remarks were "neither politically correct nor diplomatically appropriate." The opponents of Oli are also against his autocratic style of functioning.

"Our main concern is not about gaining power, what we want is to follow the proper procedure while running the NCP. We are not focusing on gaining any position, but our fight is against the wrong trend developing in the party," Prachanda told a select group of journalists during a special briefing on Wednesday.

He held the press conference along with three senior party leaders Madhav Nepal, Jhalanath Khanal and party spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha, according to Nagarkir daily.

The dissident group accused Oli of trying to damage the image of other senior leaders of the party, the daily reported.

Prachanda and Nepal have claimed that the majority of the powerful Central Working Committee members have supported them while raising voice against Oli.

Prachanda also alleged that while the Standing Committee meeting was in progress, at the initiative of Prime Minister

Oli a new party was registered under the name of a lesser-known person at the Election Commission with the intention to split the ruling party. If the chairman (PM Oli) does not follow the proper procedure of the party then how can the unity of the party remain intact," he wondered.

Prachanda claimed that he and other senior leaders of the party were trying to save the party by creating a favourable situation.

"We are trying for the best outcome but the communists of this country should also be prepared for the worst thing that happens," Prachanda told media persons, indicating a possible split in the ruling party.

"I had agreed to make Oli Prime Minister for a full 5 years term and enjoy the executive chairman's position in the party but he wanted to engage media within the party," said Prachanda.

Oli has dragged the party towards anarchy by calling separate gatherings," Prachanda said. PTI

TikTok threatens legal action in US over Trump order



Washington: Video-sharing app TikTok on Friday threatened to take legal action in US courts against Donald Trump's executive order banning anyone under US jurisdiction from doing business with the company's parent ByteDance.

"We will pursue all remedies available to us in order to ensure that the rule of law is not discarded and that our company and our users are treated fairly — if not by the Administration, then by the US courts," TikTok said in a statement. AFP

Negligence or missile may have caused blast: Lebanon President

Beirut: Lebanese President Michel Aoun says there are two possibilities behind Tuesday's blast — either negligence or 'external intervention' by a missile or a bomb.

Aoun said on Friday that he asked France for satellite images to see if there were warplanes or missiles in the air at the time of the blast.

The blast is believed to have been caused when a fire touched off 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been stored at the port since it was taken from an impounded ship in 2013. The cause of the initial fire is not known.

Aoun told journalists that he received information on July 20 about the stored material and "immediately ordered"

military and security officials to do what was necessary. He did not elaborate. He said several governments in charge since 2013 received warnings about the material.

He said the investigation is concentrating on 20 persons. He rejected an international investigation into the blast, saying that it will make us "lose the truth."

AP

Leader denies Hezbollah role in Beirut blast

Beirut: Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah says the explosion at the Beirut port reveals nepotism and corruption that can't be ignored in Lebanon and that those responsible should be brought to justice.

Nasrallah denied in a speech on Friday that his group was responsible for Tuesday's blast or exercised any power at the port.

He said the investigation is concentrating on 20 persons. He rejected an international investigation into the blast, saying that it will make us "lose the truth."

He was responding to claims that his group may have stored explosives at the port. Still, Nasrallah didn't rule out a missile attack or an act of sabotage. He said that storing explosive materials like ammonium nitrate at the port for so long means "it is partially an issue of negligence, corruption, nepotism" that should not be ignored. AP

Belgian court rejects move to extradite ex-Catalan Minister

AP ■ BRUSSELS

A Belgian court on Friday rejected Spain's demand to have a former high-ranking politician from the region of Catalonia extradited, in yet another setback for the country's efforts to try several officials in exile over their alleged roles in an independence referendum that Madrid regarded as illegal.

The Brussels prosecutor's office said the court had decided not to enforce the European arrest warrant for former Catalan culture minister Lluís Puig on the grounds that "the Spanish authorities who issued the warrant are not competent to do so."

Puig has been living in exile in Belgium since he, former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and a number of his associates fled to Belgium in October 2017, fearing arrest over their alleged roles in the secessionist push and the holding of an independence referendum that Madrid regarded as illegal.

The Brussels prosecutor's office said the court had decided not to enforce the European arrest warrant for former Catalan culture minister Lluís Puig on the grounds that "the Spanish authorities who issued the warrant are not competent to do so."

Spain's biggest political crises in decades as mass protests roiled the relatively wealthy northeast region of 7.5 million people.

AP

Kabul opens traditional council on release of 400 Taliban

Kabul: A traditional council met on Friday in Afghanistan's capital to decide whether to release a final 400 Taliban prisoners after the last hurdle to negotiations between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban under a peace deal with the US.

The negotiations are a critical step toward lasting peace in Afghanistan.

The talks will decide what a peaceful Afghanistan might look like, what constitutional changes will be made, how the rights of women and minorities will be protected and the fate of the tens of thousands of heavily armed men on both sides of the conflict. Besides Taliban fighters, warlords in Kabul

maintain thousands of armed militias loyal to them.

The Taliban in a statement on Friday rejected the Kabul proposal, saying it had no legal status. A statement by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo issued late Thursday made it clear that the 400 prisoners had to be released if peace talks with the Taliban were to move forward.

"We acknowledge that the release of these prisoners is unpopular," Pompeo said. "But this difficult action will lead to an important result long sought by Afghans and Afghans' friends: the reduction of violence and direct talks resulting in a peace agreement and an end to the war." AP

China sentences 4th Canadian to death on drug charges

Beijing: China has sentenced a fourth Canadian citizen to death on drug charges in less than two years following a sharp downturn in ties over the arrest of an executive of Chinese tech giant Huawei.

Ye Jianhui was sentenced on Friday by the Foshan Municipal Intermediate Court in the southern province of Guangdong.

Ye had been found guilty of

manufacturing and transporting drugs, the court said in a brief statement. Another suspect in the case was also given the death penalty and four others sentenced to between seven years and life in prison. Death sentences are automatically referred to China's highest court for review. Ties between Canada and China have nosedived over Canada's

late 2018 arrest of Meng Wanzhou, a company executive and the daughter of Huawei's founder, at Vancouver's airport in at the request of the US, which wants her extradited to face fraud charges over the company's dealings with Iran. Her arrest enraged Beijing, which calls it a political move aimed at constraining China's power. AP

Malaysia's Mahathir forms new party in fightback attempt

Putrajaya (Malaysia): Two-time former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced on Friday that he is forming a new ethnic Malay party after two months at the helm of a coalition, which he was sacked from his previous party during a political struggle with his successor.

Mahathir, 95, quit as prime minister in protest in late February after fellow party member Muhyiddin Yassin withdrew their Bersatu party from the ruling coalition, triggering its collapse less than two years after a historic victory in 2018 national polls.

Muhyiddin was sworn in as

new prime minister in March with a new government supported by ex-Prime Minister Najib Razak's corruption-tainted party that was ousted in 2018.

Mahathir, who was sacked from Bersatu after he was accused of mismanaging the party and helped revive what he called a kleptocratic government.

He accused Muhyiddin of using money to buy support in Bersatu, causing it to stray from its goal of fighting graft.

Mahathir said he believes many grassroots members are unhappy and still support him. AP

'Malaysia wants to send Zakir Naik to other place, but not many countries willing to accept him'

Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia was looking for a country except India to send Zakir Naik, but not many countries are willing to accept the controversial preacher, former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad has said.

Naik, a 54-year-old radical Islamic preacher, wanted by the Indian authorities for alleged money laundering and inciting extremism through hate speeches, left India in 2016 and subsequently moved to the largely Muslim Malaysia, where he was granted permanent residency when Mahathir

was the prime minister.

Claiming that the fugitive Islamic preacher "would not be safe from the Indian public," the 95-year-old politician, who is eyeing a comeback, said he would like to send Naik to some country "where we feel he will be safe."

"For the time being he (Naik) can stay here but we would like to send him to some other country where he would be safe. Unfortunately, not many countries are willing to accept him," Mahathir was quoted as saying by the WION news channel.

When asked whether he would extradite Naik if he becomes the Prime Minister of Malaysia again, Mahathir said, "Well, we would like to send him to some country where we feel he will be safe."

He once again refused to send Naik to India, saying "at this moment we feel that he would not be safe from the Indian public."

Naik has been banned from any public activities in the multi-ethnic country after his controversial remarks against Malaysian Hindus and Chinese last year. PTI

KAVYAM AFFORDABLE GROUP HOUSING
Being Developed by Agranate Realty Ltd. having License No. 101 of 2017 dated 30.11.2017
HARERA No. RC/REPH/HA/REGM/2018/23 dated 22.11.2018

TYPE-1 2BHK 512.50 Sq.ft

9428	10347	9889	10430	9014	10373	9994	9991	9342	10302	9120	10425
10215	9264	10428	10427	4356	9987	9934	10402	9758	10223	9976	10422
9677	9905	9307	10096	9431	9021	9288	9887	9850	9539	9925	9430
10348	10401	10094	9249	10420	10391	9726	10394	9996	10386	10429	10310
9507	11022	9229	9643	9019	9651	9568	9747	9261	10000	10052	9788

TYPE-3 2BHK 488.30 Sq.ft

9039	9845	9600	4921	9955	10080	9633	9537	9147	10212	10125	9757	10305
9341	10194	10074	9631	9824	9725	9995	3592	9834	10309	10426	9900	2439
9870	9839	10168	9310	10167	10077	9660	9665	10311	10403	10308	9838	9598
10342	10083	9871	9682	9996	10351	9997	10145	4219	10164	9321	9350	10146
9594	9860	10330	9835	9028	9806	3077	10328	10286	10289	10149	10419	9751
10053	9011	4355	10389	9683	3585	9408	9005	9728	9442	9656	4439	9409
9444	10237	10005	9841	9043	9484	9263	9849	9494	4250	10331	9632	10362
10174	9804	4925	9595	10173	9489	10072	10366	9693	9732	10400	4607	10180
10436	2438	9859	10340	9684	9567	9731	10192	10051	9803	9209	10073	9485
9579	4924	4684	9842	4682	9589	10205	3076	10417	9088	9036	9357	10218
9564	10327	9550	9086	9813	9301	9571	10216	9861	9490	10160	9789	10062
9978	10181	9105	9756	4116	9584	10124	9441	9616	10370	9676	9214	9366
10079	9471	9447	9736	9213	9455	9596	11001	10138	9886	10203	9332	3696
2017	10083	9483	9423	10304	10211	10236	10172	9781	9909	9569	9069	4369
10317	9802	9800	10219	10122	9197	2552	10396	9397	10202	9491	10115	9689
10334	4115	9440	10071	9133	10275	10199	9100	9959	9487	10176	9345	9698
9582	10117	10229	9136	9320	10185	10078	9465	9586	9211	10375	10228	9426
10382	10116	10113	9072	9482	9780	10096	10091	3900	9799	9030	9691	9615
10423	10390	9637	10301	9787	10132	10189	4282	9892	10121	10050	10054	9844
10055	10333	10131	10158	10263	9339	9798	9134	9042	9082	9585	9622	9769
10301	10066	9958	10179	9829	9380	10344	10315	10084				

TYPE-3 2BHK 488.30 Sq.ft

9498	9973	10182	4663	9919	3470	9435	3547	10320	9660
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SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Name: Hemchand, So: Sh. Lal Chand, R/O: H.No. T-452A, Street No. 21, Baljeet Nagar, Delhi** has been missing since **08.11.2019** at 11:00 am, from the area of P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi. In this regard a case **DD No. 50A** dated **29.07.2020** has been registered at P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi. The description of the missing person is as under:

Age: 37 years, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow Face, **Build:** Strong, **Wearing:** Blue colour shirt and black colour pant. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this person kindly inform to the following:

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail id: cic@cbi.gov.in
PH: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No: 011-24368639
DP/251/CD/2020

SHO
P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi
Tel.No. 011-25872637, 8750870434

Portland protesters cause mayhem again, cop hurt

Portland: Portland's nightly protests turned violent again even after the city's mayor pleaded for demonstrators to stay off the streets and a police officer hit by a rock early Friday suffered what was described as a serious injury. The protesters who came out Thursday night clashed with officers near a police precinct standstill and also used metal bars to disable police vehicles, police said in a statement. The nightly clashes this week have ratcheted up tensions in the city after an agreement was reached last week between state and federal officials for federal agents to pull back from their defence. AP

US RECORDS OVER 2,000 VIRUS DEATHS IN A DAY AFTER THREE MONTHS

Washington: The United States has recorded more than 2,000 coronavirus deaths in 24 hours, the highest number of daily fatalities in three months, Johns Hopkins University's real-time tally showed on Thursday.

The country, which has seen a major resurgence in coronavirus since the end of June, added 2,060 deaths in one day as well as more than 58,000 new cases, the Baltimore-based university showed at 8:30 pm (0030 GMT Friday). AFP

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl named **Suneha D/o Late Nandu R/o Jhuggi No. 320, J.J. Camp, Ayurvidya Hospital, Haiderpur, Delhi** has been missing since **20.07.2020** at 11:00 am, from the area of P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi. In this regard a case **DD No. 50A** dated **28.07.2020** has been registered at P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi. The description of the missing/kidnapped girl is as under:

Age: 14 Years, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Height:** 5', **Face:** Round, **Built:** Normal, **Wearing:** Pink colour suit & salwar and black colour chappal in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing girl then please inform P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi at following Tel No. / e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No: 011-24368639
DP/284/NW/2020

Sd/- SHO
P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi
Ph: 011-27495198

Sd/- Disha Rani
(Company Secretary)

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 47 read with Regulation 29 & Regulation 33 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Listing Obligations & Disclosures Requirements Regulations, 2015, that a Meeting of the Board of Directors of Superior Finlease Limited ("the Company") will be held on Thursday, August 13, 2020 at the Registered Office of the Company at 1:00 PM, in-ava, to consider and approve (un-ava) Financial Results (Standalone & Consolidated) of the Company for the First Quarter ended June 30, 2020. The notice is also available on the website of the Company at www.superiorfinlease.com and also on the website of BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and Metropolitan Stock Exchange of India Limited at www.mseil.com where the shares of the Company are listed. For Superior Finlease Limited

Superior Finlease Limited
CIN: L48901/194PL/CN0195
Regd. Off: NS-82, Kharsa No-3321, Ramaji Enclave, New Delhi, Near Arjun Park Bus Stand New Delhi -110043.
Email: cic@superiorfinlease.com
Website: www.superiorfinlease.com
Phone No: +91-9959378335

Sensex, Nifty end flat on negative global cues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty ended flat on Friday as negative cues from global markets and spiking COVID-19 cases in the country kept investors on the edge.

After touching a low of 37,787.38 during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex clawed back lost ground to end at 15,122 points or 0.04 per cent higher at 38,040.57.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty rose 13.90 points or 0.12 per cent to finish at 11,244.05.

During the week, the Sensex advanced 433.68 points or 1.15 per cent, while the Nifty rose 140.60 points or 1.26 per cent.

Asian Paints was the top gainer in the Sensex pack on Friday, upping 14 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Maruti.

On the other hand, Titan, HCL Tech, Infosys, M&M and Sun Pharma were among the laggards, skidding up to 2.65 per cent.

Mahindra & Mahindra on Friday reported a 94 per cent decline in consolidated profit at Rs 54.64 crore for the June quarter, adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global markets tumbled

after US President Donald Trump signed an order prohibiting American residents from transacting with Chinese apps WeChat and TikTok, ratcheting up US-China tensions.

China has vowed to retaliate against the executive order, which comes into force in 45 days.

According to traders, negative overseas cues and mounting COVID-19 cases in the country kept investors jittery.

Registering over 60,000 cases in 24 hours for the first time, India's COVID-19 tally galloped past 20 lakh on Friday while the number of recoveries surged to 13.78 lakh, according to Union Health Ministry data.

The number of cases around the world linked to the disease has crossed 19 crore.

"The unrelenting pace of virus infections and other uncertainties led to the benchmark indices ending flat today with volatile trades. Global cues were also mostly negative, with a sharp drop in US stocks following US actions on popular Chinese apps, and anticipating retaliatory action from China."

"However on a weekly basis, Indian benchmark indices ended up by around 1 per cent, following gains in the

Wall Street stalls; S&P 500 dips after 5-day winning streak

AP ■ NEW YORK

Wall Street is stalling on Friday, as a whirlwind of worries about rising US-China tensions and whether Congress can deliver more aid for the economy threaten to halt its big run.

The S&P 500 was edging 0.1% lower in early trading after a five-day winning streak had brought it back within 1.1% of its record for the first time since February. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 73 points, or 0.3%, at 27,317, as of 9:30 a.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite pulled 0.1% back from its record.

Markets around the world

got a small boost before trading began on US. Stock markets when a report showed that the US job market strengthened more last month than economists expected. But the bump for U.S. Treasury yields and European stocks proved short-lived.

It's a busy day for markets, with investors also focused on Capitol Hill, where Congress and White House officials have been negotiating on a hoped-for deal on more aid for the economy. A marathon meeting Thursday left both sides still far apart on key issues, and they both said the future of talks is uncertain.

Investors say it's crucial that Washington pump more

money into the economy, which has shown signs of improvements since the spring but is still hobbling amid worries about a resurgence in coronavirus cases.

Even though Friday's jobs report was healthier than the market expected, it also showed that hiring is already slowing, and some months of acceleration and remains far below where it was before the pandemic.

Trump is considering executive orders to address some of the issues if Congress does not pass legislation on evictions and unemployment insurance, but they appear unlikely to have much impact.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in early days.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.86 per cent lower at USD 44.70 per barrel. On the currency front, the rupee ended almost flat at 74.93 against the US dollar.

Increase in gold loan LTV will heighten credit risks for banks: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The increase in loan-to-value (LTV) ratio for gold loans, or the quantum of borrowing against a given quantity of the precious metal, will heighten credit risks for banks, a ratings agency said on Friday.

The RBI had on Thursday increased the LTV ratio for gold loans by banks to 90 per cent from the earlier 75 per cent, in a bid to make loans available to people affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

"An increase in the LTV ratio to 90 per cent increases the credit risk for banks as the collateral available in the form of gold ornaments or jewellery may not be sufficient to fully cover both principal and interest components on these loans," Brickworks Ratings said.

Its Director for Ratings, Vydyanathan Ramaswamy, said, "The increase in LTV ratio in a 'negative carry' for banks as the total exposure will exceed the value of the pledged gold."

"It could adversely impact the recoverability and asset quality of banks in the case of a weakening in the borrower

credit risk profile and/or sharp decline in gold prices, which have seen a strong rally over the last few months," he added.

However, given that the higher LTV is only till March 31 next year, the risk on the portfolio is for a limited period, the agency said in a note.

Also, gold loans are mostly short-term loans of anywhere between 3 to 24 months, it said.

The agency said given that the RBI's announcement on higher LTV gold loans is limited to the banking sector, banks are bound to garner a larger market share vis-a-vis their non-bank peers in loans against the pledge of gold in fiscal 2021.

At present, non-bank financiers and unorganised lenders like local pawn brokers with a wider network enjoy a large market share in loans against gold ornaments and jewellery.

They also charge high rates on these loans, which can range anywhere between 20 per cent to 50 per cent, whereas banks charge much lower interest rates, it said.

Gold, silver prices continue to climb; touch record levels

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices surged for the 16th straight session on Friday and touched an all-time high of ₹576 compared to the closing level of ₹77,264 per kg on Thursday.

In the previous trade, gold had closed at ₹57,002 per 10 grams. On Friday, the price increased by ₹6 to ₹57,008 per 10 grams. Due to both the metals recorded all-time high prices, HDFC Securities said.

"Spot Gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi continued to scale new highs by gaining ₹6. Gold prices are trading higher for the 16th consecutive day in India," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. In the international market, both gold and silver were trading marginally lower at USD 2,061 per ounce and USD 28.36 per ounce, respectively.

Sebi revises eligibility, shareholding limit for clearing corp at IFSC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Friday amended international financial services centre (IFSC) guidelines pertaining to eligibility criteria and shareholding limit for clearing corporations that wish to operate in such centres.

The decision, aimed at streamlining the operations of IFSC, has been taken after consultation with stakeholders, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

Under the norms, any Indian recognised stock exchange or clearing corporation, or any recognised stock exchange or clearing corporation of a foreign jurisdiction, will form a subsidiary to provide

the services of clearing corporation in IFSC wherein at least 51 per cent stake is held by such exchange or clearing corporation, Sebi said. The guidelines stipulate that the clearing corporation must be acquired or held by any other person, whether Indian or of foreign jurisdiction.

Besides, such person will not at any time, directly or indirectly, either individually or jointly, hold more than 5 per cent stake in a clearing corporation in IFSC, subject to applicable laws.

Sebi further said any other stock exchange, depository, bank, insurance company or Indian or foreign jurisdiction have been allowed to acquire 15 per cent stake in such clearing corporation operating in an IFSC.

Among others, public financial institutions of Indian jurisdiction, foreign commodity derivatives exchange and bilateral multilateral financial institutions approved by central government "may acquire or hold, either directly or indirectly, either individually or together with persons acting in concert, up to 15 per cent of the paid up equity capital of the clearing corporation with prior approval of the board."

To give effect to this, Sebi has amended IFSC guidelines. Last month, the regulator had revised eligibility criteria for clearing corporations to stock exchanges desirous of operating in IFSC. The country's only IFSC is in GIFT City near Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

India's power transmission segment may attract ₹1.8 lakh cr investment by FY25: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic power transmission segment is expected to attract investments worth ₹1.8 lakh crore in the next five years, according to a report by rating agency ICRA.

It said evacuation infrastructure for renewable energy (RE) projects will drive investments in the power transmission segment.

"ICRA expects an investment of Rs 1.8 trillion (₹1.8 lakh crore) over the five-year period from FY21 (financial year 2020-21) to FY25 in the power transmission segment at state level, driven by evacuation infrastructure for RE projects," the rating agency said on Friday in the report.

It added that in line with

a shift in policy focus from conventional sources (coal and gas) to renewable power sources (wind and solar), the focus of the transmission segment is towards augmenting infrastructure for evacuation of power generated by RE projects.

Sabyasachi Majumdar, group head and senior vice-president (corporate ratings) of ICRA, said, "The report has lined up 14 transmission projects under the tariff-based competitive bidding (RBCB) route for evacuating power from 25-gigawatt RE projects."

The Government has also lined up to maintain the pace of the intra-state segment, providing healthy pipeline for private sector players, he added.

There is likely to be

a slowdown in electricity demand and investments in the sector in 2020-21 amid the Covid-19-induced disruption but recovery is expected from 2022 onwards, he said.

ICRA said the private sector's share is expected to witness a healthy growth over the next four-five years, while Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) and other state transmission utilities are likely to remain major players in the power transmission segment.

On the issues in the segment, the agency said, "The key challenge for the winning bidder under the TBCB route has been delays in execution by because of delays in securing right of way, forest clearances and re-routing requirements in some cases."

₹ settles nearly flat at 74.93 against US \$

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee ended almost flat at 74.93 against the US dollar on Friday due to a caution prevailing in the foreign market in view of mounting coronavirus cases and US-China trade tensions.

Starting off on a tepid note, the rupee fell to a low of 75.04, but recovered slightly thereafter, ending the day in a narrow band throughout the session.

It finally settled at 74.93, gaining 1 paise over its previous close. On Thursday too, the rupee had closed steady after the Reserve Bank maintained its status quo in its policy rates.

Meanwhile, the US dol-

lar index, which gauges the value of the greenback against a basket of key global currencies, rose 0.32 per cent to 93.08. Analysts said fore for the 16th consecutive day in India, HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. In the international market, both gold and silver were trading marginally lower at USD 2,061 per ounce and USD 28.36 per ounce, respectively.

Govt aims to develop 10 Craft and Handloom Villages in India: Irani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Smriti Irani on Friday said the government is aiming to develop ten Craft and Handloom Villages in the country to promote products from across the globe can visit them and learn the rich legacy of Indian weavers and lend support to the Make in India initiative.

Irani shared the Textiles Ministry's vision while addressing a function through video conferencing to mark the National Handloom Day. Almost 95 per cent of the handwoven fabrics used globally are produced in India. The Minister said that the National Handloom Awards, which are presented on the occasion of the Handloom Day, are being deferred upon the request of weavers who wish to celebrate the honour instead of receiving it digitally due to the prevailing circumstances posed by COVID-19. "It is our goal to develop ten Craft and Handloom Villages across the country so that our Handloom products are not limited to clothes or home furnishing alone."

We want that tourists from India and across the world visit these special Craft and Handloom Villages to not only learn about the weavers but also contribute to our pledge of Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self Reliant nation)," said the minister for Textiles and Women and Child Development.

Irani shared that students from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) are contributing to the upgradation of 9 out of 28 Weavers' Service Centres across the country in terms of design, marketing and research.

These centres are located in Delhi, Srinagar, Jaipur, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Varanasi, Guwahati, Kanchipuram and

Bhubaneswar.

She said it is the government's endeavour to ensure upgradation of all weavers' service centres through NIFT students to strengthen the rich legacy of handloom in India.

Irani said the 'My Handloom' portal launched on the occasion will help in connecting state government undertakings, agencies and cooperative societies with the Centre's schemes for weavers to know about their status and benefits.

Highlighting the importance of the country's handloom, Textiles Secretary Ravi Capoor said 95 per cent of the handwoven fabrics used globally are produced in India. Observing that weavers do not get remunerative prices for their products, he said plans are afoot to ensure they get high returns by eliminating middlemen and linking them directly to the market.

After deducting the marketing fee from the amount received towards the sale of a product, the remaining amount can be transferred to the weaver's bank account through direct benefit transfer, Capoor suggested.

Irani also launched a mobile app and backend website for Handloom Mark Scheme. The minister said the Handloom Mark is being promoted to provide collective identity to the authentic handloom products. Textiles Committee Mumbai has developed the mobile app with a backend web portal to completely digitise the process of registration. The app is in English and 10 Indian languages and will enable the weavers of the country to apply for Handloom Mark registration from the comfort of their homes.

"It helps ascertain the genuineness and originality of the product through unique and dynamic QR code labels affixed on each handloom product."

RAJ CM TAKES IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Tax exemption for vehicles deprived of permits during lockdown

Jaipur: The State Government has decided to exempt the motor vehicle tax (motor vehicle tax payable for the Omni Bus category of spared transport vehicles sold during the period of nationwide lockdown in the event of COVID-19 epidemic. The CM has taken this sensitive decision after approving the proposal received from Finance Dept and Transport Dept. According to the proposal, in the motor vehicle tax payable for the period of April 1 to June 30, 2020 for Omni Bus category vehicles of 8 and above seating capacity not listed in any permit category due to non-issuance of permits during lockdown in the state. Full exemption will be given. Also, 75 per cent exemption will be given to these vehicles on the tax payable for July 2020. It is known that in the context, such tax exemption was given on 24 June 2020 in the past for permit-free buses.

CM approves 400 more in new veterinary sub-centres

588 new posts will be created in subdivision offices

Jaipur: Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has approved the creation of a total of 400 new posts of 200 livestock assistants and 200 jaladhari in 200 new veterinary sub-centers to be opened in 2020-21. Each veterinary sub-center will get the post of a livestock assistant and a water holder.

Gehlot has also approved an additional budget provision of ₹20.72 crore by creating a total of 588 new posts for strengthening 294 subdivision offices of 8 and above seating capacity will get an information assistant and a junior assistant.

Approval to fill 83 vacant posts. The Chief Minister has approved to fill 83 vacant posts in Agriculture, University, Jodhpur and its constituent colleges.

These include 65 academic, 15 non-academic and 3 deputation posts.

Vodafone Idea bounces back; shares close 7 pc higher after initial loss

New Delhi: Shares of Vodafone Idea bounced back from early losses to close 7 per cent higher on Friday. On the BSE, the stock had plunged 7.39 per cent to ₹76.41 in early trade. Later, it erased the losses as the trade progressed. It finally closed at ₹88.3, a gain of 7.03 per cent.

On the NSE, it settled the day 6.66 per cent higher at ₹88.00. During the morning trade, it had clocked 7.87 per cent to ₹76.60. Value-buying at lower levels may have led to

recovery in the stock. In terms of volume, 1,121.88 lakh shares were traded on BSE and over 68 crore on NSE. The NSE Vodafone Idea, after market hours on Thursday, reported widening of net loss to ₹25,460 crore in the June quarter after it made additional provisioning to pay statutory dues and said its ability to continue as going concern hinges on the Supreme Court allowing more time to pay dues.

PREMIUM MERCHANTS LIMITED
Registered office: Omare Square, Plot No. 14, 5th Floor, Jasola District Centre, Jasola, New Delhi-110025
CIN: L51909DL1985PLC021077.Tel: +91 11 61119658
Email: premiummerchants123@gmail.com, website: www.pmtltd.in

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the 35th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Company will be held on Monday, 31st August, 2020 at the registered office of the Company at Omare Square, Plot No. 14, 5th Floor, Jasola District Centre, Jasola, New Delhi-110025 at 3.00 PM to transact the business mentioned in the Notice of Annual General Meeting. The notice of AGM along with Annual Report, Proxy Form and Attendance Slip have been sent in electronic form to those shareholders whose email address are registered with the Company's Registrar and Share Transfer Agent/Depository Participants, unless the Members have requested for hard copy of the same. Physically copy have been dispatched through permitted mode to all other members. The Company has completed all dispatches through e-mail and other permitted modes on Friday 7th August, 2020. Members may note that the Annual Report, AGM Notice inter alia indicating the process and manner of e-voting process, Proxy Form and Attendance Slip are available on the Company's website www.pmtltd.in (due to some technical reasons, the website of the Company is being repaired and the same will get functional shortly) and can also be obtained from registered office of the Company in compliance with provisions of Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with the Companies (Management and Administration) Amendments Rules, 2015 and Regulation 44 of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirement) Regulation, 2015. The Company is pleased to provide its member the facility to exercise their right to vote by electronic means and business may be transacted through remote e-voting facility provided by National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL). The remote e-voting period commences from Thursday 27th August, 2020 at 9:00 A.M. and ends on Sunday 30th August, 2020 at 5:00 P.M. The remote e-voting shall be disabled thereafter and no e-voting will be allowed thereafter. The Board has appointed Mr. Surinder Kashore Kapahi, Proprietor Kapahi and Associates, Company Secretaries as Scrutinizer for conducting the e-voting process in accordance with the law and in a fair and transparent manner. The voting rights of members shall be in proportion to their share in the paid up equity share capital of the Company as on the cut-off date of 24th August, 2020. Members holding shares either in physical or dematerialized form, on the said cut-off date, are eligible to avail the facility of remote e-voting. Any person, who acquires shares of the Company after the date of AGM Notice and holds such shares as of the cut-off date i.e. 24th August, 2020, may obtain the login ID and password by sending a request at evoting@nsdl.co.in. At the AGM, facility for voting through ballot paper shall be only for those Members as on the cut-off date i.e. 24th August, 2020, who have not cast their votes by remote e-voting, shall be entitled to exercise their rights to vote at the AGM through ballot paper. The members who have cast their votes through electronic means prior to the AGM may still attend the AGM but shall not be entitled to cast their votes again. The notice of AGM containing inter-alia, the procedure of e-voting is available on the Company's website www.pmtltd.in and on NSDL's website <https://www.evoting.nsdl.co.in> in case of any queries, Members may refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and e-voting user manual available at the Downloads section of <https://www.evoting.nsdl.co.in> or contact NSDL at the toll free no. 1800-222-990 or write a mail to info@masserv.com. Notice is also hereby given that that pursuant to section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 10 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 and Regulation 42 of SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirement) Regulation, 2015, the Register of Members and Share Transfer books of the Company will remain closed from Tuesday, August 11, 2020 to Friday, August 14, 2020 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of taking record of the shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

Thanking You
For Premium Merchants Limited
Balbir Singh
Director
DIN: 00027438

Date: 06.08.2020
Place: New Delhi

UJVN LIMITED
(An Unlisted Govt. Enterprise)
"Uttam Janakalyan Nigam Limited"
UJVN Limited, Plot No. 14, 5th Floor, Jasola District Centre, Jasola, New Delhi-110025
Tel: 011-26368638 Fax: 011-26368641 website: www.ujvn.com

Tender No. 488 Date: 07.08.2020

TENDER NOTICE

Office of the Executive Engineer (Maint.), Chibro Power Station, Dakpatthar (Dehradun), invites sealed tenders for following works:
Tender No. CH(Maint.): 11/2020-21 Cleaning of pits, clean water tank, and miscellaneous work.

Tender No. CH(Maint.): 12/2020-21 Annual up-keeping and maint. of Chibro field hostel

Estimated cost: (1) ₹2,45,590/- GST extra (2) ₹7,96,048/- GST extra
Date of availability of bid on website: 08.08.2020, 11:00 hrs.
Last date for submission of tender: 31.08.2020 up to 13:00 hrs.
For further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website www.ujvn.com.
(Executive Engineer, Maint., Chibro)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified deadbody of male Age : 40-45 years, Height: 5'2", Build: Thin, Complexion : Sallow, Face : Oval, was found on 03.08.2020 at Ahinsa Dairy, Infront of back diwar, Fatehpur, Delhi-06. In this regard a DD No. 23-A dated 03.08.2020 u/s 174 Cr.P.C. has been lodged at P.S. Lahori Gate, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for identification for 72 hours in the mortuary of Subzi Mandi, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this found person may kindly inform to the following:-

SHO : P.S. Lahori Gate, Delhi
Tel. No. 011-23953776

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a lady namely Kamlesh, W/o: Shree Chotu Ram, R/o: H. No. A-9 in front of Dispensary missing since 01.08.2020 from H. No. A-9 in front of Dispensary. In this regard DD No. 52A, dated 01.08.2020 has been registered at P.S. Mahendra Park, Delhi. The description of missing lady is as under:

Name: Kamlesh, Age: 55 Years, Height: 5'3", Face: Round, Complexion: Wheatish, Build: Medium, Wearing: Blue suit, red salwar and slipper in feet.

If anyone have any information about this missing lady please inform P.S. Mahendra Park, Delhi.

Web: <http://cbi.nic.in>, Email: clc@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639

Police Station, Mahendra Park, Delhi
Ph: 011-27632501, 27632501, 8750879227

SHORT CIRCUITS



BHUMI PEDNEKAR

What Mumbai saw in the last two days was devastating amount of rain. There were some places that were badly affected. The videos and articles are so scary and heart-breaking. This year has been a wake-up call. Development is important but there has to be a balance. Small changes make a huge difference.



MAHESH BABU

A kind request to my dear fans. I feel blessed and thankful to have all of you. I truly appreciate all the good deeds you do to make my special day worth remembering. Since we are battling a global pandemic this year, safety is indispensable. I request all my fans to avoid any social gatherings on my birthday. Please stay safe.



SHALMALI KHOLGADE

I keep away from controversy because I am rather focussed on making music, writing songs, finding various avenues to channelise my creativity. What else should I do? Pointing fingers on people will not do any good to music. I am not just here for making music in Bollywood. I look beyond that.



RAJA KUMARI

We shot *Peace's* video in the middle of quarantine. Although I'm used to having a big crew on set to handle everything from location scouting to glam and make-up, all I had in LA was me and Shawn Thomas (long-time director and collaborator) and the help of my manager and assistant. It definitely was a challenge.

VAAANI KAPOOR

Ayushmann is one of the most talented actors of our generation and I am only thrilled about our first film together to be this beautiful love story. I have always wanted to work with Abhishek Kapoor, being so inspired by his films. This feels like an amazing opportunity to be part of his vision.



CONVERSATION 45 MINUTES



BEYOND THE DARK WHIMS

Pakistani filmmaker ASIM ABBASI talks to SAKSHI SHARMA about how his leading women have given a positive spin to the term 'churail' in his eponymous web series and the need to share stories about the under-represented

The term 'Churail' has been used to refer to witches or to a woman who practises dark magic. You might have heard women being called as *churail*, *dayan*, *bhootni*, spellcaster and other such names for their "wrong" actions. But how often have you heard them being used to question the patriarchal status quo and represent strong-willed women? Pakistani filmmaker Asim Abbasi, who is now foraying into the web series space with his series *Churails*, believes that the term rightly represents his lead protagonists as it has nothing to do with dark magic. Says he, "The term has historically been used to label women negatively for their courage, aggression, ambition — all the qualities that I associate with a strong woman, were deemed negative. She is the uncanny outsider who comes to shake up the patriarchy. And it is the fear that she elicits in the guardians of the status quo

(often men), that drives men to label them in a derogatory way. So our characters are taking this term, ripe with symbolic value, to give it a positive spin. Every woman, according to me, should aspire to be a *churail*." Set in Karachi, it is a story of four women from different walks of life who come together to open a covert detective agency to expose cheating husbands amongst the city's elite. These self-proclaimed women run their operations under the guise of a fashion store named 'Halal Designs' that specialise in conservative women's attire. As their operations expand, they come to be the saviours of abused, mistreated and harassed women, and their search for a missing girl brings them face to face with the exploitative world of talent agencies, escort services, and cosmetic companies. It features Pakistani actors Sarwat Gilani, Nimra



Bucha, Yasra Rizvi and Mehar Bano. Excerpts:

□ The series stars four women reeling from personal miseries who further

open a detective agency under the pretext of a burqa shop. How did you conceptualise it? The themes of gender politics, particularly power dynamics, between a man and



a woman, and the resultant misogyny are topics that I wanted to address in my writing for a while. But I did not want the starting point of the series to be heavy-handed. I wanted the darkness to slowly creep in. So my natural, perhaps humorous inclination, was to first make my characters colourful spies, who gradually turn vigilantes. I was interested in talking about the lack of autonomy that a woman has over her body. Often in patriarchal societies, women are dressed and undressed at the whims of the society, and are being told what is appropriate and what is not. Hence, the store specialises in modest-wear for women to showcase this irony.

□ The poster of the project has a caption: 'Hojayen tayaan, khwateen aur hazrat. Especially hazrat, Jald urahi hain kuch rangeen churailain, apki deep-rooted misogyny ki band bujaanay.' Another scene showed a sign at a store: 'Pets and men not allowed.' How do such strong statements establish the idea of the series? The store titled 'Halal Designs' is a safe space that women have created for other women. The clients need to feel protected, hence, the idea of it not being open to men. The sign for the store is a replay of boards saying 'women and dogs not allowed' that actually existed in prestigious members clubs in the subcontinent before the Partition, under the British Raj.

□ Your narratives have usually centred around strong female characters. Are there any personal instances that have shaped your choices? I have grown up in a household of a lot of women and have been surrounded by them all my life. So I tend to gravitate towards their experiences. As a filmmaker, it is my duty to tell stories about those who are under-represented or the ones I believe are not represented fairly in the mainstream media. Female-centric stories Pakistani television has mostly regurgitated the same trope about a damsel in distress who needs rescuing by a prince. Those stories are not a representative of the women I know. And those are not the stories I believe our daughters should grow up with.

□ In one of your interviews you mentioned, "It's not message per se, I prefer to raise questions." What do you aim to achieve through your work? Well, apart from entertaining audience by providing a thrilling, edge-of-your-seat experience, I hope that the show stays with them long after the 10 hours of viewing experience is over. They should be able to reflect on the questions the series raises. I wish them, particularly men, to become

more open to working towards a more equitable society, where women are respected and treated fairly.

□ There has been a surge of grey roles in online content now. Filmmakers and actors don't like putting characters in a box. Do you think the same can be said about your four leads? Absolutely. I deliberately set out to tell a tale of four very flawed individuals. They are not always going to do the right thing. They are going to make mistakes and may not even apologise for them but these traits are all very human to have. All good content, which seeks to create empathetic characters that the audience can root for, should be moving away from the binaries of black and white.

□ You had earlier said, "It's very difficult to put *Churails* into a genre. It's discussing serious issues, but the show itself doesn't take itself too seriously." What did you mean? In terms of genres, I would say the series has elements of drama and thriller but I tend to find the whimsy in the darkest of moments, and I feel my work reflects that. The themes that the series addresses are posed as questions rather than preachy messages. My characters find something to smile about even when everything around them is falling apart.

□ On the artistic front, are we ready to nurture cross-boundary collaborations, irrespective of the political environment? Yes, because art has nothing to do with institutional politics. Its sole purpose is to provide a cathartic experience for the public by emphasising our shared humanity and it aims to do that by bridging the differences.

□ Do you think the audience for the series might get affected from the Pak-India rivalry? I don't think so. People on both sides of the border are well aware that they have similar life realities and are eager to have a dialogue and cultural exchange.

□ Can we call this an opportunity for the country to attract other global platforms and entertain the idea of producing Pakistani content? Absolutely. We have not had web content come out of Pakistan that could compete in the global market before. This is a small but important step in getting our stories out to the world. I am hopeful that it will attract more investment into Pakistani talent and filmmakers. (The series will stream from August 11 on Zee5.)

STUDIO CHAT 15 MINUTES

Celebs go vocal for local

On the occasion of day, Bollywood actresses including Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Kangana Ranaut, Vidya Balan, Dia Mirza, Taapsee Pannu and Janhvi Kapoor urge people to support Indian weavers and Indian organic fabric industries. The handloom sector is one of the major symbols of the cultural heritage of India. "Most of us have more than we can consume. Fashion industry has become one of the most damaging industries for our environment. New challenges call for new resolves. Let's promote our own Indian organic fabric industries and preserve the planet. When we choose hand-

loom, we choose to elevate our poor weavers out of poverty, we choose vocal for local, we choose our mother earth, we choose love for every single being on this planet," said Kangana via a tweet. Vidya posted a few pictures in mustard silk saree on Instagram and wrote, "Let us all resolve to support our weavers across the country in these difficult times by buying and wearing their beautiful creations in our everyday life and also help keep #IndiasHandloomLegacy alive. Appreciate the labour of love." Priyanka posted a picture in a green saree and wrote on Instagram stories, "Indian handlooms are known to be

unique and a work of art. Let's support our support to the weavers and artisans of the textile industry." Janhvi shared an image of her most favourite handloom saree. "The weavers and artisans in our country are truly unmatched in skill and creativity. The best in the world," she wrote. Dia Mirza said she is proud of Indian heritage. "Our weavers need all our support and love. This National Handloom Day, let's celebrate the rich legacy of our Indian weaves and textiles. There is nothing like a handloom saree," she wrote along with an image. —With inputs from agencies



Open to new ideas: Anushka

Actor Anushka Sharma became the youngest female producer in Bollywood at the age of 25 with the clutter-breaking revenge thriller *NH10* and she has since then only shown her passion to tell remarkably new stories. From experimenting with genres to backing fellow outsiders to shine bright in Bollywood, Anushka, through Clean Slate Filmz, has been an entrepreneur who at her core is a diverse storyteller. Anushka feels her Army background has shaped her content choices majorly. "Being Army kids, we are always open to new ideas and all that travelling really helped us understand local stories. Such experiences has not only helped us in storytelling, but it also makes you look at things in different ways rather than a set societal perspective," says Anushka, who runs the business with her brother Karanesh. She adds, "Watching films doesn't always help you understand movies better. Our life experiences have helped us in this business. We have approached everything with a fresh mind. If we have taken the less travelled path, it is because we have followed our instincts." Anushka is riding on back to back suc-



cesses as a producer with both *Paatal Lok* and *Bulbul* doing incredibly well. She reveals that there is no formula for success when it comes to content production. "The business of production is very tricky and even the most experienced can't say that they have figured it out. You just learn from your mistakes. Even when things don't work the way you wanted, they give us learnings," says she.

ARTWALK 60 MINUTES

Artist Devidas Agase has got quite a following on his Instagram account. And why not? His works seem to be extremely intriguing. They take us back to the imagery from the medieval age in India, which had an integral role in both mythical as well as cultural domain. His series of eight works, *Pawn of an Unknown World*, and a series on migrant labour, *Way To Home*, are both evocative renderings of everyday symbolism.

"I come from the Beed district situated in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Beed is a historic place of medieval origin," explains Devidas who has just received the prestigious *Khoj Grant*. "Coming from a family of sugarcane farmers and farm hands, I have been a close witness to farmers' struggles and that of the working class on the farm and off it. I have realised that the needs of food, shelter, clothes, however basic, are an uphill journey for a farmer and the working class. They play different roles by taking up menial jobs to merely survive in society," adds he.

When you look at his polymorphic beings, the imagery represents a deeper tenet of *Bhakti* — one of devotion and the other, of inspiration. Devidas is deeply influenced by mythic legends, especially the three-faced deities in stories — Trimurti, Datta Digambar, Vishnu Dashavartas, and Krishna Vishwaroopa. He says, "My works explore these realities of the world and are strongly influenced by my own childhood memories and experiences. Coming from such a background, the significant role of history, mythology, gods and goddesses, turn up in my works."

His multi-dimensional work, *Pawn of an Unknown World*, created with dry pigments and water colour on paper, have been set on a nocturnal background to create a narrative born of surreal splendour.

He develops a style characterised by bright colours and symmetrical geometries rooted in the definitive domain of a post-Cubist aesthetic. We can glimpse his evolution in these eight small works that set out to uncover new dimensions with a larger quest to produce a radical visual language. For Devidas, anything he creates is born of his realisation of years of artistic experimentation and intuitive innovation. The polymorphic beings are a historical inheritance.

All the eight works have been brought forward in composition. They represent the decomposition of journeys and struggles into a series of chromatic narratives. Here, the being is portrayed as natural, which, how-



Lockdown realisations

Artist DEVIDAS AGASE's works showcase how the quest for basic needs is an uphill journey for a farmer and the working and the migrant classes. By UMA NAIR



ever, is far beyond like a human figure. These beings are graceful and full of an ethos of elegance and balance. The idea of creating still lives becomes a contemporary take on the character of a scion cultural fabric.

The pair of shoes in the last image has about it a hint of a memoir tumbling with nostalgia and metaphors of travel. "My childhood narratives from various sources trigger my thought processes about the multi-faceted existences with the contemporary context," says Devidas. "I try to recreate this idea of polymorphic reality as is seen in mythology as a reflection in today's human being. My works borrow the concept from the scientific term, Polymorphism, meaning a person at a time can have multiple layers of characteristics invisible to the society. These layered human beings are adapting to their surroundings and situations of surviving trials and tribulations of life. I consider the essence of the experience always helps to shape the core of any artwork."

In his second work that exempli-

fies migrant labour, we see a recreation of the travel and the tribulations faced by India's migrant community during the lockdown amid COVID-19 pandemic. In this work, the act of succession is clearly evident in his precious prudent finishes, which become a facet of many modes of transition in travel.

Devidas has explained his sensibility born of everyday idioms and struggles that he read about during the lockdown. "I have tried to explore the co-relation between society and human nature as well as the ideologies that govern the social norms like the morality, materialism and politics of the human mind. I believe that there are other silent individuals within an individual who battle for survival at a basic level, irrespective and because of, social, political, religious, and personal conditioning. As an artist, my attempt is to become a narrative voice of those who have been silenced. I believe it only enhances my work giving it a new perspective and a fresher voice."

CELEB TALK 30 MINUTES

Notes from 1930

Actor JULIA BROWN, while working on the series, *World On Fire*, could relate to the real life stories of loss and conflict from World War II, recalling her grandparents' experiences. By TEAM VIVA



Who is Lois?

Lois, the character that I am playing, is a 21-year-old working-class girl from Manchester, who lives with her father, Douglas and her brother, Tom. She works in a factory during the day but is passionate about singing and has another night job as a singer in a band. She works in two shifts in order to keep paying bills for the family. She's an everyday working class girl who wants to pursue her passion.

What's Lois like as a performer and a singer?

Lois is a jazz singer and sings with her best friend Connie in a band called the Victrolas. It is her one passion in life that she allows herself to indulge in because it's a form of escapism for her. She's always keen to put on the role of mother. She likes connecting with people through her songs.

How would you describe Lois' relationship with her family?

Lois' relationship with Tom is quite difficult at times because they lost their mother at a young age. Lois was 14, prior to that they were best friends and inseparable but with their mother's death, Lois had to take on the role of mother in the house because of which their relationship suffered. Her dad, Douglas, suffers from PTSD and he struggles

when the war begins, coping with memories coming back to him. She is trying to keep the ship afloat for the family, but also misses that sibling relationship she used to have with her brother when they were younger.

What made you select the script?

What's so lovely about Peter's (Bowker) writing is it's not overstated. It's about the themes of family and love, and watching how people's lives can change so dramatically due to various circumstances. There is something so beautiful in that because his writing is through humour, which illustrates the fragility of some of the relationships. I think that's a lot more relatable for today's audience because they can just observe these characters as normal people with normal relationships.

Peter described it as honouring ordinary people who did quite remarkable things at an extraordinary time in the history. Is that something that

resonates with you?

The characters don't seem to be complicated. They don't notice their own resilience because they're in the circumstances and they have to get on with things. Individually, they all do their bit in a different way and don't consider themselves to be heroes. For people of my generation, it would be quite easy to separate ourselves from that time, however, when you watch Peter's characters come to life, you can actually recognise yourself in them because they're just everyday people living their lives. They confront adversity with grit, humour and that sense of having to work through things to get to the other side. Just like we do today.

Tell us a bit about Lois and Harry's relationship and where they are when the story begins?

When the story starts, Lois and Harry are in this fiery, passionate and innocent relationship. Peter explained to Jonah and I that the pre-context to the story is that they have maybe



met at a political rally. They come from drastically different backgrounds. However, they share this passion for politics that draws them to each other and Lois encourages his rebellious streak.

How was it working with Jonah Hauer-King?

It was such an amazing experience. He is a really warm and kind person. When we sat down for our first rehearsals together, he came to the table with so many ideas and we were able to create a backstory together. Peter (Bowker) was quite open with us and allowed us to almost create our own love story. It was so important getting that rehearsal time beforehand to build the right chemistry.

What is Lois's relationship like with Harry's mother, Robina (played by Lesley Manville)?

Lois' relationship with Robina is not an easy one because they come from such different walks of life. Robina looks down on Lois and doesn't think she is an appropriate match for her son. Whereas, Lois always sticks up for herself and doesn't really care what Robina thinks because she knows her own worth. She knows that the bond she has with Harry is a special one. So she doesn't let Robina take her down.

Harry has obviously kept his two worlds apart until Jan turns up. What happens at that point?

For Lois, the first few months of the war are obviously nerve-wracking. All of the characters are desperately trying to figure out what their life

is going to look like. Lois gets separated from Harry so she's lost. When Harry brings Jan back to Manchester, Lois starts to wonder why he has a small child in tow. There are little clues before, Matt was trying to teach her how to free up my voice and use decorations. Then we started tackling the songs and it has opened up a whole repertoire of music for me, which was really fun.

Did you have to learn many songs for filming?

I was so excited as I used to sing when I was younger. The songs are beautiful and I recognise them from my grandparents and the modern takes of them over the years. I started with a month of rehearsals working with the brilliant musical director, Matt Smith. To begin with, we spent time focussing on finding Lois' style and because I'd never sung jazz before, Matt was trying to teach me how to free up my voice and use decorations. Then we started tackling the songs and it has opened up a whole repertoire of music for me, which was really fun.

What was your favourite song?

My favourite song is *Dream A Little Dream*. The funny thing about that was when I auditioned, they asked me to sing a snippet of a song that I liked and I sang that one because my granny used to sing it to me when I was younger. She sang during the Second World War as a young girl and it was crazy and lovely that when I finally got the part and the script, in which I got to perform it.

Were any of your family a part of the Second World

War in any way?

Both sets of my grandparents were present during the World War II. On my mother's side, my grandfather was in the Home Guard and he lived on a farm while my father's side, my grandfather was in Ireland. It has been incredible to get this job and have all these stories coming through from my grandparents from both sides. When I met Peter (Bowker) after I got the role, he showed me photographs of his family and the real life people that some of the characters are based on. It was such a wonderful feeling to think that some of these stories were coming to life. There will be so many people around the country who will be able to relate to the characters and remember stories from their families too.

Can you tell me a bit about Lois and Connie's friendship?

Peter told me that Lois and Connie are loosely based on his grandma and her best friend. It was really special to understand that this was a real friendship at the time, especially between a White woman and a Black woman. They're both so bubbly and a great support system to each other. Lois doesn't have many friends and Connie is the one person that can see right through her, she knows everything that's going through her head in the choices and it was so important that she had her two looks. It's simple and understated. At the time, fashion wasn't disposable and it wasn't cheap.

What sort of conversations did you have about creating the look for Lois and what's it like wearing these beautiful costumes?

Our costume designer, Nic said all along that he wanted me to be comfortable in what I was wearing and to feel like I am the character. Adam Smith, our director, was also involved in the choices and it was so important that she had her two looks. It's simple and understated. At the time, fashion wasn't disposable and it wasn't cheap.

Women probably couldn't afford to have very many outfits. They'd maybe had three dresses and a few cardigans in their wardrobes. When she goes to see Robina and is trying to impress her, Lois wears a spotty two-piece. It's as if she's trying to fit in with Robina's surroundings and background. Her performance dress is the most beautiful emerald green tight bodice and a chance for Lois to be sexy and embrace her elegance. She uses that as a tool on stage, especially when she's feeling more vulnerable. Nic made sure that we wore pieces from the 1930s, and they were all originals sourced from Paris. It was wonderful to wear real pieces from that time.

The show streams on SonyLIV from August 14.

PERFECTPAC LIMITED
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PARTICULARS	Quarter Ended		Year Ended	
	30.06.2020	31.03.2020	30.06.2019	31.03.2020
	Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited
Total Income from operations	620.77	1979.28	2216.08	7354.55
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax and Extraordinary Items)	(65.29)	4.12	143.92	361.08
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (after Extraordinary Items)	(65.29)	4.12	143.92	361.08
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (after Extraordinary Items)	(47.13)	3.26	103.63	260.86
Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)	(47.13)	0.89	103.63	258.49
Equity Share Capital	133.26	133.26	133.26	133.26
Earnings Per Share (Face Value of Rs. 10/- each) for continuing and discontinued operations -				
1. Basic (Rs.)	(3.54)	0.24	7.78	19.58
2. Diluted (Rs.)	(3.54)	0.24	7.78	19.58

NOTES:

- The above unaudited financial results, were subjected to limited review by the Statutory Auditors of the Company, review by the Audit Committee and approved and taken on record by the Board of Directors at its Meeting held on August 07, 2020.
- The above is an extract of the detailed form of Un-audited Financial Results for the quarter ended June 30, 2020, filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full form of the Un-audited Financial Results along with review report of the Statutory Auditors is available under the investor section of our website at www.perfectpac.com and on the website of the stock exchanges i.e. www.bseindia.com and www.nseindia.com

For Perfectpac Limited
Sanjay Rajgaria
(Managing Director)
DIN: 00154167

Place : New Delhi
Date : 07 August, 2020

PUBLIC NOTICE

CANCELLATION OF AGREEMENT
This Deed of cancellation of Agreement is executed at New Delhi on this 27th day of July 2020, by Mr. Gaurav Singh Bhat (S/o Late Shri Kumar Singh Bhat) H.No. 1110, Sector-7, R.K. Puram, New Delhi at Present H.No. 5-18/14, Shyam Vihar, Phase-II, Dindarpur, New Delhi-110043. (Hereinafter called the ascendants/first party)
Whereas I had executed an Agreement in respect of Ground Floor of Built up Property Bearing Plot No. S-18/14 & 50% Road Rights of Second Floor Land Measuring 84 Sq.Yds. out of Khaura No. 1042, Situated in The Revenue Estate of Village Dindarpur Delhi State Delhi Area Known as A-Block, Shyam Vihar, Phase II, Dindarpur, New Delhi-110043, with free hold rights of the land under the said property and which is bounded as under:
East: Other's Plot West: Road 18/15 North: Plot No. S-18/13 South: Plot No. S-18/15
In favour of Mr. Anurag Rawat W/o Sh. Narinder Singh Rawat (S/o Sh. Gaurav Singh Bhat) R/o S-18/14, Shyam Vihar, Phase II, Dindarpur, New Delhi-110043. duly attested by Notary Public, Delhi on 27.7.2015.
And whereas now I want to cancel and revoke the said Agreement executed by me in respect of the above said property in favour of the said beneficiary absolutely and forever.
B.R. Arora (Advocate)
Reg. No. 17652, Delhi

North Eastern Railway

Notification Notice, C/434/JTBS/PTFACHARIZN/2017
(This Notification is not for employment)
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, N.E. Railway Itanagar Bareilly on behalf of President of India invites application for the selection and appointment of 1389 Nos. Jan Sadharan Ticket Booking Sevaks (JTBS) location of 38 important serving stations over Itanagar Division to issue computerized unreserved tickets only through UTS (Unreserved Ticketing System). Interested persons fulfilling the stipulated conditions may apply in the prescribed form. The Reservation criteria will be applicable as per existing rule. Name of Work : Allotment of JTBS at Railway stations. Name of Stations (JTBS) for which Applications are invited:-
1. Faridkot 2. Kasimganj 3. Pilibhit 4. Budaula 5. Kannauj 6. Kichha 7. Rudain 8. Bazar 9. Sikandra Rao 10. Kathgodam 11. Khatima 12. Rudraipur City 13. Faizgah 14. Ujhani 15. Haldwani 16. Itanagar 17. Ramnagar 18. Baheri 19. Bhojipura 20. Soron 21. Chhabra 22. Daryaganj 23. Kalyanpur 23. Baranagar 24. Hathras City 25. Mathura Cant. 26. Kanpur 27. Kanpur 28. Patna 29. Lucknow 30. Ganj Dundwara 31. Bilhaur 32. Kamalganj 33. Bareilly City 34. Gursahaiganj 35. Rohanpur 36. Tanakpur 37. Saharua Town 38. Rawatpur. Period : 3 years; Tender Form Cost : 500/- (Rs. Five Hundred only) for each station; Earnest Money : 5000/- (Rs. Five Thousand only) for each station.
1. Sale of application form : From the office of Divisional Rail Manager (Commercial) N.E. Railway Itanagar Bareilly in any working day between 10.00 to 16.00 pm till 28.08.2020 on payment of Application form fee which will be deposited in cash in booking office at Itanagar station.
2. Applications submission date & time : 28.08.2020 to 31.08.2020 upto 14.00 Hrs. 3. Applications Opening date & time : 31.08.2020 to 15.30 Hrs. 4. This application form & document is available on N.E. Railway & Government website www.northeasternrailways.gov.in. The person who are interested to submit their applications from website he can download the documents and the cost of application form & Earnest money should be deposited necessarily with application form through Demand Draft issued by nationalized bank in favor of F.A. & C.A.O.N.E. Railway Itanagar paid in Bareilly. The railway administration reserves the right to cancel the application without assigning any reason.
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager CPRO Comm-18 N.E. Railway, Itanagar (About any Passenger, Assembly complaint) S.O. No. 40/744/2017



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney pose with the Women's World Cup trophy @cricketworldcup/Twitter

India to host 2021 T20 World Cup

Australia gets 2022; Women's 50-over WC now in 2022

PTI ■ DUBAI

India on Friday retained the right to host the 2021 T20 World Cup while Australia will conduct this year's postponed edition in 2022, the ICC announced on Friday after its board meeting, straightening out a schedule that went topsy-turvy due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year's edition had to be postponed because of the raging pandemic, which has severely impacted all sports calendars globally.

"The International Cricket Council (ICC) today (on Friday)

confirmed that the T20 World Cup 2020 will be held in Australia in 2022. India will host the T20 World Cup 2021 as planned," the ICC stated in a press release.

The global body also confirmed that next year's women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand has been postponed until February-March 2022 because of the impact the pandemic has had on cricket globally.

ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney said: "We now have absolute clarity on the future of ICC events enabling all of our Members to focus on the resched-

uling of lost international and domestic cricket.

"We will now proceed as planned with the Men's T20 World Cup 2021 in India and host the 2022 edition in Australia."

The format of the 2021 T20 World Cup will remain as it was for 2020 and all teams that qualified for that event will now participate in India in 2021.

A new qualification process will be started for the 2022 edition in Australia.

"BCCI were never keen to host the 2022 event which would have meant that they had to host back to back ICC events including the

50-over World Cup in 2023. That wasn't a viable option," an ICC Board member told PTI.

However, it was a big setback for the women's game with the much-awaited World Cup being pushed by a year.

Sawhney said the decision would "give players from every competing nation, the best opportunity to be ready for the world's biggest stage and there is still a global qualifier to complete to decide the final three teams."

An ICC Board member said that due to various countries facing different situations with regards to the Covid case load, it would

have been difficult to hold the qualifiers in time.

The postponement also raises doubts about the future of India legends such as Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami, who probably would have played their last ICC tournament in 2021.

The decisions were taken by the IBC (the commercial subsidiary of the ICC) following an extensive contingency planning exercise which took into account the health, cricket and commercial impact of Covid-19 around the world.

The format of the postponed World Cup will remain as it will stand for 2022.

The original global qualification event to determine the final three teams to contest the event was scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka in July this year, but was postponed due to Covid-19.

The qualification event will now be held in 2021.

"There has been no women's international cricket played since the conclusion of the women's T20 World Cup earlier this year and due to the varying impact of Covid-19 globally that is likely to remain the situation for a number of the teams," Sawhney spoke

Eng tour of India postponed until early 2021

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's white-ball series against England, scheduled at home in September-October, was on Friday postponed to early 2021 with both the boards citing the Covid-19 pandemic, which wrecked the international calendar and created space for the IPL during this window.

Both teams were scheduled to play three ODIs and as many T20s and the matches could now be held after the Test series between the two in India early next year.

The series was to be a preparatory one ahead of the T20 World Cup, which was originally scheduled from October 18 to November 5 in Australia, but has now been postponed.

"BCCI and ECB are in consultation with a view to confirming the 2021 schedules for an all-formats England men's tour to India to run from late January to late March and for India's Test tour to England during the summer of 2021," the BCCI said in a statement.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah added: "The BCCI and ECB are working closely to finalise the day-wise schedule as we move towards the resumption of cricket."

The first Test series to be hosted by India could be trimmed to four to accommodate the white-ball games next year.

about the impact of the pandemic.

"Moving the event by 12 months gives all competing teams the chance to play a sufficient level of cricket... So the integrity of the tournament is maintained."



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Conor Coady embraces Olympiakos' Omar Elabdellauoui after the Europa League match

Wolves send Olympiakos packing

AFP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolves battled into the quarter-finals of the Europa League on Thursday while Sevilla, Bayer Leverkusen and Basel enjoyed far more comfortable victories in the matches that brought the Europa League round of 16 to a belated close.

Raul Jimenez scored the only goal from the penalty spot in the ninth minute and Wolves survived a series of scares to edge Olympiakos 1-0 at Molineux for a 2-1 aggregate win in a tie that began in Athens on March 13.

At Molineux, Bobby Allain, the visitors' Franco-Scottish goalkeeper, failed to control a back pass in the seventh minute.

Daniel Podence, who scored for Olympiakos at Tottenham in September, but moved to Wolves in January, darted in and stole the ball.

Allain clumsily bundled his former clubmate over and Jimenez converted the penalty.

The Greek champions created a string of chances but were thwarted by good saves by Rui Patrício, a tight offside decision and their own inaccurate finishing.

Wolves, who began their Europa League campaign on July 25 last year against Crusaders in the second qualifying round, will next face Sevilla at Dusseldorf on August 11.

Sevilla were also in Dusseldorf on Thursday where they took the lead against Roma after 22 minutes. Captain and right back Jesus Navas switched play with a crossfield pass to left back Sergio Reguilón that caught Roma flat-footed.

Reguilón surged past two defenders and into the box before sliding a low shot past Spanish goalkeeper Pau Lopez's foot.

Sevilla added a second on the counter-attack in the 43rd minute.

Lucas Ocampos burst down the right and after Lopez failed to cut out the low cross, Youssef En Nesyri finished into an empty net from close range.

Sevilla, coached by former Spain boss Julen Lopetegui, dominated as they stretched their unbeaten run to 18 games in all competitions and kept on course to add to their record five Europa League titles.

In Basel, defender Fabien Frei scored the only goal in the 88th minute as the home team won 1-0 to complete an aggregate 4-0 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt.

In Leverkusen, Moussa Diaby scored the only goal after 51 minutes to complete a comfortable victory for Bayer, who won 3-1 in Glasgow in March.

In the quarter-finals, Bayer will make the short trip to Dusseldorf to face Inter Milan on August 10, Basel will play Shakhtar Donetsk in Gelsenkirchen the next night.

Pak opens 127-run lead

AP ■ MANCHESTER

England was bowled out for 219, a 107-run first innings deficit, after losing six wickets to Pakistan's leg-spinners on the third day of the first Test at Old Trafford on Friday.

At the Pakistan stretched its lead by another 20 runs, the first duck despite Shan Masood's duck.

Ollie Pope's 62 was as good as it got for the England batsmen, with the majority of those runs scored on day two, with Yasir Shah claiming 4-66 and Shadab Khan taking the last two wickets.

England resumed the day on 92-4 with Pope and Jos Buttler hoping to continue the rescue mission they had started the previous evening.

Pope had 46 to his name when he walked out but almost fell short of his half-century, deflecting Shaheen Afridi over the top of the stumps in an early scare. He got there soon after, off 81 balls, but the first hour was little more than a trial for the home side.

Just nine runs came off the bat in that time, outscored by the 10 extras Pakistan contributed, with the three-pronged pace attack of Shaheen, Mohammad Abbas and Naseem Shah working up a head of steam.

Buttler edged the third ball of Naseem's spell just short of second slip but after that it was a string of plays and misses. Somehow the duo reached the drinks break without any crucial nicks and when both hit their first boundaries of the day there was a small hope they had weathered the storm.

Tentatively, the fifth-wick-



England batsman Chris Woakes, right, is bowled out by Pakistan's Yasir Shah during the third day of 1st Test at Old Trafford on Friday

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Barca may need youth to get past Napoli

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona coach Quique Setien says that he is ready to count on youngsters Ansu Fati and Riqui Puig to eliminate Napoli and advance to the Champions League final eight in Portugal.

Barcelona will be without midfielders Sergio Busquets, Arturo Vidal and Arthur for Saturday's second leg of their round-of-16 tie. The match will be played five months after the Spanish side earned a 1-1 draw at Napoli before the pandemic brought most sports to a halt.

Both Riqui and Ansu are ready to play, Setien said on Friday. "They have performed and played pretty well and could perfectly well start

(against Napoli). And if they do start, I am sure they will be guaranteed to play well."

The 20-year-old Puig has a good chance to earn his debut in Europe's top-tier club competition and Setien values Puig's passing and ball-control skills, which remind some

Barca fans of Xavi Hernandez and Andrés Iniesta, and rewarded him with a bigger role during the final stretch of the La Liga. Fati, 17, made a huge splash in this season by becoming the youngest player to score in La Liga

and the Champions League, among other precocious scoring milestones. With Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez set to start in attack, Fati could get picked over fellow forward Antoine Griezman, who was cleared to play by team doctors on Friday after having recovered from a right thigh injury last month.

Clement Lenglet was also cleared by team doctors and will likely play with Gerard Pique in the center of the defence with Samuel Umtiti still injured.

With only 13 first-team players available, Setien has called up seven members of Barcelona's youth squad, including American Konrad de la Fuente.

Sinhu, Praneeth & Sikki resume training

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World champion PV Sindhu, along with B Sai Praneeth and N Srikanth, resumed training on Friday under strict safety protocols at the SAI Pulla Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad, ending a four-month-long coronavirus-forced hiatus.

This was after the Sports Authority of India (SAI) decided to resume the national badminton camp for the eight Olympic hopefuls following Telangana Government's approval on August 1.

"I am very happy to have our elite shuttlers back for on-field training after this long break. We are fully equipped to resume training in a safe environment," Chief national coach



PV Sindhu poses for photograph after resuming practice at Pulla Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad on Friday

Pulla Gopichand said.

The eight Olympic hopefuls also include London Bronze-winner Saina Nehwal, former world No 1 Srikanth Kidambi,

women's doubles player Ashwini Ponnappa and men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. Saina, who is based in Hyderabad, didn't train on Friday, while the others, who had gone to their respective homes in March, and are yet to return to the city.

On Friday, Sindhu was the first one to train with Gopi and foreign coach Park Tae-Sang separately.

"Sindhu trained today from 6:30am to 8:30am. Gopi and Park were also present. She will be training everyday at the same time this week. In the evening, she will have her fitness training at Suchita academy for agility and endurance," the Rio Olympics Silver-medallist's father, P V Ramana said.

"She has been training at home so physically she is in good shape but there are no tournaments till October, so she can afford to go easy, no point exerting too much. We

Chirag-Satwik to wait for 2 weeks before deciding on attending camp

NEW DELHI: Wary of the Covid-19 threat, Olympic hopefuls Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy will wait for another couple of weeks before deciding on joining the national badminton camp, which resumed in Hyderabad on Friday.

The men's doubles pair is currently apart with Shetty at his home in Mumbai and Rankireddy lodged at his base in Amalapuram in Andhra Pradesh.

"It is great to hear that the

training camp has resumed but we will have to wait for a couple of weeks before we take a call on joining the camp," the 23-year-old Shetty, who along with Rankireddy won the Thailand Open and French Open last year, told PTI.

Shetty said the coronavirus threat is real and he would not feel safe travelling at this point. Rankireddy is based close to Hyderabad, which is still over 450km from his home town.

PTI

have to be careful."

After Sindhu, Praneeth and Sikki also trained at the academy from 8:30 to 10:30 am.

Svitolina, Bertens withdraw from US Open

AGENCIES ■ NEW YORK

Women's world number five Elina Svitolina and Kiki Bertens, ranked seventh, on Friday joined a growing list of players withdrawing from this month's US Open due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I understand and respect all the efforts they are putting to make it happen in a safe environment, but I still don't feel comfortable to travel to US without putting my team and myself at high risk," Ukrainian Svitolina, who reached last year's semi-finals in New York, said on Twitter.

The United States has close to 5 million cases of Covid-19 and almost 160,000 people have died.

"The situation around Covid-19 is still worrying and



the health of everyone and the control over this virus is priority," said the 28-year-old Bertens on Instagram.

The US Open organisers are creating a bio-secure bubble in New York to hold the tournament from August 31 without spectators. But concerns remain about whether players would face mandatory quarantines

Murray, Clijsters get wild cards

WASHINGTON: Former champions Andy Murray and Kim Clijsters were on Thursday both handed wild cards for the US Open.

Former world No 1 Murray, currently ranked 129 after a lengthy period battling a hip injury, narrowly missed direct entry.

The 33-year-old won the first of his three Grand Slam titles at the 2012 US Open, becoming the first British male to win a major since Fred Perry in 1936.

While Clijsters will be upon returning home from the US Open.

"Our prime minister indicated yesterday that we should be quarantined for 14 days after coming back from the States,"

looking to repeat her magic from the 2009 US Open, when she famously won the women's singles title as a wild card after returning from an initial retirement, during which she became a mother.

The three-time US Open champion (2005, 2009-10), who came out of a more than seven-year retirement earlier in 2020, will be playing the US Open for the first time since she stepped away from the game following the 2012 tournament.

Bertens said.

"Of course we respect this as a team and this would disturb our preparation for my beloved clay court tournaments in Rome and Paris."

NSW offers to host 2021 Aus Open

SYDNEY: The Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) has offered to host the 2021 edition of the Australian Open alongside other sporting events that are usually held in neighbouring Victoria.

The Australian Open is first of the four Grand Slams during the season and usually starts in late January. Victoria's capital Melbourne has been the host venue since 1972. However, the state is currently under a second lockdown and has nearly 8,000 active Covid-19 cases, while NSW has about 800.

"Some of these events down in Victoria are national events hosted in Victoria," NSW deputy premier John Barilaro told 2GB radio. "It's important for the economy, important for the Australian psyche when it comes to sport."

Absolutely we should be able to work with Victorians to find ways to make sure these all happen, these events are far too important in this crisis to not have."

Manpreet, 4 other players test corona +ve

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian men's hockey team captain Manpreet Singh and four other players have tested positive for Covid-19 but the national camp will resume in Bengaluru as scheduled with those who are not infected. Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Friday.

Besides Manpreet, defender Surender Kumar, Jaskaran Singh, drag-flicker Varun Kumar and goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak have also tested positive for the dreaded virus.

The players tested positive after returning to the national hockey camp at the SAI South Centre in Bengaluru following a month-long break.



planned with the fit players.

"As of now the camp is on and will resume as planned. The fit players can start their individual training and the players who have tested positive for Covid can resume later after recovering but they will have to pass a fitness test," the source said.

According to the SAI source all the players who have tested positive were part of a 10-member group who have travelled together and there are chances of more positive results come out.

The SAI further said that the five players initially tested negative in the rapid test.

"...And the five have been found to be Covid positive. Though the test results have still not been handed over to SAI, but the state Government has informed the test results to the SAI authorities," the SAI said.