

**OPINION 6**

SEEDS OF CONFLICT

**WORLD 8**

FORCES KILL PAK-ORIGIN HEAD OF ISIS-KHORASAN

**SPORT 12**

IPL CAN'T BE SELECTION CRITERIA FOR MS: NEHRA

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 16 Issue 211  
\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY AUGUST 3, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹4

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KARTIK REVISTS  
DIL BECHARA  
10 VIVACITY

## Shah tests Covid +ve, hospitalised

Presence of comorbidity makes HM vulnerable; TN Guv, UP BJP chief too test positive

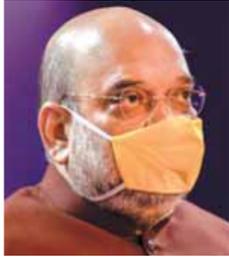
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has tested positive for coronavirus and has been admitted to hospital for the treatment. Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit and UP BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh too have tested positive for Covid-19.

Amit Shah took to Twitter to inform about his Covid positive status and requested all those who have come in contact with him in the last few days to get themselves tested for coronavirus.

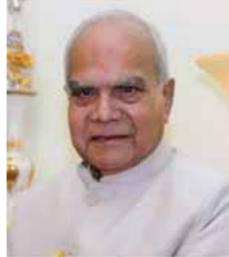
Shah said that his health is fine and he is being admitted to hospital on the advice of doctors. Amit Shah was admitted to Medanta Hospital in Gurugram in the afternoon.

"On getting initial symptoms of coronavirus, I got the test done and the report came back positive. My health is fine, but I am being admitted to



hospital on the advice of doctors. I request that all those who have come in contact with me in the last few days, please isolate yourself and get your enquiry done," Home Minister Amit Shah said in a tweet.

Shah was also on the list of 200 invitees of the Ayodhya Ram temple "bhoomi puja" that is to take place on August 5, however, sources had confirmed that Shah was not going to attend the event. Shah testing positive for Covid-19 is like-



ly to have an impact on the Ayodhya event as several Cabinet Ministers and BJP leaders who may have come in close contact with Shah in recent meetings were also on the invitee list for the event.

As per doctors, Amit Shah has comorbidities and thus comes under the vulnerable category. His oxygen levels will be monitored from now on.

The Home Minister attended a Cabinet meeting on Wednesday at the Prime min-



ister's residence where the new National Education Policy was passed.

Among the high-profile cases Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is also currently down with the virus and recuperating in hospital. Prior to this, BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia and Delhi Health Minister Satendra Jain were also inflicted by Covid-19 and recovered.

The 55-year-old Home Minister has been admitted in a

room on the 14th floor of the Medanta Hospital and is under Dr Sushil Kataria's observation. The entry to the hospital has reportedly been barred for now.

Amit Shah's contact-tracing is being done. Shah has come in contact with all his Cabinet colleagues in recent meetings, however, it is unclear whether all Cabinet ministers will be tested for coronavirus or not. BJP leader Babul Supriyo said that he had met Shah a day before and has been advised by doctors to isolate himself.

"I had met Amit Shah ji day before in the evening. I am advised by doctors to confine myself, away from my family members, for the next few days with a test to be done soon. Shall abide with all precautionary measures as per rules and protocol," said Babul Supriyo.

### Naveen wishes Shah speedy recovery

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Sunday wished speedy recovery of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has been hospitalised after being tested positive for Covid-19.

"Concerned to know about the hospitalisation of Union Home Minister Amit Shahji after being tested positive for Covid-19. Wishing him a speedy recovery and praying for a long life," Patnaik said in his Twitter post.

Earlier in the day, Shah (55) had said on his Twitter handle that he has tested positive for coronavirus and is getting admitted to a hospital following the advice of doctors.

## Advani, Joshi to attend bhoomi puja virtually

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

With the corona threat looming large over the groundbreaking ceremony of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the organisers have further pruned the list to 170 people and issued instruction that there should be no crowding at the dais as well as Ram Janmabhoomi Complex where the main function will be held on August 5.

Former Deputy PM Lal Krishna Advani and Murlu Manohar Joshi — considered the architect of the Ayodhya movement — will attend the function virtually from Delhi. "This is being suggested because of their age and spread of corona infection in the region. Some senior officials of the Trust have spoken to both of them," a source said.

A senior official in the Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust said earlier the Trust wanted to invite 280 people but after the intervention of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the list was

### Ayodhya temple invitee list pruned further to 170 to avoid crowding



reduced to 200 members. After one of the temple priests and several cops posted at the complex were found corona positive the number of invitees has further gone down to 170.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of the temple.

## UP's sole woman Cabinet Minister Rani dies of Covid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Minister Kamal Rani Varun, the only woman Cabinet Minister in the State, died of Covid-19 at a hospital here on Sunday. She was 62.

The Technical Education minister, who tested positive for Covid-19 on July 18 and is the first minister in the State to succumb to the disease, breathed her last at the Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPIMS).

She had comorbidities, including diabetes, hypertension and hyperthyroidism, a senior doctor at the hospital said.

Kamal Rani, who is sur-



vived by her daughter, was cremated at the Bhairo Ghat crematorium here in accordance with Covid-19 protocols.

"A guard of honour was given as soon as her body reached Bhairo Ghat crematorium," District Magistrate Dr Brahmedo Ram Tiwari said.

## Big B tests negative; Abhishek still +ve

Mumbai: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Sunday said that he has tested negative for Covid-19 and will now be quarantining at home.

The 77-year-old actor, who was admitted to Nanavati hospital along with son Abhishek after testing positive for Covid-19 on July 11, expressed his gratitude to well-wishers for their continued support and prayers.

"I have tested Covid -ve, have been discharged. I am back home in solitary quarantine. Grace of the Almighty, blessings of Maa, Babuji, prayers, duas of near and dear and friends fans EF and the excellent care and nursing at Nanavati made it possible for me to see this," Amitabh wrote on Twitter.

Minutes before the screen icon, Abhishek shared on the microblogging site that his father has tested negative for



the virus.

The 44-year-old actor, however, said he is still Covid-19 positive and will remain under medical care. "I, unfortunately due to some comorbidities remain Covid-19 positive and remain in hospital. Again, thank you all for your continued wishes and prayers for my family. Very humbled and indebted. I'll beat this and come back healthier! Promise," he wrote.

### Centre asks States, UTs to allow hospitalised patients to use cellphones to interact with kin

New Delhi: The Centre has written to all States and Union Territories stating that smartphones and tablet devices should be allowed for hospitalised Covid-19 patients so that they can interact with family and friends through video conferencing, which would provide them psychological support.

## 10 more die; Sate Covid toll rises to 197

- GANJAM ONLY REPORTS 103 DEATHS SO FAR
- STATE REGISTERS 1,434 NEW +VE CASES; TOTAL 34,913
- DAY'S HIGHEST 320 INFECTIONS IN GANJAM AGAIN

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Covid-19 death toll in the State jumped to 197 with 10 more deaths registered on Sunday. Out of the new fatalities, four were reported from Ganjam district, three from Khordha and one each from Jajpur, Kalahandi and Sundargarh.

The deceased included a 73-year-old man of Sundargarh district, a 58-year-old man and a 60-year-old woman of Khordha, a 78-year-old woman of Bhubaneswar (Khordha dis-

trict), a 57-year-old man, a 94-year-old woman, a 45-year-old woman and a 57-year-old man of Ganjam, an 80-year-old man of Jajpur and a 62-year-old man of Kalahandi.

Besides, one more patient of Gajapati district died due to other health complications. "Regret to report the demise of a 65-year-old male Covid-positive patient of Gajapati district, who expired due to end stage chronic kidney disease," the Health and Family Welfare Department said.

With this, the number of

deaths for other than Covid reached 39 in the State.

So far, Ganjam district has reported the maximum 103 casualties, followed by 28 in Khordha, 11 each in Cuttack and Gajapati, 10 in Sundargarh, seven in Rayagada and three each in Puri, Nayagarh and Baleswar, two each in Angul, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kandhamal, Kendrapada and Malkangiri.

On Sunday, 1,434 new positive cases were reported in the State, pushing the total tally to 34,913. Out of the new cases,

889 were from quarantine centres and 545 were local contacts.

The day's maximum 320 cases were reported from Ganjam district, followed by Khordha 218, Rayagada 197, Cuttack 123, Gajapati 91, Puri 65, Jajpur 5, Kandhamal 44, Bhadrak 25, Malkangiri 24, Kendrapada 22, Kalahandi 18, Dhenkanal 13, Baleswar and Korapur 12 each, Angul nine, Nayagarh eight, Nuapada seven, Jharsuguda six, Bargarh and Boudh five each, Deogarh, Keonjhar and Nabarangpur two each and Mayurbhanj one.

## India insists China must disengage completely

Military leaders of two nations review progress of withdrawal of troops

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agreeing to sustain the tempo of dialogue to defuse tension on the volatile Line of Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, India on Sunday insisted that China completed the process of disengagement from all the "friction points" including the Pangong Tso (lake) at the earliest.

While the pace of pullback is positive at three face-off sites, China is reluctant to ease the situation at the Pangong and has deployed additional troops.

The fifth round of talks between the Corps Commanders of the two armies — Lt General Harinder Singh and Major General Liu Lin — at Moldo on the LAC in

Ladakh region on Sunday also reviewed the progress of withdrawal of troops by both the sides, including the front and depth areas, sources said here.

The Indian security establishment was keenly watching the evolving ground situation since the last Corps Commander-level talks were held on July 14.

The two sides had agreed for complete disengagement at the earliest but China refused to step the pace. The local commanders of the Indian Army have monitored the situation every 72 hours and sources said there was little movement by the Chinese since July 14.

During the latest round of parleys, the Indian commander reit-

erated that complete disengagement is part of major confidence building measure to end the ten-week old impasse at the border.

This insistence by India came as China has substantially reduced and withdrawn its troops from Galwan valley, Gogra and Hot Springs but has not done so at the Pangong Tso. In fact, the first face-off took place at this place on May 5 when the Chinese intruded more than five km into India and obstructed an Indian army patrol. It led to exchange of blows.

Since then, the Chinese bolstered their troop strength there forcing India to take preventive steps to thwart any major challenge, sources said.

## 118 more Covid cases in BBSR; total 2,979

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR/CUTTACK

As many as 118 new Covid-19 positive cases were detected under the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) area on Sunday. With this, the city's total tally rose to 2,979.

Of the new cases, 69 were quarantine cases and 49 local contacts, the BMC said.

The quarantined cases included seven, all employees of a private hospital linked with an earlier positive case; five of Palaspalli near the airport linked with an earlier case; four of Jagamara linked with an earlier case; three, all male police staffs, linked with an earlier case; three of Pandra linked with an earlier positive case, two new cases of New Forest Park linked with earlier case; two, both women employ-

- 69 from quarantine, 49 local contacts
- 11 pvt hosp staffs, 4 cops among infected
- 125 patients recover
- Cuttack city reports 55 new cases

ees of a private hospital; two, both minor girls, of Tankapani Road Shiba Nagar linked with an earlier case; two of Bhoi Nagar linked with earlier case; two, both women of Maa Tarini Basti; and two cases of Dumduma Raghunath Nagar Basti.

The local contacts included three

of Unit-8 CBI Colony; two of Salia Sahi; two of Baramunda; two of IRC Village; two of Khandagiri; two, both employees of a private hospital; two of Bhoi Nagar; two of Satyanagar, both women staffs of private hospital; and a 57-year-old police staff of Nayapalli.

However, 125 patients recovered from the disease on Sunday, taking the city's total recoveries to 1691.

In Cuttack, 55 new positive cases were reported on the day, increasing the city's total cases to 1,004. Out of the new cases, 47 were from home quarantine, two from institutional quarantine and six were local contacts, the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) said.

Besides, 33 patients recovered on the day. Till now, while 511 persons have recovered, 10 have succumbed to the disease in the city.

## Chandrayaan-2 Pragyan intact on lunar surface

Software engineer spots the rover which travelled piggyback on Vikram

PNS ■ KOCHI

Eight months after he detected "Vikram", the lander payload of Chandrayaan-2, India's second unmanned mission to moon which went haywire minutes before it was to land on the lunar surface, a Chennai-based software engineer Shanmuga Subramanian has spotted "Pragyan", the Rover which travelled piggyback on Vikram.

Shanmuga Subramanian, addressed as Shan by friends, tweeted on Sunday that Chandrayaan-2's Pragyan "Rover" is intact on Moon's surface and has rolled out a few meters from the skeleton Vikram lander whose payloads got disintegrated due to rough landing.

This was followed by a

series of tweets by him (@Ramanan) in which he said that the rover has rolled out from lander and has actually travelled a few metres from the surface.

He said he had intimated the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) about his findings. In 2019 December, Shan had spotted the lander Vikram, the main payload in the Chandrayaan-2 space mission, with the help of satellite images provided by the NASA.

The Chandrayaan-2 mission was launched by ISRO from Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, 100 km north of Chennai on July 22, 2019 onboard a Geo Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III rocket and the project cost the exchequer ₹78

crore. The spacecraft entered the Moon's orbit on August 20, 2019. The ISRO engineers and scientists had scheduled to make a soft landing of Vikram on the lunar surface on September 6, 2019. But a software glitch resulted in Vikram making a crash landing on Moon and the Space scienc-



tists were under the impression that the mission had a premature death.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had travelled to the ISRO headquarters in Bangalore to be with the scientists and to watch the soft landing of Vikram and Pragyan on the lunar surface.

He was seen hugging and consoling K Sivan, ISRO chairman who broke down after the master control room lost track of the second lunar mission of India in the last moment. Shan's finding proves that the rover Pragyan remains intact despite the crash landing. It is for the ISRO to take the lead and find out the possibilities of getting any communication from the rover.

## SPG repatriates over 200 personnel to CAPF cadre

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Special Protection Group (SPG) has repatriated over 200 personnel, including 85 from CRPF, who were on deputation from the Central paramilitary forces.

The others include 45 BSF, 23 from the CISE, 17 from Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and 24 from Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

SPG needs only 500 staff as it provides security to PM only

The SPG needs only 500 staff, not the earlier 3,000, since it is deployed for the security of the PM only now.

"On completion of their extended tenure of deputation to SPG, services of 85 officer (s) of CRPF...are replaced at the disposal of their parent department with effect from the forenoon of 01st August, 2020. These officer (s) will accordingly stand relieved from SPG from the fore-noon of 01st August, 2020 and will report to the Deputy Inspector General (Pers/Estt/Org), Directorate

General, CRPF, Lodhi Road, New Delhi for duty and further orders, after availing leave sanctioned in conjunction with repatriation, if any and admissible joining time," reads the order issued by the SPG (Cabinet Secretariat).

Separate orders on similar lines were also issued on Saturday for the repatriation of 201 paramilitary personnel of the forces like BSF, ITBP, CISF and SSB. Others were also issued for repatriation of three more men from CRPF, one inspector from Railway Protection Force (RPF) and one constable each from the Rajasthan and Haryana Police besides another from Rajasthan Armed Constabulary (RAC).

### CAPSULE

#### HOCH DEATH TOLL IN PUNJAB MOUNTS TO 98

Chandigarh: The death toll in the Punjab hooch tragedy rose to 98 on Sunday with 12 more people reported dead in Tarn Taran district after drinking spurious liquor. "In Tarn Taran, the death toll is now 75," Deputy Commissioner Kulwant Singh said over the phone.

#### PILOT MUST APOLOGISE FOR RETURN: GEHLOT

New Delhi: After Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said he will embrace rebel Congressmen if they apologise to the "high command", the Congress on Sunday made it clear that Sachin Pilot must first spell out his position unequivocally and hold a conversation.

#### UP GOVT FOR CBI PROBE INTO LAB TECH MURDER

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Government has decided to recommend a CBI enquiry into the kidnapping and murder of 27-year-old technician S Yadav in Kanpur. Additional Chief Secretary Awanish Awasthi on said the recommendation for the probe the Central agency is being made on the demand of the family of the victim.

#### MHA SEEKS 3 ADDITIONAL MONTHS FOR CAA RULES

New Delhi: The Home Ministry has sought an additional three months' time for framing rules of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), officials said on Sunday. The plea was made before the Department Related Standing Committee for Subordinate Legislation as according to the Manual on Parliamentary Work, the rules for any legislation should be framed within six months of the presidential assent or an extension must be sought.

# City shopping malls reopen after 4 months

**But food courts, gaming zones, cinema halls restricted**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Various shopping malls in Bhubaneswar, which had been closed due to the Covid-19 lockdown for over four months, reopened with certain conditions on Sunday.

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) had given permission for it on Saturday.

But no food court or eatery would operate in the mall premises. Gaming zone and cinema halls would not be permitted.

All shops would ensure that buyers and staffs maintain 6-ft social distancing and use

facemask.

All staffs would wash hands frequently. In case of illness, staffs would inform the concerned mall authorities and then to the BMC.

They should be advised to install "Arogya Setu App" and "Sachet App" on their personal mobile phones.

At the entrance of the mall, thermal screening should be done on customers and staffs. There should be sanitizer dispenser for use at entrance point too.

The mall authorities should also make arrangement of AV media at different places inside the mall and display the Covid-19 prevention measures so that it catches the attention of most visitors/customers.

The number of persons in elevators may be restricted so as to maintain social distancing norms.

# No elections for co-ops: Administrators appointed

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the State Government could not go for elections to the management committees of the cooperative societies and has vested the management on administrators.

With the expiry of the term of Committee of Management of various apex cooperative organisations, the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Odisha has appointed several administrators to manage the affairs of the cooperative societies.

As per provision of section 32(1) of the OCS Act, 1962, where the election is not conducted before expiry of term of the committee, it shall be deemed to have been superseded immediately and the management shall stand vested on the Registrar.

Accordingly, the Registrar has appointed administrators in several apex cooperative societies as on July 30, said official sources.

While the Development Commissioner has been appointed as administrator in Odisha State Coop Milk Producers' Federation Limited (OMFED), the Secretary, Cooperation has been appointed as administrator in the Odisha State Cooperative Bank (OSCB).

The Secretary Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts has been appointed administrator in the Odisha State Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Societies (Boyanika) and in the Odisha Cooperative Tassar and Silk Federation Limited (SER-IPED).

The Additional Secretary Cooperation has been appointed as administrator in the Odisha State Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (MARKFED).

The Director Handicraft and Cottage Industries has been appointed as administrator of the Odisha State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation Limited.

The Director Industries has been appointed as administrator of the Odisha Cooperative Coir Corporation Limited and the Odisha Rajya Talaguda Samabaya Sangha Limited.

The Director Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services has been appointed as administrator in the Odisha State Poultry Products Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (OPOLFED).

The Director SC Welfare has been appointed as administrator of the Odisha SC ST Development Finance Cooperative Corporation Limited.

The DRCS Credit in RCS Office has been appointed as the administrator in the Odisha Federation of Urban Cooperative Bank and Credit Cooperative Societies Limited and the Odisha State Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (OSCARD).

# ₹5L ganja seized at BBSR rly station; 1 held

**Also ₹50L contraband from truck in G'pati**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR / PARALAKHEMUNDI

The Government Railway Police (GRP) on Sunday seized ganja worth more than Rs 5 lakh from the Bhubaneswar station and arrested a person in this connection.

According to reports, the accused was waiting for a train at the station in the morning possessing a carton containing the ganja.

Acting on a tipoff, the GRP detained the person and found the ganja from the carton during the search. The accused was trying to smuggle the contraband outside the State.

The criminals are increas-

ingly trying to smuggle contraband, especially ganja, from the State to outside using long distance trains. The back-to-back seizures by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and GRP are proof of that, said sources.

In another incident, the Mohana police in Gajapati district seized 38 sacks of ganja from an onion-laden trailer on the Luhagudi road which was being transported to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and arrested two people in this connection on Saturday.

The accused identified as Nikhil Kumar and Anurag Kumar of Rourkela. The market value of the seized contraband was estimated to be around Rs 50 lakh, said Mohana PS IIC Sujit Kumar.

Sources said the raid was carried out on the instructions of Gajapati SP Tapan Kumar Patnaik under the supervision of SDPO Ashok Kumar Mohanty.

# State GST collection rises by 13%

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Despite sluggishness in many sectors due to Covid lockdowns, the State has witnessed a positive growth rate in GST collection in July during the current financial year.

The collection of State GST (OGST) in July 2020 increased to Rs 794.02 crore as against Rs 702.44 crore collected during the corresponding month last year, registering a growth rate of 13.04 per cent.

The growth rates of OGST collection for April, May and June were -61.15 per cent, -25.22 per cent and -5.83 per cent, respectively, as compared to the corresponding months last year i.e. 2019.

This turnaround of positive growth rate in July'20 is primarily due to regular persuasion and facilitation by the field officers, continuous monitoring and hand holding supported by data analytics by the Commissionerate of CT & GST as well as better performance in the mining sector.

# CORONA HITS JAL MISSION

## Odisha slow in tap water connections, funds use

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While Odisha has been provided more funds for implementing Jal Jeevan Mission, slow progress and underutilisation of funds have raised concern.

Jal Jeevan Mission is a flagship programme of the Government of India for providing tap connections to the households in villages allowing them to enjoy pure drinking water.

The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation under the Ministry of Jal Shakti is implementing the programme through Jal Jeevan Mission.

Looking at the requirement of the State, the Central

Government has allocated Rs 812 crore in 2020-21 as Grant In Aid and the first installment of Rs 149 crore was released during this year.

Minster Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat reviewed the progress of various States since first quarter of 2020-21 was over, said official sources.

A Jal Jeevan Mission Review has revealed that on both physical and financial progress count, Odisha is lagging behind.

While the Central funds flow is more, spending less in the programme implementation is a cause of concern, said a senior official.

According to information available with the National

Mission, Odisha has provided nearly 81,500 household connections during first quarter of 2020-21. The Annual Action Plan for Odisha was to provide 17.10 lakh Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC)s to the households.

As in the first quarter, progress is slow, a strategy is needed for speeding up the household connections. While Odisha was also falling short of more than 7 lakh household connections in 2019-20, now with the shortfall in first quarter, more is needed to be covered.

This is because 40 per cent coverage of the uncovered households is to be taken up during 2020-21. So it is a huge target and with Covid-19 pan-

demia, the State administration faces a Herculean task in implementing the flagship programme, admit officials.

While physical progress is slow, financial spending is also low. Official sources revealed that out of nearly Rs 240 crore Central grants available with the State, Rs 115 crore has been spent.

The slowdown of spending is also a cause of concern for the Central Government and it has requested the State authorities to speed up spending. In the meantime, Jal Jeevan Mission authorities have reportedly requested the State Government to speed up the implementation of the flagship programme as Central grants are available with the State.

# Youth's naked body found under city flyover

**Cops suspect deceased to be fugitive looter**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Mystery shrouded the death of a suspected highway looter, whose naked body was found under a flyover at Fire Station Square here on Saturday.

As per the documents found from the spot, the youth was identified as Rakesh Panda, a resident of Aditya Lane at Satya Nagar of the city.

Police said the deceased along with another youth Asim Nanda Jena of Brahmanjarilo under the Cuttack Sadar police station looted cash and a mobile phone from a truck



by breaking its window glass near CRPF Square on the NH-16 on Saturday.

However, a driver of truck coming from Khandagiri informed police about the incident. On receiving information,

towards the Baramunda area.

Following the incident, the PCR team informed the Police Control Room and managed to nab Jena at VSS Nagar with his motorcycle.

Soon later, the police received information about a body lying at Fire Station area. Immediately, police rushed to the spot and found body of

a youth without clothes. The documents including Aadhar Card showed that the deceased was Rakesh and he was accused, who had fled from the crime scene on the highway, police said.

# CUO WEBINAR

## 'Let nations reset environment agendas'

PNS ■ KORAPUT

The Department of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources, Central University of Odisha, organised a national level webinar on "Biodiversity- Environment-Health" on July 30.

Inaugurating the webinar, VC Prof I Ramabrahmam cited the World Economic Forum Report-2020 highlighting concern for loss of biodiversity and man-made environment disasters and said that the nation States need to come out with policy responses and there need to have a reset of agenda

of environment concerns.

FM UNIVERSITY VC PROF MADHUMITA DAS in her lecture highlighted impact of climate change on biodiversity.

Director, National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi, Dr Amulya Kumar Panda in his lecture said biodiversity of Odisha is rich and cited some examples of mushrooms of forests which are source of anti-cancer drugs, Kia flower (Pandanus species) source of costliest perfume of the world.

Noted environmentalist from Hyderabad Prof K Puroshothom Reddy discussed

about environment movement in the world and intervention of United Nations in the Millennium Development Goals and the recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The national level webinar was attended by faculty members, research scholars, students and academicians from Odisha and other parts of the country.

Prof SK Palita, convener of the seminar, gave the welcome address, and coordinated the proceedings. Dr Kakoli Banerjee introduced the guests, while Dr Debabrata Panda gave vote of thanks.

# S'garh MLA Tete seeks Lokayukta probe

SUNDARGARH: Sadar BJP MLA Kusum Tete has urged the Odisha Lokayukta to order a high-level probe into misappropriation of funds by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Sundargarh.

MLA Tete in her letter to Justice Lokayukta Chairman Ajit Singh said that it is a matter of grave concern that despite the implementation of 5T and zero tolerance on corruption, there has been misappropriation of Government funds by the ITDA, Sundargarh.

Tete in her letter alleged misappropriation of funds in construction of boundary wall of Bhalugarh School, asbestos fixing in the hostel of Lankhuda Primary School,

boundary wall of Salangabad Primary School, departmental work in Kundukela Girls High School, Hostel of Bhasma Primary School where no work was done but expenditures were shown.

The letter said works were executed in the same building during three financial years i.e 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20. These were done at Ekalabya Model School at Laing, Malidhi Girls High School, Jampali Girls High School and hostel of Kansahal College.



# 'Save nature, wildlife to ward off corona'

**OES holds webinar**



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The warning that the scientists are now issuing is the possibility of increase in Covid-19 infections in coming decades as a consequence of degradation of forests and other natural ecosystems and depletion of wildlife that harbor many such viruses. In such a changing scenario, the need is to reinforce protection measures for the vegetation and the wildlife.

The experts participating in a webinar organised by the Orissa Environmental Society (OES) on the theme 'Covid-19: A Novel Zoonotic Disease' opined this.

Organised under the chairmanship of OES president Dr Sundara Narayan Patro, chief speaker of the occasion was

Dr Parida stated that vaccines are the second most important requirement after clean water for human health. Presently more than 300 vac-

ines are available globally for the treatment of 80 odd human pathogens, which wipe out the viruses by synthesizing antigens in human blood. Whereas

approximately one million viruses exist on earth at present, seven Corona virus species have been identified and Covid-19 has come to the forefront just eight months ago. "The corona infection that we witness in India has its origin from two sources- European and South-East Asian countries. In Odisha now we have identified five clades of Covid-19, 19 A, 19 B, 20 A, 20 B and 20 C."

If the virus changes its genetic features further soon after the vaccine gets invented, it is going to create new challenges for scientific research. The best option in such a glooming scenario is mankind has to apply its wisdom and undertake all conservation measures for protection of the nature and wildlife, he stated.

OES secretary Dr Jayakrushna Panigrahi presented the welcome address. Dr Patro emphasised on protection of the biodiversity. Vote of thanks was presented by OES vice-president Dr Lala AK Singh.

# Japanese mask-use, distancing culture can contain viruses



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

Today 'mask' is probably the most-used word across the globe after corona happened. Facemasks are most effective shields against flu viruses. Mask-wearing is now health-safety culture. Even as governments are struggling to keep citizens healthy and safe, there is a lot of heartening news coming from around the globe. Social distancing, though difficult to practise at all times, will remain live in human minds for always as flu virus-

es will keep attacking the human race one after the other.

British science, economics and environment journalist Mark Ridley says, "From vaccine triumphs to leadership learning curves, we can finally dare to hope for a breakthrough in containing the unruly speck of a fat substance called virus. The nightmare will end this year or at least by the spring in 2021."

Ridley sounds logical. The quickly-produced vaccine trials have been promising. They seem to be safe and capable of raising both a T-cell response and an antibody response. Behind the pioneer Oxford vaccine, comes a stream of other vaccines, some of which will surely work. The second big reason for hope is that herd immunity may be achieved more easily than experts first thought. Infections have begun to dwindle in developed countries despite social distancing protocol is being ignored by many people. 'Herd immunity' has already been achieved in London as a recent study indicates. Half the population may have already turned immune

because of exposure to coronavirus colds while children seem to resist catching Covid-19. Senior medical officer Chris Whitty has conceded that the epidemic is already in retreat. That has happened because the virus has had a few super spreaders before imposition of measures like lockdowns, 'no handshakes', 'frequent hand washing', 'no large gatherings' and strict 'social distancing'. The third reason for optimism is that as long as people continue with the preventive measures, the virus will struggle to keep spreading.

Unfortunately, at the beginning, the virus did spread with horrible ease in care homes and hospitals. Since T-cell senescence is a critical issue, old people's immune systems are just not as good at coping with this kind of infection. Further, there were dreadful policy mistakes like stopping testing people, clearing patients out of hospitals to care homes without tests and assuming no asymptomatic transmission. Besides, healthcare and care home staffs were not protected properly. Many of them were infected

and had become potent carriers. The fourth cause for cheer is, therefore, that now experts know about asymptomatic transmission, people have more protective equipment and also a better, if still imperfect, capacity to test, track and isolate cases, it is likely that the hospital-acquired epidemic of the last spring will not be repeated. The fifth excuse is that doctors and scientists now know better how to treat serious patients. Ventilation is not necessarily the answer; blood clotting is a real threat making patients lie face down; dexamethasone can save lives and some antiviral drugs are showing promise.

These are reasons that even if a lot of people catch the virus this winter, fewer will die. Colds and flu viruses usually peak in mid-winter when we are indoors. Viruses survive longer in colder and drier conditions; and centrally heated air dries out our protective mucous membranes. Only 21,000 Australians were diagnosed with flu; 132,000 people were diagnosed in the same period last year. Social distancing had

worked wonders. And this winter in Australia, fewer people will die of flu of any kind. Behaviour change has virtually thrown off flu viruses there.

Authorities and employers have to show zero tolerance to cold-spreaders. Mocking them for taking a day off and praising them for trudging into work while feeling miserable has to stop.

So, having learnt top grade lessons, ten years from now, people will not only have defeated Covid-19 but made common colds rarer too.

The bigger challenge this winter will be to tackle the backlog of treating cancer and other medical problems delayed by Covid. And to unleash economic growth to help those who lost their jobs.

Japan is the smartest nation on good-health behaviour which is part of the Japanese culture. Now, the Japanese have happily decided to coexist with the new corona virus! The Japanese know too well that 'bad' things can't be forsaken for all times. So, using risk assessment models in principle, humans can continue to live

well. The Japanese have learnt never to violate the three basic principles: Keep a distance between people; wear a mask unflinchingly; and wash hands frequently. The moment they return home, they wash face and clothes immediately. They religiously wash hands as soon as they touch someone's hand. Citizens are encouraged to go for online shopping and electronic settlement. They don't talk on public transportation systems. They are encouraged to go to work by bicycle or on foot. They are constantly requested to use electronic business cards. They are using videoconference for meetings. They work in spaces with open windows for ventilation thereby avoiding air-conditioned interiors. No Japanese is allowed to go to countries where the virus is endemic. Even visiting relatives is also avoided in Japan. They chat less at meals, eat more vegetables. While eating, they sit side by side, and never face to face.

The Japanese are genetically disciplined. The rest of the world can become immensely immune by following them.

**NETWORK WOES IN RAYAGADA**

**Students climb hills, take online classes**

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Even as online classes have been inevitable for students in view of the Covid 19 pandemic, the mobile network is still a distant dream in many parts of rural areas in the State much to the agony of learners.

In many parts, students are now facing difficulties in attending online classes, being imparted by their respective institutions, due to poor network.

Such a scenario was found at Kandhakhilum village under Rayagada block where school and college students are scaling a mountain for online classes.

According to reports, over 30 students, who are enrolled in various schools and colleges at Rayagada walk about 5 km everyday to Pitamahala area to attend online classes due to unavailability of mobile network at Kandhakhilum village.

The students also face fluctuation issue even after going



up the hills by crossing the muddy paths.

The villagers alleged the district administration and the BSNL authorities of not paying heed to their repeated demands for setting up a mobile phone

tower in the village.

The similar issue is also being faced by many students in 25 villages of eight gram panchayats under Rayagada block in the tribal dominated district.

Source said as many as 271 villages of the district have no mobile phone towers. This puts a question mark on 'Digital India' programme launched by the Centre.

**B'garh vendors seek lockdown relaxation**

PNS ■ BARGARH

The Merchant Association, Padampur of Bargarh district led by its president Pratap Mishra submitted a memorandum to the Bargarh Collector through the Sub-Collector on Friday demanding relaxation of shutdown and lockdown restrictions in the locality.

In the memorandum, they said that the Central and State Governments have declared shutdown and lockdown for last four months as a result of which many small and medium establishments have been paralysed. The general public has been facing many difficulties



as their livelihood has been adversely affected.

Now the Central Government has relaxed some restrictions. In view of this, the merchant body requested the Collector to permit them to open their shop and business establishment.

Among others, Nandakishor Agrawal, Rabinarayan Dora were present.

Padampur Sub-Collector Tanmaya Kumar Darwan received the memorandum and assured that he would put up the demands before the Collector.

**3 siblings swept away in Mahanadi**

**TWO RESCUED; ANOTHER DEAD**

ATHAGARH: One Suba Reddy from Andhra Pradesh, who for the last ten years is engaged in a muri factory in Banki town, on Sunday went to the Mahanadi near the Sunadei hill with three of his kids for bathing where due to being unaware of the water level the legs of his nine-year-old daughter slept in the stream.

When she shouted for help, Reddy's son (6) and daughter (12) tried to rescue her but failed to do so and were themselves swept away. When all the three cried, some fishermen rushed to the spot and fished out Reddy's son and one of the daughters. The elder daughter remained missing for two hours before her body was recovered by the fire brigade personnel after a search operation.

**'Reconvert S'pur DHH for common patients'**

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

MLAs of Sambalpur and Rengali Jayanarayan Mishra and Nauri Naik have demanded before the Chief Minister for his intervention to convert the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) to a general one like before where people will avail all medical facilities.

They also suggested converting JMM Hospital at Bareipali into town to convert it to a Covid hospital as the district administration has converted a part of it for the general patients.

"After my visit to JMM Hospital today, I came to know that only a portion of the hospital has been converted to general hospital when only limited but not all patients will get health care facilities. This is because of its space constraints. Hence, a reconsideration and

reconversion will be better for the benefit of the poor patients who depend on the DHH located in the heart of the town for all purposes," Mishra said.

It needs mention here that after public resentment and also looking at the inconvenience of the non-Covid patients, the Collector, Sambalpur, has converted the JMJ Hospital in Bareipali to a general hospital for all kinds of patients. But MLAs Mishra and Naik alleged that only Gynaecology and minor surgery patients will get facility from here and hence rest of the patients will suffer like before.

But a senior officer of the administration said that there are seven health centres inside the SMC area. Hence there is no problem at present. Moreover, OPD at Burla is also functioning as usual, he added.

**Centre suppressing labour laws: INTUC**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Central Government in a most dubious manner is taking the advantage of Covid-19 pandemic situation for implementing its hidden agenda for privatisation of important public sector including railway, coal and defence, suspension of existing labour laws, increasing daily working from 8 hours to 12 hours, said Dr G Sanjeeva Reddy while addressing the INTUC 302 Working Committee virtual meeting on Friday.

While giving details about the present situation, Dr Reddy emphasized on trade union unity and appealed to the working class to join August 9 CTUC joint agitational programme to support coal strike.

Vice president INTUC, Dr RC Khuntia while addressing said that 14.5 crore MGNREA

**Compensate workers who lost jobs for Covid, says Khuntia**

workers, 5 crore construction workers, 13.9 crore migrant labourers, 2.5 crore international migrant labourers, contract labourers, vendors, shop keepers and 12 crore workers who are working in small and medium scale industries have lost their wage or job for lockdown, shutdown demonetization and GST. But the Government has failed to give financial package to workers of Rs 7,500 per month.

The Government should give compensation to those migrant workers who have lost

their life in train and bus accidents while returning to their native places, he demanded.

Ragabeya, Ashok Singh, K Chandra Sekhar, Chandra Prakash Singh, Sanjaya Singh, former Minister Paban Singh Ghatuwar, KK.Nair, K Raju, Hirarn Vora, Sanjaya Gaba and Rakeshwar Pandey spoke.

The INTUC Working Committee unanimously resolved to support on August 9 agitation programme and the coal industrial strike on August 18.

**Road sale coal transport issue Jharsuguda truckers miffed over MCL policy**

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ JHARSUGUDA

The members of the Bandhbahal Maa Samselwari Truck Owners' Association have expressed displeasure anticipating disruption of coal transportation by trucks in MCL's Ib Valley, Lakhanpur and Orient Area.

Hundreds of truck owners gathered at Bandhbahal BOCM Chowk. For years 5,000 truck owners have been maintaining their livelihood through roadsale coal transportation with the cooperation of the district administration and MCL management.

But since last few weeks, irregularities are seen in road-sale coal transport. No facility

for coal loading is given inspite of thousands of trucks stranded on the road. Maximum 4 to 5 trips per month is given for coal transport. As a result, the truck owners are facing hardships to manage monthly vehicle premium, staff salary, fuel charge etc. Hence, the family members of the truck owners depending on their income are now passing days together.

The truck owners had already ventilated their grievances before the MCL management and local peoples representatives to get a permanent solution of the problem. For the last so many years, a total of 30 per cent auction coal was transported through trucks to the local industries while now the MCL management are trying

to transport coal through rail.

During last 4 months also, auction coal is being transported to the industries by railway thus leaving 50,000 families of truck owners and their workers almost jobless. Now, MCL is trying to change the existing guidelines for which thousands of families are being deprived of their daily livelihood, they alleged.

Jharsuguda Collector Saroj Kumar Samal said that a decision will be taken in the matter soon. Likewise Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari assured that he is in touch with both MCL management and district administration and the matter will be decided in a meeting soon.

**Ganjam Tata Covid hosp continues to face flak**

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAMPUR

Corona virus continues to bring unending miseries and one arguably cannot find better example than a family in Ganjam which lost three members due to medical negligence.

There is hardly any chance left for the State Government and the district administration including a band of senior bureaucrats monitoring the healthcare needs of Corona affected patients in Ganjam to escape, as the manifold lapses are being noticed every day at Tata's so super speciality Covid-19 hospital located at Sitalapalli on the outskirts of the silk city. A number of videos currently which have been circulated in various social networking platforms reveal the ground realities attracting public anger.

Rights activist cum BJP leader Srikanta Padhi has

recently moved the NHRC seeking legal action against Additional Chief Secretary Pradip Mahapatra, the District Magistrate-cum-Collector of Ganjam, CDMO and the Superintendent of Sitalapalli Covid-19 Hospital for their reported negligence in providing proper healthcare services to Corona patients that claim valuable lives of the entire family of Anuradha Panigrahi, an adhoc teacher of Digapahandi, the complaint pointed out.

Shockingly, Anuradha lost her husband E Jitendra Patra, father in law E Krishna Patra and mother in law E Janaki Patra. Padhi also made an appeal to the Governor of Odisha for an impartial probe into the case and also many more such cases noticed in Ganjam due to sheer medical negligence of the Covid hospital and to bring the culprits to book.

The complaint notably

**ACTIVIST MOVES NHRC AGAINST NEGLIGENCE IN TREATMENT**

alleged that, Anuradha's family members while under treatment in the Covid hospital neither got beds, nor were there any doctors, nurse or healthcare professional to attend them all the time. There was none to give attention to them nor were they given medicines and vitamins in time and there was lack of ventilators and oxygen.

Anuradha alleged that the day her husband died, oxygen was over and water was coming out of it. As a result, her husband faced immense chest pain and fell down from the bed and the hospital did not allow Ganjam patients to

Bhubaneswar. The patient was forced to die, Padhi in his complaint wrote.

Anuradha's father-in-law Krishna Chandra, an engineer by profession, mother-in-law Janaki and husband Jitendra-all had tested positive and were admitted to hospital at Sitalapalli. The misery of the incident is that, Janaki became the first victim and succumbed to the virus on July 15 while undergoing treatment. Five days later, Krishna Chandra also passed away while his son breathed his last the same evening. Padhi demanded adequate compensation for next kin of the deceased.

**Debt burden Farmer ends life in Bhadrak**



PNS ■ BHADRAK

A farmer committed suicide by hanging himself over loan burden at Rajualbindha village under the Bhadrak Rural police limits late on Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Mahendra Das.

Reports said Das had borrowed Rs 50,000 from four

moneylenders of the locality. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, his source of income got severely affected and he became unable to pay back the loan. He was under stress.

He was found hanging in his house at about 2.30 am.

Police have sent the body for postmortem and initiated an investigation.

**INBRIEF**

**ANTIGEN TEST STATS AT ATHAGARH SDH**

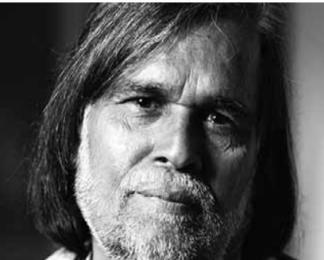


Athagarh: Antigen test for probable corona-affected people started at the Athagarh Sub-Divisional Hospital (SDH) from Saturday. The test facility would be available on Tuesdays and Fridays for the time being. If required, the facility would be extended for more days in a week. Symptomatic people should avail the facility without delay, told SDMO Dr Bijaya Mishra.

**BLOOD DONATION CAMP HELD AT KEONJHAR**

Champurua: A blood donation camp under the Jeevan Bindu programme was held at old town, Keonjhar on Friday, where 40 units of blood were collected. The camp was inaugurated by Keonjhar MP Chandrani Murmu in the presence of Patna MLA Jagannath Naik, BJD district president Madhab Sardar and Kahanu Charan Pahi. It was organised by the Gandhamardan Loading Agency and coordinated by its leaders Anjan Bej, Suresh Barik, Umakanta Bindhani and Panchanan Barik.

**Unmindful mining to pose far greater threat than Covid**



PRAFULLA SAMANTARA

Today the whole world is under a panic health crisis created by the Corona virus which has led to a pandemic situation since January and nobody, even scientists engaged deeply in research work to produce medicines for its treatment, knows the duration of the crisis. And it is a temporary crisis and may be it will again reappear through a new virus

as a result of destruction of deep forests along with its rich biodiversity which is natural shelter of zoonotic viruses.

But the way the nation-States in the world totally driven by the capitalist global market forces for profits are insensitive to the need of a cool earth, it seems, a far bigger disaster is ahead. Climate change will pose a threat not only to the human health but also to the whole nature, human existence as well as civilization.

The PM justifies the diversion of 41 coal blocks for commercial mining though private Indian and foreign conglomerate of companies for 'Atma Nirvar Bharat' or self reliance

of India. But it is totally opposite to its thinking, action and consequence. Because the sovereign State like India as democratic, socialist and secular will be resourceless after a short period of time witnessing the ashes of destructive developmental fires and ultimately (we the people of India) can not claim as a sovereign republic.

The lockdowns have brought phenomenal changes in climate. Highly polluted cities in the world have seen clean blue sky, return of migratory birds, clean water in rivers and free journey of beautiful deer along with many such flora and fauna on the high-ways because of stoppage of vehicles consuming fossil fuel and a halt in chimneys of industries. Reduction of green house gases and diminishing extractive industries is the only way to save the burning earth. The learning from Covid 19

lockdown is that less consumption is directly related to prevention of climate change which is an outcome of high consumption by rich people, high resources exploitation by rich nations and opting for high life style by middle class.

Last year 11,000 scientists in a joint appeal to the heads of nations had urged to reduce unnecessary wants and accordingly refrain from unmindful mining and unending industrialisation which is responsible for finishing non renewable resources and excess emission of carbon dioxide. The pandemic lockdown should be taken as an opportunity to begin with to change the present economic system and developmental paradigms to sustainable development for achieving minimum needs for dignity of life to everyone without concentrating of either natural resources or capital in

the hands of limited people or corporates. But the Central Government's new economic package already started to take place in name of economic revival is a dangerous antithesis to mitigation or prevention of climate change. It is also fuel to the fire to destroy the livelihood system of the marginalised sections like tribals, Dalits, farmers and labour class who need small-medium industries, food processing, renewable energy for which the protection and conservation of land, forest and water resources and its development are necessary with priority. This will open the gates for mass employment in every region of the country.

The present auction of 41 coal blocks will destroy lakhs of acres of forest and agricultural land in Odisha, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Angul and

Jharsuguda districts 33,000 acres of forest and agricultural land will be diverted and the mining activities will pollute and create water scarcity in river Brahmani which has been already vulnerable to industrial and mining activities. In Jharkhand there will be huge loss of livelihood system of tribal communities. In Maharashtra a tiger sanctuary will be affected along with land of tribals. In Madhya Pradesh 11 coal blocks are to be auctioned where as the State is surplus of power generation.

In 2010, the Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had notified 60,000 thousand hectares as 'no go zones' and 'inviolable area' in forest areas of the country. It is a matter of deep concern that there are 11 such restricted zones among 41 coal blocks for destruction. Why this madness? Because

these are areas in favour of blue eyed corporate giants of the ruling boss. All these auctions of mines have been fixed ignoring the laws of the land.

In this covid period, the MOEFCC has cleared Dibang Valley Etalin hydropower project of 3,097 megawatts dam in Arunachal Pradesh's Forest area of 1,178 hectares which is natural habitat of more than 300 species of birds and mammals.

India is a signatory to Paris Climate Agreement 2015 on which we have to reduce fossil fuel up to 30-35 per cent till 2030 and have to strive for green energy like solar and wind. The Secretary General of the UNO Antonio Guterres has said that the Governments shouldn't open new coal mines in lockdown and they should go for solar and wind energy production as to maintain quietness of present atmos-

phere. The UNO environmental chief Ingar Anderson also said to keep the deep forests untouched to prevent viruses transfer to human living regions. So far as electricity generation is concerned, India has capacity of 4 lakh MW to produce but our maximum national consumption in last year was below 3 lakh MW for which 33% plants have been closed for operation because of low demand. For coming 20 years the Indian Government has responsibility to go for increasing green energy without stepping into new thermal projects. Given the situation, a natural forest of nine lakh saal trees in Dangalpada of Keonjhar district which is set to be destroyed for mining must be left untouched.

(The writer is president, Lokshakti Abhijan, psamantara@rediffmail.com)

# Govt issues fresh guidelines for int'l arrivals

## Int'l passengers seeking exemption from mandatory seven-day institutional quarantine in India will have to submit a negative RT-PCR test upon arrival



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

International passengers seeking exemption from mandatory seven-day institutional quarantine in India will have to submit a negative RT-PCR test upon arrival which should have been conducted within 96 hours prior to undertaking the journey.

The passenger will also have to submit a declaration with respect to authenticity of the report and if found otherwise will be liable for "criminal prosecution" as per the Government's revised guidelines issued on Sunday.

Those travelers in situations of distress like death, serious illness, pregnancy or to parents with children under 10-years of age, have also been exempted from the mandatory institutional quarantine.

These people citing the compelling reasons will need to undergo 14 days of home quarantine instead. However, they will be eligible for availing this exemption only if they apply 72 hours before boarding the aircraft on the online portal—www.newdelhiairport.in, the Health Ministry clarified.

"Only for compelling reasons/ cases of human distress such as pregnancy, death in family, serious illness and parent(s) with children of the age of 10 years or below, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days," as per the guidelines.

"At the time of boarding the flight/ ship, only asymptomatic travelers will be allowed to board after thermal screening while suitable precautionary measures such as environmental sanitation and disinfection shall be ensured at the airports.

"On arrival, de-boarding should be done ensuring social distancing and thermal screening would be carried out in respect of all the passengers by the health officials present at the airport/ seaport/ landport, the guidelines point out.

Also, the passengers found to be symptomatic during screening shall be immediately isolated and taken to medical facility as per health protocol.

Post thermal screening, the passengers who have been

# Smartphone, tab allowed for hospitalised Covid patients

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Union Health Ministry has asked all the States and Union Territories to allow hospitalised Covid-19 patients to use smartphones and tablet devices to help them interact with their kin through video-conferencing, which would ease their mental stress.

Though mobile phones are allowed in hospital wards, the missive was issued following some representation from the kin of patients alleging otherwise. States like Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal too had initially banned the phones in the hospitals but later on withdrew their order following protests from the families.

Director General of Health Services (DGHS) in the Health Ministry Dr Rajiv Garg in the letter to the principal secretaries of health and medical education of states and Union territories said appropriate protocols for disinfecting devices and allotting time slots can be developed by the hospital concerned to facilitate contact between patients and their family.



He underlined that administrative and medical teams should be responsive to the psychological needs of patients admitted in COVID-19 wards and ICUs of various hospitals.

"Social connection can calm down patients and also reinforce the psychological support given by the treating team. Please instruct all concerned that they should allow smartphones and tablet devices in the inpatient area so that the patient can video conference with their family and friends," as per the letter.

"Though mobile phones are allowed in the wards to enable a patient stay in touch with his or her family, we received representations from State Counters on their cell phones/other mode before being allowed home quarantine for 14 days.

These passengers shall be kept under institutional quarantine for a minimum period of 7 days after which they shall be tested as per ICMR protocol, said the guidelines.

# Covid pandemic may take form of suicide pandemic as people facing financial strain

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The findings have been published online in PLOS One. Researchers in the United States and elsewhere have begun studying the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health, but the impact on suicidal behavior and deaths is difficult to assess due to lag time in the availability of mortality data.

Previous studies suggest that suicide rates often decrease in the immediate aftermath of national disasters, such as 9/11, but may increase several months later, as seen after the 1918 flu pandemic and the 2003 SARS outbreak in Hong Kong.

The researchers used an algorithm to analyse Google trends data from March 3, 2019, to April 18, 2020, and identify proportional changes over time in searches for 18 terms related to suicide and known suicide risk factors.

"We didn't have a clear hypothesis about whether there would be an increase in suicide-related queries during this period of time, but we anticipated a national sense of community during the pandemic that might mitigate suicidal behavior in the short term," says Emily Halford, data analyst and the study's first author.

The proportion of queries related to depression was slightly higher than the pre-pandemic period, and moderately higher for panic attack.

"It seems as though individuals are grappling with the immediate stresses of job loss and isolation and are reaching out to crisis services for help, but the impact on suicidal behavior hasn't yet manifested," says Gould. "Generally, depression can take longer to develop, whereas panic attacks may be a more immediate reaction to job loss and having to deal with emotionally charged events amidst the social isolation of the pandemic."

Searches for terms related to loneliness were also meaningfully higher during the early pandemic period versus the prior year.

Gould adds that social distancing is one of the primary measures implemented to slow the spread of the coronavirus, "but this approach may have detrimental secondary effects, such as loneliness and exacerbation of preexisting mental illnesses, which are known suicide risk factors."

The researchers said that in light of an anticipated increase in suicidal crises, it will be important to ensure continued availability and accessibility of crisis services and other mental health services during the later stages of the pandemic.

# Undeterred by corona, civil servants plan maiden 'virtual' sports contest beginning with carrom next week

**DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI**



Undeterred by the Corona scare, the civil servants of the country have planned the first ever 'virtual' sports competition beginning with carrom next week. The online carrom competition, to be held for both the men and women Government employees, is being organised by the Central Civil Services Cultural and Sports Board on the Facebook Online Platform.

The Government as per the Department of Personnel Training (DoPT) has already implemented work from home COVID rules and is conducting online meetings besides webinars where even Union Ministers have been participants.

In a letter to the Chief Secretaries of the States' and UTs, CCSCSB Secretary Kulbhushan Malhotra said the States/UTs and Regional Sports Board are requested to consider sending names of the participants for the Facebook Group CCSCSB Online Carrom Challenge 2020 scheduled from August 10 to August 15.

The circular also says the participants should have AICF-approved Carrom Board, Carrom Men (CM) Set, Lamp Shade, Strikers besides a Facebook profile and all necessary equipments such as mobile, camera and significantly, an internet connection to allow the live performance likely to be witnessed by thousands who will be able to watch the virtual competition.

"We are confident about the event's success. Other competitions will follow thereafter following similar SOP," said an office bearer of CCSCSB.

The organisers have asked the players to fix the camera in front of them in such a position that the entire carrom board is visible during the live performance.

"For better visibility all the players are required to place a white sheet on the frame for keeping CM as indicator of missed chances. The missed chance CM shall be placed on the white background only and in the order of missing raised starting from player's side upward side of the frame," said the circular.

# CAPSI seeks exemption from paying service tax

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Central Association of Private Security Industry (CAPSI) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying private security services should be exempted from paying service tax.

In a letter to the Prime Minister on July 29, CAPSI Chairman Kunwar Vikram Singh said in order to "create goodwill among its citizens post Covid, the private security services should be declared tax free as majority of such services are now being availed by lakhs of resident welfare associations (RWAs) and small and medium enterprises (SMEs)".

If the private security industry is exempted from service tax payment, consumers of the private security services will be hugely benefited as such services will become more affordable, he added. Singh is of the view that it is the basic and fundamental duty of the Government to ensure that every citizen of the country feels safe and secure by providing adequate internal security infrastructure.

The Government created police and paramilitary forces to respond to the security and safety situation for its citizens and does not send invoices to people for availing such services which are provided to ensure safe living for all, he pointed out, he wrote in the letter.

This need is felt by them as they don't feel secure due to various prevailing factors that create a fear psychosis among them that force them to buy private security for a cost, according to the letter.

The circumstances arose out of the factor that the government's internal security infrastructure is not adequate to grant the right to security to citizens, it said.

# Bhima Koregaon case: NIA searches Noida residence of DU Prof Hany Babu

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday conducted searches at the residential premises of Delhi University professor Hany Babu Musaliyarveetil Tharayil at Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh) in connection with the investigation of Bhima Koregaon Elgar Parishad Case.

The case relates to organisation of Elgar Parishad at Pune, Maharashtra on December 31, 2017 which promoted enmity between various caste groups and led to violence resulting in loss of life and property and statewide agitation in Maharashtra.

"The investigation revealed that the Elgar Parishad along with Maoist leaders used the incident to spread the ideology of Maoism/Naxalism and encourage unlawful activities on the instructions of the leaders of CPI (Maoist), a banned organisation," the NIA said in a statement.

Accused Hany Babu M. T., son of Kunhu Mohammad, was found to be a co-conspirator along with other accused persons propagating Naxal activities and Maoist ideology, and was arrested on July 28.

The NIA investigation further revealed that accused Hany Babu was in contact with Paikhomba Meitei, Secretary Information & Publicity, Military Affairs, Kangleipak Communist Party (MC), an organisation banned under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"An interview of Ganapathy, General Secretary of CPI (Maoist) was shared by Paikhomba Meitei with the accused Hany Babu. Communications of Hany Babu with other Maoists of Manipur have also been retrieved," the NIA further said.

# NEP high on catchwords, gloss: Cong

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Congress on Sunday said the National Education Policy (NEP) was "high on catchwords, gloss, appearance and verbosity", but lacked clarity on key issues like roadmap and strategy, and did not detail the scale of finances required to execute it.

Addressing a Press conference, former HRD Minister MM Pallam Raju said the policy not only comes at a time of the coronavirus pandemic, but also circumvents parliamentary oversight indicating that it could raise the issue in the next session.

Some of the key concerns raised by Congress include lack of transparency in consultations, record of the union government's public spending on education, pushing digital divide for the less privileged and impact on socially disadvantaged groups.

"The timing of the NEP 2020 in the middle of the Corona pandemic when all educational institutions are closed, in itself, questionable," said Raju joined by Congress chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala and Rajya Sabha MP Rajeev Gowda.

"On a policy that impacts and affects our present and future generations, even parliamentary oversight has been circumvented. Contrast this with the rigorous parliamentary and widespread consultation that preceded the Right to Education Act," Raju said ahead of the Monsoon session of the Parliament nearing.

"There is thus a huge mismatch between promise and delivery with no clarity on whether NEP 2020 proposes financing of 6% of GDP to come from public funds or private investment," the grand old party said in a statement.

"What about affirmative action. India over 70 years has put in a huge amount of effort to be inclusive and take care of the disadvantaged groups in terms of education and related job opportunities.

# Kerala gold smuggling case: NIA raids six places in Kerala

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The NIA on Sunday conducted searches at six places in Kerala in connection with the Kerala Gold Smuggling case and recovered one Tablet PC, eight mobile phones, six SIM cards, one digital video recorder and five DVDs besides bank passbooks, credit/debit cards and travel/identity documents. A PFI-linked accused has also been arrested in the case.

The agency has so far arrested 10 accused persons in the case including six during the last week whose premises were searched during the day.

On Saturday, the NIA arrested two accused persons, Muhammad Ali Ebrahim and Muhammad Ali, both residents of Muvattupuzha, Ernakulam district, Kerala, after investigation revealed that they were also a part of the conspiracy besides aiding and assisting arrested accused Jalal A. M. in collecting the smuggled gold from Ramees K. T. at Thiruvananthapuram and dis-

tributing the contraband amongst other conspirators, the NIA said in a statement.

"Muhammad Ali is a member of the Popular Front of India and was earlier charge-sheeted by Kerala Police in Professor's Palm Chopping Case but got acquitted after trial in 2015," the agency said.

On Friday, two accused, Mohammed Shafi P. resident of Ayikkarapadi, Malappuram district and Abdu P. T. of Kottakkal, Malappuram district of the State were arrested for playing similar roles in the crime.

On July 30, the agency arrested two accused—Jalal A. M., resident of Muvattupuzha, Ernakulam district, Kerala and Said Alavi E. Alias Bawa of Vegara, Malappuram district of the State for conspiring with already arrested accused Ramees K. T. and for smuggling gold through diplomatic baggage addressed to the UAE Consulate at Thiruvananthapuram, it said.

Further investigation in the case is continuing, the agency added.

# IMD plans to use artificial intelligence in forecasting

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is planning to use artificial intelligence in weather forecasting, especially for issuing nowcasts, which can help improve 3-6 hours prediction of extreme weather events. The IMD has invited research groups who can study how artificial intelligence (AI) be used for improving weather forecasting and the Ministry of Earth Sciences is evaluating their proposals. According to IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra, the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning is not as prevalent as it is in other fields and it is relatively new in the area of weather forecasting.

Mohapatra said the IMD is also planning to do collaborative studies on this with other institutions. The IMD uses different tools like radars, satellite imagery, to issue nowcasts, which give information on extreme weather events occurring in the next 3-6 hours. The IMD issues forecasts for extreme weather events like thunderstorms, dust storms. Unlike cyclones, predictions of thunderstorms, which also bring lightning, squall and heavy rains, are more difficult as the extreme weather events develop and dissipate in a very short period of time.

Last month, over 160 people died due to lightning alone in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The IMD wants to better the nowcast predictions through AI and machine learning. "Artificial intelligence helps in understanding past weather models and this can make decision-making faster," Mohapatra said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the US announced new strategies this year to expand the agency's application of four emerging science and technology focus areas — NOAA Unmanned Systems, artificial intelligence, Omics, and the cloud -- to guide transformative advancements in the quality and timeliness of NOAA science, products and services.

Omics is a suite of advanced methods used to analyse material such as DNA, RNA, or proteins. With regards to AI, it said the overarching goal of the NOAA Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy is to utilise AI to advance NOAA's requirements-driven mission priorities. The NOAA said through this, it seeks to reduce the cost of data processing, and provide higher quality and more timely scientific products and services for societal benefits.



Yellow and orange alert issued for several districts in Kerala for the next four days

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued yellow and orange alert for several districts in Kerala for the next four days (Monday onwards). The districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode,

Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod are among other districts where the IMD has issued yellow alert. On some days, an orange alert has been issued in these districts.

The IMD website also indicates the formation of a low-pressure area over north Bay of Bengal towards the later part of the first week of August and says it's likely to intensify over northwest Bay of Bengal off Odisha coast at the end of the first week.

The Orange warning indicates heavy to very heavy rainfall, while yellow warning indicates moderate rain is expected. The Red alert is the most serious kind of weather warning which indicates the weather is likely to cause damage.

through this, it seeks to reduce the cost of data processing, and provide higher quality and more timely scientific products and services for societal benefits.

Didi wishes Shah speedy recovery

Bengal Health Commission fixes corona treatment rates SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Notwithstanding her differences with the Union Home Minister Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday wished Amit Shah well soon after he was hospitalised testing positive for the corona virus.

#COVID-19. Wishing him a speedy recovery. My prayers are with him and his family! At least three Bengal BJP leaders who recently met the Home Minister withdrew into self-isolation soon after Shah's hospitalization, sources said. "I met Amit Shah ji a few days ago and so I have isolated myself in a room in my house," Union Minister Babul Supriyo said adding "I have my old parents both of whom are more than 80-years-old and a small child so I cannot take any risk." Supriyo said he had consulted a senior cardiac specialist who has asked him to

remain quarantined till his tests were conducted. "It is too early and signs may not show so I am will have to wait for a few days... I will be tested on Tuesday for the corona virus." The Minister however said he was not feeling any discomfort as of now. Other two Bengal BJP leaders who have gone into self isolation are Nisit Pramanik the Coochbehar MP and Soumitra Khan MP from Bishnupur, sources said. Meanwhile, in a major decision Bengal State Health Commission a quasi judicial body on Sunday issued a

mandatory advisory for the hospitals treating corona patients. Capping costs of corona treatment the directed the hospitals not to charge more than ₹2,250 for testing for the virus. The Commission also directed the hospitals not to charge more than ₹1,000 per day for the personal protective equipment, masks etc required for the treatment givers. Besides, the order also fixed ₹50 as 'corona protection' charges for outdoor patients and ₹10 per km for collecting samples from homes, sources said.

Kerala gold smuggling: Union Min demands CM's resignation

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A Union Minister has demanded the resignation of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan for his association with persons involved in gold smuggling and anti-national activities. "Pinarayi Vijayan has provided his office as a haven for gold smugglers and anti-national elements. His principal secretary (since removed) M Sivsankar was helping gold smugglers and was friendly with people of questionable characters. The Chief Minister gave

tacit support to Sivsankar to appoint a school drop-out to an important position," charged Union Minister of State for External Affairs V Muralledharan while addressing a meeting held at New Delhi on Sunday. Muralledharan observed a day's fast demanding Vijayan's resignation as part of BJP's State-wide agitation in Kerala. He also charged that Vijayan's family members too were engaged in questionable deeds and how can he keep away people like Sivsankar who were helping

them. The Kerala Government led by Pinarayi Vijayan has come under the scanner for its association with the three kingpins of gold smuggling racket, Swapna Suresh, Sarith P S and Sandeep Nair who have been arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). "K T Jaleel, a Minister in Vijayan's council of Ministers, has violated all Constitutional proprieties and laws of the land by accepting gifts and help from the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram.

UP to recommend CBI probe into lab technician kidnap, murder case

KANPUR: The Uttar Pradesh Government has decided to recommend a CBI inquiry into the kidnapping and murder of a lab technician in Kanpur, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Awanish Awasthi, said on Sunday. He said the recommendation is being made on the demand of the family of the 27-year-old technician S Yadav. According to the police, five people, including a woman and two friends of Yadav, have been arrested in connection with the case. Later, the lab technician's sister, Ruchi, "After getting to know from the police that a CBI probe has been recommended, we feel satisfied. We had demanded a probe by the central agency." The lab technician in Kanpur was kidnapped in June and killed within a week of being held captive. His family has claimed that ₹30 lakh ransom was paid for his release in the presence of police, but police say that it was not true. Eleven police personnel, including two senior officers, were suspended for laxity in investigation. Kanpur SSP Dinesh Kumar Prabhu had said a police probe confirmed that Yadav was murdered by his abductors. He said that several suspects were detained and grilled intensively, and two of them confessed to the crime. Agencies

98 succumb to virus, 5,875 new cases in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

98 persons died and 5,875 new patients were diagnosed with Covid-19 during the last 24 hours that ended on Sunday evening in Tamil Nadu. The day also saw the First Citizen of the State too getting infected with the pandemic. Governor Banwarilal Purohit was tested positive for covid-19 at a corporate hospital in Chennai. A bulletin issued by the hospital on Sunday said the Governor has been advised



home isolation and would be monitored by the medical team of the hospital. As on Sunday evening, there were 56, 998 Covid-19 patients in Tamil Nadu. Till date 2.57 lakh persons have been tested positive in the State while 1.96 lakh has been

discharged following recovery from the pandemic. The only positive news from the State was the fall in the number of new patients in Chennai. The Metropolis which was the epicentre of the pandemic during the last two months with the highest number of persons testing positive experienced a fall in new cases. On Sunday, 1,065 persons tested positive in Chennai while the situation in the three neighbouring districts of Chengalpet (446), Kancheepuram (393) and Thiruvallur (317) remaining critical.

TN parties oppose new education policy

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

If the views expressed by some of the political parties in Tamil Nadu and students and parents are any indication, the Dravidian parties may get isolated in their stance viz-a-viz Hindi and Sanskrit. The DMK and its offshoots the MDMK and the DK have come out in the open lambasting the new National Education Policy announced by the Centre. M K Stalin, president, DMK, declared that Hindi and Sanskrit were not welcome in Tamil Nadu and his party would not allow to disturb the two-language system adopted by the State.

Tamil Nadu is the only State in the country which does not have Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, the concept public school introduced by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as part of his Government's New National Education Policy in 1987. All remaining States in the country boast of each Navodaya Vidyalaya in each districts. These schools offer quality education at unbelievable rates of fee and charge nothing for boarding and lodging. Though the Madras High Court issued a directive to the Tamil Nadu Government to provide land and infrastructure in the State so that the Centre could launch Navodaya

Vidyalayas, the AIADMK Government challenged the order in Supreme Court and managed to get a stay on the verdict. "The politicians are forgetting the fact that there exists a vast country outside Tamil Nadu. The Dravidians are violating fundamental rights of the children in Tamil Nadu to learn additional languages," said Vijayashree Ramesh, a lawyer-turned-activist questioning the legality of the Dravidian parties to oppose the National Education Policy. She said even while the DMK opposed teaching Hindi and Sanskrit in State Government schools, the educational institutions owned by the DMK leaders and their

relations taught Hindi and Sanskrit charging exorbitant fees. Devika, a Plus Two student in Chennai, said that it was only if one had knowledge in Hindi one could move to North India for higher learning and employment. "There were instances of some post graduate students from Tamil Nadu studying in North India committing suicides because of their failure to comprehend Hindi," she pointed out. Interestingly, Puthiya Tamilakam founder Dr Krishnasamy and Tamil Manila Congress leader and former union minister G K Vasan welcomed the NEP terming it progressive and students friendly.

Aug 5 ideal for Ram temple bhoomi poojan: South Indian astrologers

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

It is rare to see astrologers in South India agreeing on an issue, especially when it comes to fix the Muhurtha (auspicious hour) for events like weddings, naming ceremony and even on the ideal time to consecrate temples. But two prominent Sanskrit/Vedic scholars of South India are unanimous in their astrological forecast that the Sree Ram Temple to be built up at Ayodhya would change the face of the city as well as the State. The foundation stone for the temple is being laid on August 5 between 12 pm and 12 40 pm in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and other Hindu Sants. The South Indian astrologers' forecast comes at a time when in the backdrop of doubts raised by some of the leading Hindu sants Parappanangadi Unnikrishna Panicker, Sanskrit and astrological scholar of repute who is a regular columnist in national newspapers is of the view that the date, day and time chosen for the function could be rated as excellent. "It is Wednesday, the 14th day in the months of Shraavan. According to Sashtra (science), at 12.15 pm it would be 16 Ghatas and 49 Vighatis (astrological time) after sunrise in Ayodhya. Each Muhoortha lasts for 16 Ghatas (24 minutes). At 12 15 pm it would be Virinca Muhoortha.

The Lord of Virinca Muhoortha is Brahma, the Lord of Creation. "Week, Star, Thithi, Yoga and Karana (all astrological factors) are good at this Muhoortha. This will alleviate all disorders and defects. The Muhurtha ascendant is Tula. This is also great. Mercury which represents Lord Sri Rama is also in a most favorable position at this Muhoortha," explained Panicker. Panicker, addressed as Guruji, by Marxists, Congressmen and rationalists Dravidians alike, is of the view that the temple would bring prosperity and richness to the city of Ayodhya. "This would also be of great and auspicious for the country and the

rulers," he said. Pandhappili Gopala Menon and his son Prof M G Gireeshan, a physicist-turned-astrologer too were of the view that the temple trust authorities could not have selected a most ideal muhoortham than this. "Lord Rama was born in the month of Shraavan, the Malayalam equivalent of Karkkataka, when Kerala experiences heavy downpour. It is the month when Ramayana is recited non-stop in all Hindu homes in the State, a tradition dating back to thousands of years," said Menon and Prof Gireeshan, who is also known as Kerala Edison because of the number of scientific inventions he has made.

444 infected in J&K on Sun

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Jammu: The total number of coronavirus positive cases in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Sunday rose to 21, 416, with 444 new positive cases. A total number of 256 patients recovered while 8 patients died due to Covid -19 taking the tally to 396. According to the media bulletin, 206 fresh cases of coronavirus were detected from Jammu division and 238 from Kashmir division. The highest number of 68 cases were reported from Udhampur and 65 from Jammu district while Srinagar and Pulwama districts recorded 62 cases each. Out of 68 cases, 50 jawans of BSF tested positive late Saturday evening in Udhampur. In Jammu, seven members of a family tested positive from the Rehari area forcing the local authorities to strictly enforce lockdown guidelines in the area. Already several localities with corona positive cases have been declared as containment zones by the district administration. Out of 21.416 positive cases, 7893 are Active Positive, 13127 have recovered and 396 have died; 28 in Jammu division and 368 in Kashmir division. The Bulletin further said that out of 6,54,117 test results available, 6,32,701 samples have been tested as negative till August 02, 2020. PMS

Adhir Chowdhury's house attacked

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Some miscreants attacked Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury's house at Behrampur in Murshidabad district, police said. According to sources the attack took place in the night intervening Saturday and Sunday when alleged goons pelted stones at Chowdhury's house breaking the glass panes. The senior Congress leader escaped unhurt as he was not in the house during the time of the attack. Sources also said that some suspected miscreants have been caught in the CCTV camera moving suspiciously around his house carrying gun during the time of the attack. Senior State Congress leader Manoj Chakrabarty rushed to Chowdhury's house soon after, sources said. The police are investigating the incident. Chowdhury also a former Pradesh Congress president and a firebrand leader has been the five-time MP from Behrampur.

The Government is now contemplating to organise the investors summit early next year and hoping to revive its contacts with all those investors who had previously shown keen interest in investing money in the region. Various Government departments had also conducted road shows and preliminary meetings across different states of India to woo big investors. The Jammu & Kashmir government had also identified 6,000 acres of land across the Union Territory for potential investors. The land was identified in the districts of Samba and Kathua in Jammu region, and Pulwama and Anantnag districts in the Kashmir Valley. Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation was also constituted as a nodal agency for organising the investors meet.

Bengal Guv launches fresh attack on Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday launched a fresh attack on the Mamata Banerjee Government for refusing to share information with the Raj Bhavan on vital issues. In a series of tweets the Governor alleged that though it was the "right and duty of Governor to seek information" the Government was hiding facts about issues like "political violence, Bengal Global Business Summit," and alleged "corruption" in "Public Distribution System" and distribution of relief to the victims of super cyclone Amphan. Curiously the Governor found a spontaneous support from an unlikely quarter, the Left Front whose senior leaders said the Governor had after a long time made a valid demand and asked the Chief

Minister to "take up challenge and share information." The Governor who has no love lost with the State Government asked as to "why information is not provided? What is there to hide? Government must clarify. For sake of accountability and transparency, responsibility be fixed on those ... who defaulted in giving information. Opacity would breed scams and add skeletons to cupboards." Wondering how the basic rights under the Right to Information Act was violated the Governor said "failure ... to give information to Governor reveals worrisome state of RTI. I had earlier cautioned Chief Information Officer at low RTI applicants - for fear of police knock and repression if they seek information. Sharing information is a deterrent to corruption." The Left Front which is usually

skeptical about what they call Governor's "mock fight with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee" immediately jumped into the fray saying "this is for the first time that he has raised a genuine issue." CPI(M) legislator party leader and its central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said the Left Front too had on several occasions raised the issues in the State Assembly mentioned by the Governor but they were not answered by the Government. "We asked the state government to come up with the information during the Assembly sessions. But our questions were never answered," Chakrabarty a former MP said. CPI(M)'s legal spearhead and Rajya Sabha MP Bikash Bhattacharya said how "this is the first time the Governor raised relevant issues which are related to common man...

now the Chief Minister must take up this challenge and come out with information or else the people will have no option but to call her Government a government of thieves." Giving his reactions senior TMC leader Partho Chatterjee said the Governor was behaving like a BJP cadre and faulted the Left for "showing their true colours." He said "today's statements by the Left leaders only prove our allegation that the CPI(M) was behind the BJP's performance in the Lok Sabha elections." Trinamool MP and senior counsel Kalyan Banerjee said that the Governor should not cross the his constitutional limits while dealing with the State Government even as he said that the Governor was "the face of the BJP in Bengal always speaking like a BJP leader."

Unemployment biggest worry in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In the run up to the first anniversary of Abrogation of Article 370 and reorganisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union Territories the biggest worry remains providing job opportunities to the growing Army of unemployed youth in the region. In the absence of any major private investment coming its way in the near future the majority of unemployed youth are keenly waiting for the Government departments to advertise their vacant posts and fill the vacancies. In the second week of July this year, the Jammu & Kashmir Services Selection Board had advertised 8575 Class IV posts for District/Divisional/Union Territory cadre in various departments under the provisions of the Jammu &

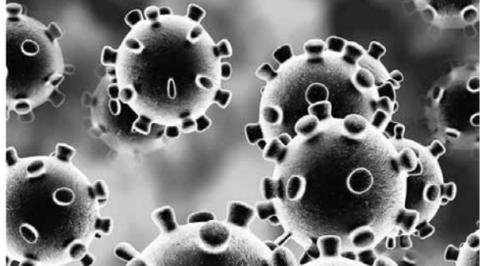
Kashmir Appointment to the Class-IV (Special Recruitment) Rules, 2020. So far a total number of 4,04,200 Registrations have been done by the candidates on JKSSB's Online Portal, and 2,05,400 candidates have completed their online application submission process for Class IV posts till August 2. Official sources said, an average number of 47 unemployed youth are set to compete with each other for one single post of Class IV employee as on date. In addition to this, 46,100 applications have been submitted online for the post of Accounts Assistant. Meanwhile, to attract fresh investment in Jammu & Kashmir the Government had earlier decided to hold global Investors meet early this year but in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic the plan was shelved.

The Government is now contemplating to organise the investors summit early next year and hoping to revive its contacts with all those investors who had previously shown keen interest in investing money in the region. Various Government departments had also conducted road shows and preliminary meetings across different states of India to woo big investors. The Jammu & Kashmir government had also identified 6,000 acres of land across the Union Territory for potential investors. The land was identified in the districts of Samba and Kathua in Jammu region, and Pulwama and Anantnag districts in the Kashmir Valley. Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation was also constituted as a nodal agency for organising the investors meet.

260 die, 9,509 +ve in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after a record 322 people succumbed to Covid-19 in Maharashtra, the pandemic claimed 260 lives, while 9,509 people tested positive in various parts of the state. With fresh fatalities and infections, the total number of deaths in the state mounted to 15,576, while the total positive cases jumped to 4,41,228. Of the total 260 deaths reported on Sunday, Pune accounted for 51 deaths, followed by 49 deaths in Mumbai and 48 deaths in Thane district. The deaths in Mumbai fell below 50-mark for the third time in a week. With 49 new deaths, the pandemic toll in the city rose from 6,398 to 6447, while the number of infected cases went up by 1105 to touch 1,16,436. In addition to 51 deaths in Pune, 49 deaths in Mumbai and 48 deaths in Thane district, there were 19 deaths in Palghar, 12 in Solapur, 11 in Latur, 8 in Nashik, 7 in Ahmednagar, 6 each in Satara and Sangli, 5 each in Raigad, Aurangabad and Akola, 4 in Dhule, 3 each



in Kolhapur, Amravati and Washim, 2 each in Jalgaon, Hingoli, Jalna, Osmanabad and Nagpur and one death each in Parbhani, Nanded, Yavatmal, Buldhana and Chandrapur. Meanwhile, as many as 9926 patients were discharged from hospitals in the state after full recovery, taking the total number of patients discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year to 2,76, 809. The recovery rate rose to 62.74 per cent. The mortality rate in the state is 3.53 per cent. The state health authorities pegged the number of "active cases" in the

state at 1,48,537. With 96,120 infected cases and 2,674 deaths, Thane continued to be the second-worst hit district in Maharashtra. Pune, which has emerged as the third worst-affected district in terms of spread of the pandemic, has recorded 94,911 infections and 2226 deaths till now. Out of 22,55,701 samples sent to laboratories, 4,41,228 have tested positive (19.56 per cent) for COVID-19 until Sunday. Currently, 9,25,269 people are in home quarantine while 37,944 people are in institutional quarantine.

Kerala reports 1,169 new cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Number of persons diagnosed with Covid-19 reached new high in Kerala as 1,169 persons tested positive on Sunday. Though there were reports that four persons died in different parts of the State, the release issued by the Government of Kerala on Sunday evening said only one person has succumbed to the pandemic. With the death of one person on Sunday, the State's fatality toll reached 82. The speed with which Covid-19 is spreading all over Kerala indicates that things are going out of control in the State. Out of the 1,169 persons tested positive on Sunday, 991 contracted the pandemic through local transmission. The total number of persons tested positive on Sunday included 43 expatriates while 95 were those from other parts of the country. The capital city of Thiruvananthapuram continued to be the epicentre of coronavirus. There are 377 new covid patients in the district out of which 363 developed the pandemic through contacts. The cosmopolitan district of Ernakulam had 128 patients out of which 121 were infected through local transmission. By Sunday evening, 11,342 persons have been admitted to hospitals with Covid-19 and there were 497 hotspots in the State. By Sunday, all 14 districts in the State have come under the grip of coronavirus.

Karnataka ends Sunday lockdown, night curfew

Bengaluru: People in Karnataka breathed easy as the Sunday lockdown was lifted and the night curfew withdrawn despite surge in coronavirus cases, according to an official, here on Sunday.

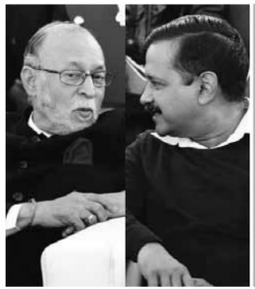
"As decided by the state government on July 30 on the advice of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, the Sunday lockdown has been lifted and the 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. night curfew withdrawn," a state home department official told IANS. Lockdown had been reimposed on four Sundays since July 5, and the 8 p.m. to 5 a.m night curfew since July 1 to July 31 to contain the spread of coronavirus. Though hotels, shops, markets, malls and parks re-opened, majority of people preferred to stay at home. It was evident from fewer people and less vehicular traffic in cities and towns across the state. "As festival holidays began on Friday for Varamahalakshmi Vratam, Bakrid on Saturday and holiday on Sunday, most outstation people had left for their native places by Thursday night," the official said. But lockdown restrictions will remain in containment zones and only essential services and supplies are exempted. "With more relaxations of lockdown, gyms and yoga institutes will reopen from August 5," said the official. Schools, colleges, theatres, bars, entertainment parks,

auditoriums, assembly halls and swimming pools will continue to remain shut till August 31. "Ban on social, political, sports, entertainment, academic, cultural, religious functions and other large congregations will also continue till further orders," the official said. IANS

Karnataka's centenarian woman recovers from coronavirus IANS ■ CHITRADURGA (KARNATAKA) Over a century-old woman recovered from Covid-19 within a week after she contracted the virus from an infected person in Karnataka's Chitradurga, a district doctor said on Sunday. "Siddamma, who is about 100 years old, recovered from the infection and was discharged on Saturday from a Covid designated hospital in the town where she was admitted on July 27 and treated as an asymptomatic patient," district hospital doctor Rangareddy told IANS on phone. Chitradurga is 205 km north-west of Bengaluru. "Though a native of Burujanahatti village in the district, Siddamma was living with her family in police quarters near the state-run hospital in the town. "Siddamma is said to be a mother of 5 children, 17 grand children and 22 great grandchildren," said Rangareddy.

# AAP, L-G collide

Nullifying the Delhi govt order on appointing independent lawyers for riots cases seems to be aimed at influencing courts



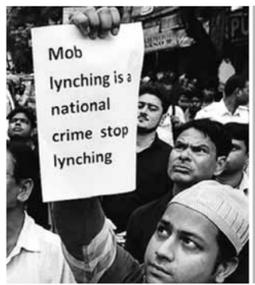
If the Delhi Police, being an elite law-keeping force in the country, is so sure about the impartiality and professionalism of its conduct during the city riots in February, why does it want its own public prosecutors to fight related cases in court? Or why is the Lt Governor, Anil Bajjal, as the Centre's representative, locking horns yet again with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Delhi Government on an issue of propriety? This time Bajjal has overturned the Delhi Cabinet's decision that had disbanded the panel of lawyers suggested by the Delhi Police from arguing in the Supreme Court and the High Court

in the interest of a fair probe. Not only this, he has invoked Article 239AA(4) of the Constitution and referred the dispute to the President. Under the said Article, the Delhi Government is bound to follow the L-G's orders. The AAP Government, which has time and again insisted that the Delhi Police is not under its purview and did not oppose it or the Home Ministry to which it reports despite public criticism during the riots, rightly exercised its prerogative to suggest a transparent analysis of events. It argued that since the courts had already raised serious questions on the investigations done by the Delhi Police in the riots case and during students' protests, the lawyers shouldn't be pro-Government. So against the Delhi Police's proposal to appoint six senior lawyers, including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and ASG Aman Lekhi, as special counsel in the High Court and Supreme Court in 85 cases related to the riots and the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests, the Delhi Government wanted to field lawyer Rahul Mehra and his team. Does this mean that the Centre is trying to dictate the course of the trial, investigation and public perception? Or is it trying to justify the crackdown on the protesters and label them as seditious? For under no circumstance should the prosecution be linked to one of the parties that is under investigation. Of course, the BJP has launched a counter-charge, saying the AAP was trying to save its MLA Tahir Hussein, who has been booked for instigating the riots. But there have been far too much evidence and reports that show how instead of pursuing the rioters, the Delhi Police has been harassing victims, activists and acting in a partisan manner. Meanwhile, politicians who incited mobs were neither charged nor arrested. One cannot ignore the judiciary either, which has called out the non-action or the programmed action of the police. Earlier, none other than the Supreme Court had observed that the riots in Delhi could have been prevented if the police had the independence to act. The Bench used strong words: "Unfortunate things have happened, the problem is the total lack of independence of the police." And on Friday, the Delhi High Court asked Special Commissioner of Police Praveer Ranjan to explain the "necessity" of issuing a letter to chiefs of probe teams, which said that arrests of "some Hindu youth" from riot-hit areas had led to a "degree of resentment among the Hindu community." Justice Suresh Kumar Kait also asked him to place before the High Court "five such letters" issued by him or his predecessor as the CrPC does not mandate such instructions and reminded that senior officers can just guide their teams but not influence the facts.

The February riots were the worst that Delhi has seen since the targeted killing of Sikhs in 1984. It brought out a rabid kind of communal sentiments and embarrassingly happened when US President Donald Trump was on his first visit to India, thereby drawing international attention. But then COVID-19 happened and steamrolled all such concerns. Yet, given the sensitivity involved and the excesses of brutality, it is of utmost importance that the rule of law is upheld and the judiciary allowed to function independently. Already perceived to be acting under executive pressure, ever since the Narendra Modi Government came to power and emaciated institutional powers, the judiciary should not appear to be "guided" in the riots case. Anyway, the line between fact and fiction has blurred with too many ground truths held back from the public domain. And disproportionately, the Government narrative of stereotyping the riots as another volatile expression of communal angst has been gaining ground. The Delhi Police is capable of conducting a sound probe but appears to be under pressure to "manage" a certain narrative so that courts have very little to deliberate on. Certainly, nothing could be a bigger travesty of justice. And if the Delhi Police looks toothless, one would dread to imagine what happens in the State police forces of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, where the ruling party sentiment will sit in judgment on the right to protest.

# Hate crime, again

Cow vigilantes beat up a young man suspecting he was transporting beef. Only he wasn't



It is official. India has a major law and order problem on its hands as communal conflicts are rising and are being settled outside the justice system. Hate Crime Watch documented 254 criminal attacks targeting religious minorities between January 2009 and October 2018, which killed 91 people and injured 579 others. And to worsen matters, our police force is inefficient, ineffective and distressingly complicit in most crimes and atrocities that are committed on religious minorities, Scheduled Castes, tribes, backward classes and the underprivileged. The most recent example of this

chilling indifference and perversion of the law comes from Gurugram where a group of five cow vigilantes beat up a young man with a hammer in the presence of policemen on the suspicion of transporting beef. Later, it turned out that it was buffalo meat that the young man was transporting at the behest of his boss, who has been in the business for 50 years. For now, the victim, who was beaten within an inch of his life, is alive, but who is to say what will happen tomorrow? This incident is a throwback to the Dadri lynching case of 2015 when one Mohammad Akhlaq was killed by cow vigilantes in Uttar Pradesh for allegedly slaughtering a cow and consuming its meat. The Gurugram incident, that occurred on the eve of Eid al-Adha, which is colloquially known as "Bakri Eid", shows that it was pre-planned and pre-meditated as the cow vigilantes were out to create trouble or even spark off communal disturbance. Just like the Dadri case, the police was faster at sending the meat to a lab for testing than taking the half-dead victim to the hospital or catching any of the suspects. This also reminds one of the Alwar policemen, who delayed rushing another lynching case victim, Rakbar Khan, to the hospital and were reluctant to take action against the guilty cow vigilantes despite video evidence.

It is obvious that emboldened by political patronage and police inaction, cow vigilantes, basically criminals posing themselves as wingmen of Hindutva, are no longer afraid of the proverbial long arm of the law and don't hesitate to violate it with impunity. What else can explain the fact that assaulters continued to beat the young man even after dragging him to his village with the police watching in silence? In fact, so brazen and fearless were the men that they turned on the cops themselves when they finally deigned to intervene. This loss of respect for the law and the guarantee of protection for a "majoritarian cause" are the reasons why there has been a surge in kangaroo courts across the country over the last two months. The vigilantes dispense instant justice for what they call "theft" and "selling beef." This latest incident not only shows how cow vigilantism is on the rise again in India but that the politics of otherisation is set to be the new pandemic.

# Seeds of conflict

Turkish nationalism could only emerge at the expense of Muslim identity. For the Greeks, by contrast, religion continued to be a decisive factor in shaping their national identity



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

Edwin A Grosvenor (1845-1936), an American historian and author, who for some years lived and taught in Constantinople — as Istanbul was still called in the late 19th century — found that the Turks regarded Aya Sofia (Hagia Sophia) with "pride of conquest than affection." The exquisite cathedral was still functioning as a mosque when Grosvenor wrote the history of the Ottoman capital in two volumes, *Constantinople* (1895). Nevertheless, since the end of the Crimean War (1854-56), its ground floor and the gallery were thrown open to the visitors for payment of a fee. The Christian characteristics of the cathedral were so pronounced that "its structural form has always resisted the requirements of Moslem ritual."

The Turks, being conscious that "though the mosque is theirs, it is not of them", had to import two distinctive symbols connected with the pulpit. The first was a pair of silken flags, "significant of victory of Islam over its parent faiths, Judaism and Christianity." Second, every Friday, when its Sheikh (*Imam*) climbed the steep pulpit steps to preach, he held in his right hand an unsheathed sword, indicative of the manner in which the Hagia Sophia was conquered. "So, would the Moslem forget the long past of the church?" asked Grosvenor. "He cannot, for the flags and sword are there" (*Constantinople*, Vol-II, Pg. 543)

It is speculative whether the flags and sword would be reintroduced in Hagia Sophia, which was recently reverted to a mosque. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, however, did not re-reclaim Hagia Sophia for Islam in a manner reminiscent of Sultan Mehmed II in 1453 AD. Erdogan achieved his end through a presidential decree, published in the official gazette on July 10. He has, thus, clothed himself in the role of "Gazette Ghazi."

Mustafa Kemal Pasha, former President of Turkey, was also known as a "Ghazi" (vanquisher of infidels) for 14 long years before he adopted his last name Ataturk in 1935. This title was conferred upon him by the new Turkish National Assembly in September 1921, at the height of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) that he led as the Field Marshal. To many of his countrymen, especially those who never saw him, the title conjured a glamourised image.

Once, when Kemal Pasha "Ghazi", as biographer Patrick Kinross informs, was visiting a mountainous village in Turkey, he found that an artist had drawn his portrait from imagination on



a wall. It was that of a formidable warrior, with sweeping moustaches and a seven-foot long sword. The villagers, however, were shocked to discover a clean-shaven Ghazi in European style summer suit, a sports shirt open at the neck and a Panama hat. So great was their disbelief that they barely managed to clap as the Ghazi walked past his imaginary portrait. The conqueror was wearing the costume of the infidel (*Ataturk: The Rebirth of a Nation*, Pg. 414).

More than his western attire, Kemal's westernising policy was likely to scandalise his countrymen, who had been direct subjects of the Caliphate for 400 years. However, it was much less than what we might assume. Kemal, by sheer force of his personality, no less than the weight of his achievements, was able to ramrod secularisation in matters of State policy and national life of Turkey. He abolished the Caliphate, eliminated religious courts, abolished the fez cap, discouraged veil for women, suppressed religious brotherhood, closed sacred tombs as places of worship, declared the Gregorian calendar as a national calendar, replaced Sharia with a new civil code law, introduced Latin alphabets in place of Arabic for writing Turkish and made the adoption of the last name

mandatory (himself took up Ataturk) among others.

Even the name of the republic *viz*, Turkey (which citizens called *Turkiye*), clearly revealed its European origin. The term Turk, profoundly connected with Islam, had originally been given by the Europeans in the 11th century. Whether the modernisation of Turkey could have been achieved without brazen westernisation is a matter of opinion. However, through these measures, Ataturk built up a Turkish identity founded on language and territory but delinked from religion.

"In the imperial society of Ottomans, the ethnic term Turk was little used and then chiefly in a derogatory sense" says Bernard Lewis, "to designate Turcoman nomads or later ignorant and uncouth Turkish speaking peasants of Anatolian villages. To apply it to an Ottoman gentleman of Constantinople would have been an insult" (*The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Pg. 1-2). Until the 19th century, the Turks had thought of themselves purely as Muslims. Turkish nationalism could only emerge at the expense of Muslim identity. Ataturk's republic, however, was one-party rule. Therefore, he could enforce his policies without any organised opposition. He

did not banish religion from the republic but controlled its institutions, clergy and instructions through State apparatus.

For the Greeks, by contrast, religion continued to be a decisive factor in shaping their national identity. The Lausanne Convention on the compulsory exchange of population between Greece and Turkey (January 30, 1923) defined a Greek as one belonging to "Greek Orthodox religion" and Turk as "Moslem" without any reference to a person's mother tongue. Greece's democratic Constitution (2001) begins counter-intuitively "in the name of Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity" rather than Solon, Clisthenes, Themistocles and Pericles.

The reason for the indissoluble bond between Eastern Orthodox Christianity and Greek identity is two-fold. First, during the Byzantine era (mid-fourth to mid-15th century AD) orthodox religion cemented spiritual and national unity of the Greeks. The Hellenic past of the Greeks witnessed conflict of philosophy and religion as well as extreme political disunity. Second, under the Ottoman rule (mid-15th century to 19th century), the Church formed the nucleus of the Greek nation. Under the millat system, the Greek patriarch based in Constantinople also acted as the

secular head of the Roum millet (Roman nation) comprising all Christian subjects in the Ottoman empire. It, thus, functioned as a State within the Empire, whose influence continued to increase as Ottoman power declined *vis-à-vis* Europe.

The pioneer of the Greek War of Independence (1821-29) was Germanos, the Archbishop of Patras, who on April 4, 1821, proclaimed the insurrection against the Turks. Several high dignitaries of the Orthodox Church, including Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory IV himself, suffered martyrdom. Thus, Church and Greek independence somehow got interconnected from the beginning. This is a legacy that even 21st century Greece continues to respect. However, the Church and the State were separate even during the Byzantine Empire, with no scope for conflict between the Emperor and the Patriarch, unlike between the Pope and the monarchs in Latin Christendom. The same continues to be true in the republic of Greece, where the Church has no role in statecraft. Turkey, meanwhile, has denied its own image by reversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque.

(The writer is an author and independent researcher. The views expressed herein are personal.)

## SOUNDBITE

I welcome the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The construction of the temple is being carried out with the consent of every Indian. It's possible only in India.



Congress leader —Kamal Nath

Even though a lot of horrible things are being said about me on the electronic media, I refrain from commenting on the advice of my lawyer as the matter is sub judice.



Actor —Rhea Chakraborty

I attach great importance to the development of China-Nepal relations and I am willing to work with Nepal to push for the continued advancement of the bilateral relationship.



Chinese President —Xi Jinping

He's (Dhoni) lost a bit of fitness and there are younger players coming through the system. He's past his best really and he would be the right judge for that.



Former India all-rounder —Roger Binny

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### NEP idealistic

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "New curriculum" (July 31). Coming after a gap of 34 years, the new educational policy unveiled by the Government is still idealistic. But it is timely considering that in a post-COVID-19 world, the educational pattern will undergo a sea change. The proposed shift in the existing (10+2) system to (5+3+3+4) will lead to the overall development of children. Vast changes will ensure universal access to school education, focus on early childhood care and education, restructure the school curriculum and pedagogy, reform the assessment system and invest in teacher training. All of this will significantly transform the educational system.

Yet NEP's success depends on the finer details. It is up to the Government to create an atmosphere, infrastructure and teaching resources for the smooth phasing of this transition stage. And it must ensure transparency and accountability. But most importantly, it must bring out an action plan for a pan-India implementation,

### NEP: Challenge lies in implementation

This refers to the editorial, "New curriculum" (July 31). The first thing that strikes the eye is the proposed Higher Education Commission of India that dispenses with every other autonomous regulator in the sector. Notwithstanding its unbecoming proclivity for ideological ascendancy on education *per se*, the BJP, in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, has but added frills to the 1986 education policy without altering the main motif. The continuity is welcome.

In doing away with rigid separations between arts, commerce and sciences; curricular and extra-curricular activities; vocational and academic streams, the reshaped policy is akin to converting overnight medical clinics to multi-specialty hospitals. Students can now select subjects across streams. This would exponentially drive additional infrastructure, be it of funds, quantity, variety or quality of faculty. Taken together, the management of such involved matrix of matching each course to resources would need first-rate professional administration. Our education spend is to be boosted. Our enduring incapacity to improve our healthcare spend has been mercilessly exposed by COVID-19. One hopes the Government has the will to fund two major social sectors simultaneously.

R Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai



Our education spend is to be boosted. Our enduring incapacity to improve our healthcare spend has been mercilessly exposed by COVID-19. One hopes the Government has the will to fund two major social sectors simultaneously.

### Game-changer jets

Sir — The induction of five Rafale jets will boost the Indian Air Force (IAF)'s airpower and military prowess. The procurement of the jets is a very significant development for India,

which is in the midst of a bitter military standoff with China in eastern Ladakh and heightened tensions with Pakistan along the LoC.

Technical experts claim that the supersonic Rafale can be used for ground and sea attacks and can undertake electronic warfare, air defence, ground support and in-depth strikes. The biggest asset, however, is its

weapon carrying capability and air-to-air missile feature. Being claimed as the most potent aircraft in South Asia, the flight is equipped with scalp long-range missile and can hit a target more than 300 km away. It can also detect threats well in advance and neutralise them.

However, in the context of the border confrontation with China, so long as Beijing refus-

es to restore status quo ante along the LAC, the Rafales should be used as a bargaining chip or as a contingency tactic. But in the changed security environment, India needs to fast-track the procurement of the subsequent batches of the jets. Unfortunately, the political system is always more concerned about accusations of scandals regarding arms purchases than what they mean for security.

N Sadhasiva Reddy  
Bengaluru

### Where we lag behind

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "New curriculum" (July 31). The NEP offers a lot of hope but the Government must simultaneously work on improving the quality of teaching and research. It must also improve its funding structure. Due to the lack of opportunities, researchers prefer moving abroad to pursue PhD. We need to give them job offers and financial security.

Rati Agrawal  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

**FIRST COLUMN**

## A search for some answers

One wonders if people are suffering more from being infected by Corona or from almost driving themselves over the edge by the fear of the virus



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

One is living almost cocooned in an equilateral triangle. One arm of the triangle is the terrifying COVID-19 situation, the second arm of the triangle is an economy in a tailspin, with little understanding of how deep the dive is going to be or how it can be brought under control. The third arm of the triangle is made of the travails and trials of an ordinary life. The COVID age — for want of a better phrase — that the world is currently passing through, is known to have just as much of an impact on the psyche and lifestyles of people as the Coronavirus has on the human body. How long can one survive in a bottomless pit of anxiety is a question to which there can be no definitive answers. Even history is silent on this very vital issue of human endurance.

One wonders if people are actually suffering more from being infected by the virus or from almost driving themselves over the edge by the fear of being infected by COVID-19. The governance process itself seems to be in a trial and error mode with a hands-on situation. A few weeks ago, a locality of a major district of an important State was claimed to have no place in the listing of containment zones issued by the District Commissioner's Office. Yet, when the police department was contacted, they claimed it was still in the containment zone. Similarly, a Chief Minister asked the people to come out in large numbers and promote the economy. He said the weekly bazaars and hotels would open and much, much more lay ahead. The Lieutenant-Governor negated the instruction and the hapless citizens struggled to understand what the content of Unlock 3.0 was.

There are millions of questions about the virus that remain unanswered. To what extent is surface transmission of the disease real? Do the envelopes received in the mail pose a risk? One former director of a major national medical institute says he keeps the mail and packages in the sun, for a while, before opening them. He didn't have an answer on what to do when it rains. A doctor from England advised the use of gloves while opening envelopes received through an agency, or at least sanitising the hands after opening the mail. However, the World Health Organisation (WHO), in an advisory says that it is safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported. So, who does one believe in a situation like this?

Then there is the case of newspapers. Epidemiologists say newspapers are safe while others have their doubts. It is difficult to identify which is an authoritative source of information in so many aspects of the so-called COVID-era. And then, what happens to currency notes? The packaging of the kitchen ingredients which any household would need? Or the milk packets brought from the dairy?

As noted above, one side of the triangle is that of one being currently caught up in the actual experience of acquiring the Coronavirus infection. The other side of the triangle is the kind of collateral experience when trying to live a normal life through a pandemic. Even if one forgets about the vaccines, the high and mighty of the medical profession are still not unanimous on the nature, extent and the reality of the actual infection.

If one is not clear there, one can only keep washing hands, sanitising surfaces, not go out of the house beyond a certain point and hope for the best. Therein comes the third arm of the triangle. The ways of earning, while staying at home, (the ordinary life) are limited by class and profession. The circulation of the service class is so large and unstructured that contact tracing can sometimes become like trying to put together a ten thousand-piece puzzle.

Add to it the travails of real life. The other realities don't disappear because the COVID-era is in focus. Where does one find a safe dentist? In the rainy season one will contract cold because of change in weather. How does one find out whether it is the first stage of the Coronavirus or an overheated imagination? One of the estimates says that over 16 lakh Indians have fallen ill in the last three months of the pandemic from the Coronavirus. Is there any figure available of how many people fell ill from diseases other than the Coronavirus, in the same period?

During the same period, the number of unemployed rose by 10 crore. Even milk registered a lower availability by 30 per cent. One of the news channels ran a random survey, where 11 per cent of those surveyed were found to be suffering from mild depression and another six per cent from depression. Reportedly, in a Parliamentary Committee proceeding, there has been reference to an addition of 12 crore to the number of people who have, further, sunk below the poverty line. The auto sector has registered loss of jobs to the tune of 30 per cent and the retail sector up to 60 per cent.

More statistics can be quoted. The relevant part is at least to ask whether the Coronavirus is the bigger malaise or the collateral damage done by it? For a solution in either case, a scientific method and its comprehensiveness will be the acid test.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant)



NADEEM PARACHA

An acquaintance associated with an advertising firm once related a rather telling anecdote. Two years ago, his firm prepared a campaign for a food company owned by a gentleman from Faisalabad. The owner of the company was a self-made-man who, decades ago, had begun his career as a worker in a factory after arriving as a teenager from a village.

He had passed his matriculate exams but because of his family's deteriorating economic situation, he could not attend college. However, this did

not stop him from diligently working his way up. From a factory worker, he became a foreman and then, years later, with some money borrowed from a friend, he first set up a grocery store and then a small food company. The business was a success and by 2006, he was a rich man.

The campaign that the advertising firm presented to him was based on phrases and antics popularised by archetypal Punjabi films. After the firm was done presenting, the owner began giving his feedback. He told the agency's executives that he would never want to use the campaign.

He then explained: "For years, Punjabis like me have been struggling to eliminate this image of us as people who look and do things like Sultan Rahi in Punjabi films." The businessman was disappointed that a group of educated executives from Karachi could not visualise his company as a modern entity as they would do for a multinational.

This was a case of how superficially sometimes members of urban middle-classes perceive people from humble backgrounds. The advertising executives had been told by "insiders" in the company about the owner's rural origins. So, in a bid to appeal to this aspect of his personality, they assumed that Punjabi films were accurate depictions of the province's rural life and, therefore, such imagery would suffice to get the owners' approval.

In the early 1990s, Imran Aslam, playwright and former editor of an English daily where I worked as a reporter, told me that when he was a young man and "experimenting" with communism, there used to be a trend among communists from well-to-do middle-class families to "prove their socialist credentials" by taking up "working class vocations."

Imran said that he once joined a group of labourers working at a construction site but the workers simply

refused to let him work. This was not because his presence threatened them. In fact, according to Imran, it actually amused them no end. They just could not figure out why a person with a good education, spacious home and the potential to bag a lucrative job would leave all of it to lift bricks with a group of men who would rather have a good education, spacious homes and the potential to bag lucrative jobs.

According to Imran, his young, idealistic self had sketched a romanticised picture of how working class people think. He believed they would be pleased to see a member of a more prosperous class join them in doing what they did for a living. Imran said that, eventually, some of the labourers told him that one day they would like their children to have the kind of life he had before he arrived at the construction site. Imran went back home.

In 2015, at that year's Karachi Literature Festival that I attended as a speaker, I bumped into a relative of

the late communist leader Hasan Nasir. Nasir, who hailed from an aristocratic family in India, was associated with the Communist Party of Pakistan. He was arrested by the Ayub Khan dictatorship in 1960, tortured and killed. His relative is married to one of my mother's cousins. He (the relative) told me that Nasir was arrested from a shanty town in Karachi. When I asked him if he was hiding there, the relative smiled and said, "No, he was living there." He said that Nasir was constantly at odds with his privileged background and made sure he challenged it by residing in areas where working-class people lived, in their huts and tiny apartments.

As I showed my appreciation, the relative smiled again and said, "But they (the poor) always treated him differently. He was never accepted as one of their own. All they were interested in was whether he could get them better jobs or a better education for their children. All else they understood as

just talk by a young man." This is interesting because, as a student leader, during my involvement in a campaign for a political party for the 1988 elections, I remember that when we used to visit low-income areas, the people there would nod, smile and applaud the fiery speeches that the party's younger cadres delivered. But they were far more interested to meet the candidate and talk to him about whether he was capable of providing them jobs or schools, or how the candidate planned to resolve the area's infrastructural issues.

Finally, one day, I asked the candidate how he was able to engage with the voters in such areas where our revolutionary speeches about solidarity with the poor were failing to attract similar traction. He replied: "They dream about becoming what you are. They don't want to see another them. They want to see themselves becoming you, or at least believe that their children can. That's what I

promise them. Things and tools to better their lot."

In his 1937 book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell writes about his experiences living as a socialist among coal miners and factory workers. According to Orwell, the poor were simply interested in improving their lives with better pay and conditions. They had no interest in the theoretical aspects of any ideology. Orwell believed that the reason the socialists failed to fully engage with the workers was because the socialists bring with them people who preach complex political and cultural ideas that have everything to do with upper and middle-class discourses and nothing to do with the realities and aspirations of the working-classes. In some cases, this may also mean using ideological rationales to keep the poor from even thinking about any upward mobility because that would be "beneficial to capitalism."

(Courtesy: Dawn)

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**

LAKHS OF PEOPLE SACRIFICED FOR THE RAM TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION. **BHOOMI PUJAN** WILL BE HELD ON AUGUST 5. THE PRIME MINISTER WILL TAKE PART IN IT. —INTERNATIONAL JOINT GENERAL SECRETARY, VHP SURENDRA KUMAR JAIN



ATTENDING **BHOOMI PUJAN** IN OFFICIAL CAPACITY WILL BE A VIOLATION OF THE PM'S CONSTITUTIONAL OATH AS SECULARISM IS PART OF THE CONSTITUTION. —AIMIM CHIEF ASADUDDIN OWAISI

# Own the hybrid war

The armed forces must set the tone for tech-based warfare and create a roadmap so that they can reach 'Military 4.5' quickly and guide the industry rather than be dictated by it



PJS PANNU

The modern military is increasingly becoming technology-reliant and, therefore, industry-dependent. Hybrid warfare — the current flavour of war-fighting — is fast transforming into a technology-based, non-contact, ambiguous and transitory model. The rapidity of change comes from exponential growth in every facet of human life, largely fuelled by computers, generating competition between man and machine as well as combined man-machine teams. Bursts of concentrated technology innovation periods like these — so productive, so game-changing — move into an entirely new category: Industrial revolution.

The military has been constrained to follow and adapt to what technology and the industry provide through these cycles. Throughout revolutions historically, the industry has been just a level ahead of the military. Today we are deep into Industrial Revolution 4.0, marked by data and machine learning (ML). For the military, that means moving our industrial platforms and war machines to be run by Artificial Intelligence (AI) engines. The current security dynamics dictate that the military must do that, albeit with caution, to finally pull a half-level ahead of the industry.

The armed forces must set the tone for technology-based warfare and create the roadmap so that they can reach 'Military 4.5' as quickly as possible and guide the industry rather than be dictated by it. This is a call for the military fraternity and their counterparts in the industry. If a country is inferior in technology, by inference, it would be inferior in national security.

Facing an adversary with better technology, you are that much weaker, more porous and behind the curve. If you are vulnerable, you are also exploitable by nations that are high on research and development and innovation. That advantage extends well beyond military might to the negotiating table, to diplomatic efforts, to trade and financial markets. Overall, security is driven by accelerating technological prowess. For example, China feels comfortable, as it projects and flexes its muscles, leveraging technology and military power in tandem.

Moving the military to 4.5 will represent a major hurdling of significant obstacles i.e. our cultural aversion to swift change. Right now, we have yet to fully subsume the elements of Industrial Revolution 4.0. We're frankly closer to 3.5. But who better to determine what is needed and put forth to the industry than the armed forces, the tip of the spear. We need the industry to deliver today on the most promising technologies of tomorrow.

**Neo-Nanotechnology:** Light, small and fast, nanotechnology and miniaturised components offer the military some obvious benefits in terms of portability, protection and connection. But it needs to go further. We need the military version — neo-nanotech — that's even smaller, refined for reliable performance, and rugged and hardened enough to withstand the rigorous demands of field operations.

**Human augmentation to match the machine:** As systems become more networked and the machines get smarter, the sheer speed and connectivity will challenge the human beings they are meant to serve. They will need to keep up. Fast and capable, these systems will easily outstrip their operators unless some augmentation technology pairs with the person to prevent fatigue, circumvent relatively slower thinking and fuels a better decision-making cycle. This intelligent augmentation is crucial to controllable autonomous applications. For context, consider the modern-day flight deck, which relies on human input to set up a flight plan. But

“ FACING AN ADVERSARY WITH BETTER TECHNOLOGY, YOU ARE THAT MUCH WEAKER, MORE POROUS AND BEHIND THE CURVE. IF YOU ARE VULNERABLE, YOU ARE ALSO EXPLOITABLE BY NATIONS THAT ARE HIGH ON RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION. THAT ADVANTAGE EXTENDS WELL BEYOND MILITARY MIGHT TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, TO DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS, TO TRADE AND FINANCIAL MARKETS. OVERALL, SECURITY IS DRIVEN BY ACCELERATING TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS ”



the execution of that flight is now undertaken by the onboard flight computer, a machine. Why? Humans are now the weakest link in the chain, vulnerable to lapses in attention, fatigue, even informational, psychological, biological and chemical warfare. Autonomous systems are much more impervious to such influences.

**True network-centric operations:** When target acquisition and robotics are brought together, we will have nearly achieved the Industrial Revolution for Military 4.5. Call it CSISR-STAR2 (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence and Information — Surveillance, Target Acquisition, Reconnaissance and Robotics). It is a substantial name for a substantial capability, a networked battlefield where decentralised, robotic-initiated decision-making would be the norm. The Command, Control and Surveillance would largely be linked through space. These assets in space would need protection. How that is achieved is another race.

Imagine, for example, that humans pre-programme a satellite to identify targets in a certain area. AI can enable them to set the parameters by which the target would be eliminated autonomously — the system would designate the weapon for doing so and take action if the criteria fits. In another situation, humans might serve as the final confirmation before the autonomous system locks on to a target for action. Another step forward would be to designate pre-sanctioned targets, to be engaged on appearance.

**The Internet of Military Things (IoMT):** Network-centric operations won't happen without the fusion of smaller, smarter sensors, network connectivity, signal intelligence devices, aircraft, UAVs and so on. A secure, private network is the core layer to communicating this data. That will require scalable satellite connectivity for narrowband applications plus fibre and microwave links to

support broadband applications. These would ultimately connect millions of devices and sensors operating ubiquitously and support data transfer. AI would play a critical role, enabling the IoMT to transition from mostly telemetry and sensing to complete autonomous action guided by rules defined by individual countries.

Computer networks are efficient, desirable tools as they can move massive machine data simultaneously to multiple subscribers. This can also turn disaster if disruption is caused through technology limitations, an incident driven by adversarial action or a simple human error. The military has this challenge — it needs its machines and networks secured and protected against these possibilities. High assurances and strong protection tools will need to be delivered by the industry. Call it military-grade secrecy; security protocols would need to be well-defined.

Secure Chips, Quantum Technology and IP concealment (ie, no IP Address) would essentially form this baseline. None of the above will be possible if the industry cannot pin down the fundamental, base-layer PME (Power, Materials, and Electronics) capabilities. Military superiority will come from innovations that can deliver lighter, more sustainable power, perhaps delivered through nuclear, renewables or rechargeable through motion.

It will come from lighter, stronger, self-healing materials designed to maximise survivability for the war-fighter and bear up under temperatures that span the extremes of heat and cold.

It will come from next generation electronics that are tiny, light and programmable. It will come from developing the technological mechanisms that make it possible for humans and machines to partner in powerful new ways. PME would expand the possibilities for a single fighting machine to perform operations in all three spheres — air,

ground and water — with almost equal efficiency and sustainability. The AI engines would enable them to be networked as swarms and self-assign targets between machines. Networks will make it possible to build H-M2M-H (Human-Machine to Machine Human) interfaces to bring battles to be planned, regulated and controlled from manned war rooms, yet fought by machines in the field. The groundwork has clearly been laid. We have data, advanced computing, new materials and engineering methods that are translating into the fastest evolution of physical systems in human history.

We can process data in seconds and run experiment after experiment based on the evolving results. Even small companies can better innovate at scale because it's cheaper and faster to do so. There are simply no excuses for failure.

If the industry can deliver on this considerable potential, the military can deliver and fulfil its prime directive: Ensuring national security that underpins all else. We can do it while preserving human life and outsourcing the truly dangerous jobs to robotics and autonomous systems. Military 4.5 is not a holistic war-fighting solution but a concept to guide the industry to push the envelope beyond 4.0.

For all actors, elements of war-fighting (ethical, unethical and ambiguous) are coming together in a new technology-enabled paradigm — hybrid war — that will challenge us to be more thoughtful. The Grey Zone is expanding, stitching non-State and State actors as legitimate participants of the hybrid war. The conventional battles are subsiding the sub-conventional. Technology is the common denominator but it needs ethical military guidance along the way.

(The writer is a military veteran and former Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff of India. He raised the Defence Space Agency, Defence Cyber Agency and Special Operations Division.)

# Socialist ideas and an indifferent working class

Complex political and cultural ideas that stem from upper and middle-class discourses often mean little to the working class looking for upward mobility

not stop him from diligently working his way up. From a factory worker, he became a foreman and then, years later, with some money borrowed from a friend, he first set up a grocery store and then a small food company. The business was a success and by 2006, he was a rich man.

The campaign that the advertising firm presented to him was based on phrases and antics popularised by archetypal Punjabi films. After the firm was done presenting, the owner began giving his feedback. He told the agency's executives that he would never want to use the campaign.

He then explained: "For years, Punjabis like me have been struggling to eliminate this image of us as people who look and do things like Sultan Rahi in Punjabi films." The businessman was disappointed that a group of educated executives from Karachi could not visualise his company as a modern entity as they would do for a multinational.

This was a case of how superficially sometimes members of urban middle-classes perceive people from humble backgrounds. The advertising executives had been told by "insiders" in the company about the owner's rural origins. So, in a bid to appeal to this aspect of his personality, they assumed that Punjabi films were accurate depictions of the province's rural life and, therefore, such imagery would suffice to get the owners' approval.

In the early 1990s, Imran Aslam, playwright and former editor of an English daily where I worked as a reporter, told me that when he was a young man and "experimenting" with communism, there used to be a trend among communists from well-to-do middle-class families to "prove their socialist credentials" by taking up "working class vocations."

Imran said that he once joined a group of labourers working at a construction site but the workers simply

refused to let him work. This was not because his presence threatened them. In fact, according to Imran, it actually amused them no end. They just could not figure out why a person with a good education, spacious home and the potential to bag a lucrative job would leave all of it to lift bricks with a group of men who would rather have a good education, spacious homes and the potential to bag lucrative jobs.

According to Imran, his young, idealistic self had sketched a romanticised picture of how working class people think. He believed they would be pleased to see a member of a more prosperous class join them in doing what they did for a living. Imran said that, eventually, some of the labourers told him that one day they would like their children to have the kind of life he had before he arrived at the construction site. Imran went back home.

In 2015, at that year's Karachi Literature Festival that I attended as a speaker, I bumped into a relative of

the late communist leader Hasan Nasir. Nasir, who hailed from an aristocratic family in India, was associated with the Communist Party of Pakistan. He was arrested by the Ayub Khan dictatorship in 1960, tortured and killed. His relative is married to one of my mother's cousins. He (the relative) told me that Nasir was arrested from a shanty town in Karachi. When I asked him if he was hiding there, the relative smiled and said, "No, he was living there." He said that Nasir was constantly at odds with his privileged background and made sure he challenged it by residing in areas where working-class people lived, in their huts and tiny apartments.

As I showed my appreciation, the relative smiled again and said, "But they (the poor) always treated him differently. He was never accepted as one of their own. All they were interested in was whether he could get them better jobs or a better education for their children. All else they understood as

just talk by a young man." This is interesting because, as a student leader, during my involvement in a campaign for a political party for the 1988 elections, I remember that when we used to visit low-income areas, the people there would nod, smile and applaud the fiery speeches that the party's younger cadres delivered. But they were far more interested to meet the candidate and talk to him about whether he was capable of providing them jobs or schools, or how the candidate planned to resolve the area's infrastructural issues.

Finally, one day, I asked the candidate how he was able to engage with the voters in such areas where our revolutionary speeches about solidarity with the poor were failing to attract similar traction. He replied: "They dream about becoming what you are. They don't want to see another them. They want to see themselves becoming you, or at least believe that their children can. That's what I

promise them. Things and tools to better their lot."

In his 1937 book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell writes about his experiences living as a socialist among coal miners and factory workers. According to Orwell, the poor were simply interested in improving their lives with better pay and conditions. They had no interest in the theoretical aspects of any ideology. Orwell believed that the reason the socialists failed to fully engage with the workers was because the socialists bring with them people who preach complex political and cultural ideas that have everything to do with upper and middle-class discourses and nothing to do with the realities and aspirations of the working-classes. In some cases, this may also mean using ideological rationales to keep the poor from even thinking about any upward mobility because that would be "beneficial to capitalism."

(Courtesy: Dawn)

IN AFGHANISTAN

# Forces kill Pak-origin head of ISIS-Khorasan

**Kabul/Islamabad:** Pakistan-origin intelligence head of terror group Islamic State's Khorasan unit (ISIL-K) has been killed by special forces near the eastern town of Jalalabad, according to the Afghan security agency.

Zia-ur-Rehman known as Assadullah Orakzai, the native of Akhel Orakzai agency of Pakistan during a targeted operation, the TOLONews reported, citing the statement.

He was involved in several deadly attacks against both military and civilian targets in Afghanistan, it said.

"Afghanistan's regional and international partners should remember that Afghanistan is a key player in the fight against terrorism and will crush terrorists' roots anywhere," the NDS said.

Last week, the 26th report of the UN's Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team concerning ISIS, al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities said that many former Tehreek-e-Taliban militants have joined ISIS-Khorasan (ISIL-K).

"The total number of Pakistani foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan, posing a threat to both countries, is estimated at between 6,000 and 6,500, most of them with TTP," it said.

The monitoring team also estimates the current ISIL-K membership in Afghanistan at 2,200. In April and May, the Afghan special forces conducted a series of countrywide operations that led to the arrest of the group's leaders, including Aslam Farooqi (also known

as Abdullah Orakzai), the head of ISIL-K, his predecessor Zia ul-Haq (also known as Abu Omar Khorasani) and other senior members.

In March, at least 25 Sikh worshippers were killed and eight others injured when a heavily armed ISIS suicide bomber stormed his way into a prominent gurdwara in the heart of Afghanistan's capital of Kabul, in one of the deadliest attacks on the minority community in the strife-torn country.

Eighty people, including women and children, stranded inside the gurdwara were rescued by the security forces.

The ISIS terrorist group claimed responsibility for the latest attack.

In July 2018, ISIS terrorists bombed a gathering of Sikhs and Hindus in the eastern city of Jalalabad, killing 19 people and injuring 20.

Awatar Singh Khalsa, one of the country's best-known Sikh politicians then, was among those killed in the attack. **PTI**

# Ransomware feared as possible saboteur for Nov polls

**Washington:** Federal authorities say one of the gravest threats to the November election is a well-timed ransomware attack that could paralyze voting operations. The threat isn't just from foreign governments, but any fortune-seeking criminal.

Ransomware attacks targeting state and local governments have been on the rise, with cyber criminals seeking quick money by seizing data and holding it hostage until they get paid. The fear is that such attacks could affect voting systems directly or even indirectly, by infecting broader government networks that include electoral databases.

Even if a ransomware attack fails to disrupt elections, it could nonetheless rattle confidence in the vote.

On the spectrum of threats from the fantastical to the more probable, experts and officials say ransomware is a particularly realistic possibility because the attacks are already so pervasive and lucrative. The FBI and Department of Homeland Security have issued advisories to local governments, including recommendations for preventing attacks.

"From the standpoint of confidence in the system, I think it is much easier to disrupt a network and prevent it from operating than it is to change votes," Adam Hickey, a Justice Department deputy assistant attorney general, said in an interview.

The scenario is relatively simple: Plant malware on multiple networks that affect voter registration databases and activate it just before an election. Or target vote-reporting and tabulation systems.

"With the 2020 election, election infrastructure has a target on its back," Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold said. "We know that election infrastructure was attempted to be undermined in 2016, and we know the techniques are shifting."

The number of attacks has escalated in recent years, with targets including Texas' transportation agency and city computers in New Orleans. A December report by cybersecurity firm Emsisoft tracked attacks against at least 966 entities that interrupted 911 services, rendered medical records inaccessible and hindered police background checks.

"We're seeing state and local entities targeted with ransomware on a near daily basis," said Geoff Hale, a top election

security official with Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Election Infrastructure Agency.

Steps taken to improve security of voter registration systems after the 2016 election could help governments fend off election-related ransomware attacks. They've also acted to ensure they can recover quickly in the event of an attack.

Colorado, for example, stores redundant versions of its voter registration data at two separate secure locations so officials can easily shift operations. Backups are regular so the system can be quickly rebuilt if needed.

Even so, ransomware is an added concern for local election officials already confronting staffing and budget constraints while preparing for a shift from in-person voting to absentee balloting because of the pandemic.

In West Virginia, state officials are more concerned about the cyberthreat confronting its 55 county election offices than a direct attack on the statewide voter registration system. One click from a county employee falling victim to a spearphishing attack could grant a hacker access to the county network and eventually to election systems. **AP**

# Only 34% approve Trump's handling of pandemic: Poll

**Washington:** Only 34 per cent of Americans approve of US President Donald Trump's handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic, according to a new poll.

The ABC News/Ipsos poll, whose results were released on Friday, also found that the US public broadly disapproves of the President's handling of other recent crises such as the nationwide protests following the death of African American George Floyd, reports Xinhua news agency.

According to the poll's result, "just over a third of Americans (36 per cent) approve of President Trump's handling of the response to the protests across the country."

"Specifically, a majority of Americans (52 per cent) believe the deployment of federal law enforcement to cities with protests have made the situation worse," it added.

Republicans back Trump's handling of the coronavirus (74 per cent), the protests (78 per cent) and Russia (80 per cent) by overwhelming margins.

Democrats are almost uniformly in opposition to Trump's managing of the three issues, with approval of the president in single-digits on the pandemic (7 per cent), the unrest (8 per cent) and Russia (8 per cent).

Roughly 1 in 5 Republicans disapprove of the president on coronavirus (26 per cent), the protests (22 per cent) and Russia (20 per cent), and just over 9 in 10 Democrats disapprove on all three matters.

The ABC News/Ipsos study surveyed 730 adults from July 29-30. **IANs**

# Oli-Prachanda agree to meet today to resolve differences

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and the ruling party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' have agreed to hold another round of talks on Monday as nearly three-hour long meeting on Sunday failed to resolve their differences, a media report said.

"Talks are positive between the two leaders. There was discussion whether to summon the party's Secretariat, Standing Committee or the Central Committee meeting. The meeting also dwelled on holding the party's unity general convention," the Prime Minister's Press Adviser Surya Thapa was quoted as saying by My Republica.

"The two leaders are yet to reach any consensus," Thapa said. The meeting between the two top leaders of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) came six days after Prime Minister Oli

# Portland police declare unlawful assembly during protest

**Portland:** The Portland Police Bureau declared an unlawful assembly Saturday night when people gathered outside a police precinct in Oregon's largest city and threw bottles towards officers, police said.

Until that point, federal, state and local law enforcement had been seemingly absent from the protests Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The demonstrations — that for weeks ended with tear gas, fireworks shot towards buildings, federal agents on the street and injuries to protesters and officers — have recently ended with chanting and conversations.

Activists and Oregon officials urged people at Saturday night's protest in Portland to re-center the focus on Black Lives Matter, three days after the Trump administration agreed to reduce the presence of federal agents in Oregon.

Groups gathered Saturday evening in various areas



Black Lives Matter protesters march through Portland, Ore. after rallying at the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse on Sunday **AP**

around downtown Portland to listen to speakers and prepare to march to the Justice Center and Mark O. Hatfield Courthouse.

One of the more popular events, "Re-centering why we are here - BLM," was hosted by the NAACP. Speakers included activists as well as Oregon

Sen. Jeff Merkley and Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty.

Merkley and Hardesty spoke about policies they are putting forward, including to cut police funding and restrict chokeholds. "The next thing we need you to do is vote like your life depends on it, because guess what, it does," Hardesty said.

For the first time since the presence of federal agents in Portland diminished law enforcement and protesters noticeably clashed Saturday night.

As one group of protesters gathered outside the courthouse another marched to a precinct for the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and Portland Police Bureau.

Police stated that protesters proceeded to throw glass bottles and direct lasers at officers. Just before 10 p.m., Portland police declared an unlawful assembly and directed people to disperse or they may be subject to use of force or be arrested. Police could be seen charging, multiple times, at protesters in the area.

At the courthouse the scene was different. Around 11:30 pm hundreds of people remained, standing and listening to speakers. **AP**

# Pompeo urges HK to reverse decision to suspend polls

**IANs ■ WASHINGTON/HONG KONG**

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday urged Hong Kong to reverse a decision to suspend its legislative elections amid a resurgence of the coronavirus, saying the delay would be another blow to its autonomy from Beijing, the media reported.

In a statement published on Sunday morning, Pompeo condemned the decision by Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam to invoke her emergency powers to postpone the Legislative Council elections, scheduled for September 6, until September 5, 2021, reports the South China Morning Post (SCMP).

"We urge Hong Kong authorities to reconsider their decision," he said.

The elections should be held as close to the September 6 date as possible and in a manner that reflects the will and aspirations of the Hong Kong people.

"If they aren't, then regretfully Hong Kong will continue its march toward becoming just another Communist-run city in China.

"There is no valid reason for such a lengthy delay... It is likely, therefore, that Hong Kong will never again be able to vote - for anything or anyone," the SCMP newspaper quoted Pompeo as saying in the statement.

As relations between Washington and Beijing remain tense, the US has moved to end preferential treatment for Hong Kong over what it sees as an erosion of its autonomy and freedoms.

Besides Pompeo, Hong Kong's opposition lawmakers have also decried the election delay as a political move.

# Rishi Sunak wants ethnic minorities on UK coins

**London:** UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak on Sunday backed a campaign for influential ethnic minority figures to be featured on a set of UK coins to celebrate Britain's diversity.

Mahatma Gandhi is in the running as an influential Commonwealth figure, as the UK's Royal Mint considers the plans as part of commemorating the 150th birth anniversary year of the Indian independence movement leader.

Others in the race also include Noor Inayat Khan, who was the first Indian-origin World War II spy for Britain, and Khudadad Khan, the first soldier of the British Indian Army to become the recipient of the prestigious Victoria Cross, the highest military award for gallantry in the face of the enemy given to British and

Commonwealth forces.

"Yesterday [Saturday] I wrote to the Royal Mint urging them to consider how to celebrate the achievements of BAME [black, Asian and minority ethnic] individuals on UK coinage," said Sunak in a statement issued on social media on Sunday.

The move follows a letter to the Indian-origin finance minister from the "We Too Built Britain" campaign calling for a set of coins entitled "Service to the Nation".

In response to the campaign, led by Indian-origin Conservative Party candidate Zehra Zaidi, Sunak issued a letter to the chair of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee (RMAC), Lord William Waldegrave, to task the Sub-Committee on Themes to consider recognising BAME contributions on the

# N Korea slams Seoul over revised missile guidelines

**Seoul:** North Korean media outlets on Sunday lashed out at South Korea over a recent US decision to lift restrictions on Seoul's use of solid fuel for its space rockets, slamming the move as being contrary to the South's calls for peace.

Seoul and Washington revised the missile guidelines between the two countries on July 28 to lift a decades-old ban on the South from using solid fuel for space rockets, a move expected to lead to the country developing space rockets and launching spy satellites to monitor North Korea, reports Yonhap News Agency.

Meari, one of the North's websites, denounced the revised guidelines, saying Seoul "has revealed its evil intentions for contention, saying the solid fuel-propelled space rockets allow the launch of low-orbit reconnaissance satellites, or

# Israeli Minister for Jerusalem tests positive

**Tel Aviv:** An Israeli Cabinet minister says he has tested positive for the coronavirus.

Minister for Jerusalem and Heritage Rafi Peretz tweeted late Saturday that he received a positive result after being tested the previous day. He said he felt well.

Peretz is the second Israeli minister to have been infected with the virus. Israel's former health minister, Yaakov Litzman, also contracted it and later recovered.

Israeli media reported that contact tracing was being conducted to determine whether Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or other legislators would need to self-isolate following Peretz' diagnosis. Israel is experiencing a surge in coronavirus cases after having largely contained an earlier outbreak in the spring. **AP**

# Nearly 45 police officers injured in Berlin protests against Covid 19 curbs

**Berlin:** Some 45 police officers were injured in a wave of weekend demonstrations in Berlin including protests against coronavirus restrictions, police said as protesters gathered again in smaller numbers on Sunday.

The unruly protests, in which many demonstrators failed to wear masks or respect social distancing rules, have sparked a chorus of condemnation including calls for tougher penalties against those who violate restrictions aimed at curbing transmission of the deadly virus. A total of 133 people were arrested during Saturday's protests, which included a huge "day of freedom" demo against coronavirus restrictions, police said in a statement on Sunday.

The arrests were for offences including resisting police officers, breach of the peace and the use of unconstitutional symbols.

Three officers required hospital treatment, police said.

Around 20,000 people took part in the "day of freedom" demonstration, the majority not covering their nose and mouth or respecting Germany's 1.5-metre (five-foot) social distancing requirement.

The crowd, a mixture of hard left and right, and conspiracy theorists, shouted "We are the second wave" as they converged on the Brandenburg Gate, demanding "resistance" and dubbing the pandemic "the biggest conspiracy theory".

Police began dispersing the crowds in the late afternoon, but hundreds of protesters remained at the Brandenburg Gate late into the evening. **AFP**

# In Africa, stigma surrounding coronavirus hinders response

**Kampala:** After 23 days in quarantine in Uganda — far longer than required — Jimmy Spire Ssentongo walked free in part because of a cartoon he drew. It showed a bound prisoner begging for liberation after multiple negative tests, while a health minister demanded to know where he was hiding the virus.

"The impression was that we were a dangerous group and that what was necessary was to protect the rest of society from us," said Ssentongo, a cartoonist for Uganda's Observer newspaper who was put in quarantine when he returned from Britain in March.

The fear he describes is indicative of the dangerous stigma that has sprung up around the coronavirus in Africa — fuelled, in part, by severe and sometimes arbitrary quarantine rules as well as insufficient information about



patients were being treated," Salim Abdool Karim, an epidemiologist who chairs South Africa's COVID-19 ministerial advisory committee, told a World Health Organization event last month. People with HIV were often shunned by their own families, and reports of health workers refusing to care for them were common in the 1990s.

Now, some people avoid testing for the coronavirus "because if they test, they're ostracised," Karim said. Or simply locked away. Ssentongo, who was released from quarantine on the 24th day after testing negative three times, told The Associated Press that he and others were poorly treated at the facility, a hotel. Like him, many were held for far longer than the required 14 days, and he saw some bribe their way out. He was among those that went on hunger

strikes in a bid to be freed.

"It was dehumanising," said Ssentongo, who also noted that there was no social distancing at the facility, and medical workers were rarely seen and inconsistent in their efforts to control the virus. A medical team once took a woman suspected of having the virus from her room and sprayed her with disinfectant, but ignored her partner.

In neighbouring Kenya, people in quarantine reported similar poor treatment and discrimination.

At one facility, those inside said their money was rejected by the staff and the surrounding community when they tried to buy food, according to a Human Rights Watch report in May. At another, kitchen staff sometimes declined to serve them, forcing a security guard to bring the food.

Some humanitarian groups

warn that stigma could set back Africa's pandemic response.

In Somalia, "our teams are seeing people who have tested positive running away from their homes out of fear of being stigmatised by the community," Abdinur Elmi, an official with the aid group CARE, said in a statement.

As a result, the group said, contact tracing has become nearly impossible in the Horn of Africa country, which has one of the world's weakest health systems after nearly three decades of conflict.

Worryingly, the stigma has attached to health and aid workers in some places. In the West African nation of Burkina Faso, a nurse's assistant who found employment as a cleaner in a hospital said her uncle gave her an ultimatum: quit or leave home.

"He said, 'Pack your bags

and find another place to live," said the woman, who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to avoid retribution from her family.

Health Minister Pierre Somse, of Central African Republic, said humanitarian workers have been targeted because the idea has spread that Westerners, who often do such work, brought the virus. He urged governments to "de-dramatize" the response to calm panicked communities.

Aid workers have raised similar concerns about how the response is described in Uganda, where health officials frequently speak of "hunting down" suspected patients.

The blaring horns and sirens of the vehicles used by those tracing the contacts of the infected add to a sense of fear in some communities, such as the village of Bugomoro near the Congo border, said Charles

Kaboggoza. The World Vision official said he witnessed discrimination against the family of a man who tested positive after returning from Afghanistan in March.

"The people had stopped them from going to fetch water from the (well)," he said. "It was really stigmatizing." Some accused the patient of bringing a "curse" to the community, he said.

Stigma is also having a negative effect on health care more broadly. In CARE-supported health centers in Somalia, the number of people seeking consultations for communicable diseases has fallen by 26 per cent since the first case of COVID-19 was recorded in the country, "with fear of stigma for having the virus being a major factor," according to the group.

Some leaders are aware of the dangers of stigma and are countering it. **AP**

# Shift to market eco cause of RBI-Govt rift, says Acharya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A shift to being a market-based economy from a nationalised system has led to simmering tensions between the Reserve Bank and the Government and questions over the central bank's independence, former RBI deputy governor Viral Acharya has said.

The economist, who went back to teaching in the US after his surprise resignation from the RBI ahead of his term's end last year, said India continues to be in his heart and he would like to "give back" to the country in the future as well.

Acharya, who resigned after run-ins with the Government last year, said the dip in financial savings is also another reason which can explain the disagreements between Mint Road and North Block.

It can be noted that a slew of central bank governors in recent times have flagged the issue of autonomy, and pointed to instances where there were disagreements both in rate setting - where the government wants an accommodative stance - and also regulatory aspects.

"Over discussions with for-



mer governors and deputy governors, I seem to have found one explanation for why I think these pressures are now sort of simmering more. I think it is because we have moved from being a nationalised economy to a market economy," Acharya said during a discussion organised by Bhavan's SPIJMR.

Citing former Governor Y V Reddy, Acharya said in the olden days, there was the central government, the RBI and the public sector banks made for a "Hindu undivided family arrangement", wherein all the requirements of the stakeholders were easily handled.

"This Hindu undivided family arrangement isn't what the economy is about anymore. There are markets, pri-

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"This Hindu undivided family arrangement isn't what the economy is about anymore. There are markets, pri-

## Slew of RBI Governors in recent times have flagged the issue of autonomy

Acharya said in his newly launched book on financial stability, he has given nearly half a dozen specific examples of "fiscal dominance" to illustrate that pressures are "very pervasive and across board".

It can be noted that at the peak of difference between the Government and the RBI, which started with the former invoking a never-used law to give directions to the latter, Acharya had made the "wraith of the markets" speech, warning that the markets will punish if the Government interferes in the central bank.

A little over a month after the speech, Governor Urjit Patel resigned, which was followed with a similar move by Acharya. Both Patel and Acharya launched their books last month, and the latter said RBI lost its governor at "the altar of financial stability".

Meanwhile, when asked if he will return to India, Acharya said he is back to spending time with his family in the US right now but would like to give back to the country in the future as well. "If the right opportunity comes, India will always be and is always inside my heart and (I) would like to give back. I still think I have something to give back," he said.

# RBI's MPC meets next week amid urgency to revive growth

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank's rate-setting Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will meet next week to decide on the policy stance amid the urgency to revive the coronavirus-hit economy and increased demand for one-time loan restructuring by industry chambers.

Experts are, however, divided over the possibility of another rate cut by the RBI in its forthcoming policy arguing that one-time loan restructuring was more essential at this juncture to tide over the COVID-19 situation.

The MPC, headed by RBI Governor, is scheduled to meet for three days beginning August 4 and announce its decision on August 6.

The central bank has been taking steps proactively to limit the damage to the economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns.

It is to be noted here that a fast-changing macroeconomic environment and the deteriorating outlook for growth necessitated "off-cycle meetings" of the MPC - first in March and then again in May 2020.

SBI's research report 'Ecowrap' said with the 115 basis points (bps) reduction in repo beginning February,

banks have already transmitted 72 bps to the customers on fresh loans in the interregnum which is perhaps a milestone in terms of the fastest policy rate transmission in India. Large banks have transmitted as much as 85 basis points.

"...We believe an August rate cut is unlikely," it said.

It believes the MPC could now well debate what further unconventional policy measures could be resorted to in the current circumstances to ensure financial stability is continued to be addressed.

However, several experts, including from banks, have opined the RBI may go for yet another reduction in repo rate of at least 25 bps on August 6.

Higher prices of food items especially meat, fish, cereals and pulses pushed the retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) to 6.09 per cent in June. The government has tasked the RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent (+, - 2 per cent). The central bank mainly factors in CPI while arriving at its monetary policy.

Kuntal Sur, Partner & Leader, Finance Risk & Regulation, PwC India, said the MPC has followed an accommodative policy on rates, with a cumulative repo rate cut of 135 bps over the last one year.

"Given the growth priority, we expect the soft stance to continue. However, since there is ample liquidity in the system and transmission of rates is happening, there may be a pause on the reduction of rates," Sur said.

CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said in the current subdued economic environment, the RBI must consider regulatory relaxations to avoid a bulge in deficits.

"Banks and financial institutions may be allowed to provide a one-time window for restructuring of all term loans so that companies can come back on stream.

The credit guarantee on loans to MSMEs has taken off well," he said.

The RBI may consider increasing the turnover limit for eligible companies in line with the new definition of MSMEs, Banerjee suggested.

Gaurav Dayal, Partner-LakshmiKumar & Sridharan, agreed with the position taken by SBI Ecowrap that the MPC may look to leave the rates unchanged and not go for further rate cuts in the upcoming meeting.

"However, the committee may yet surprise us by going with a nominal rate cut to lend support to the government's push for reviving growth quickly post the lifting of lockdown," he added.

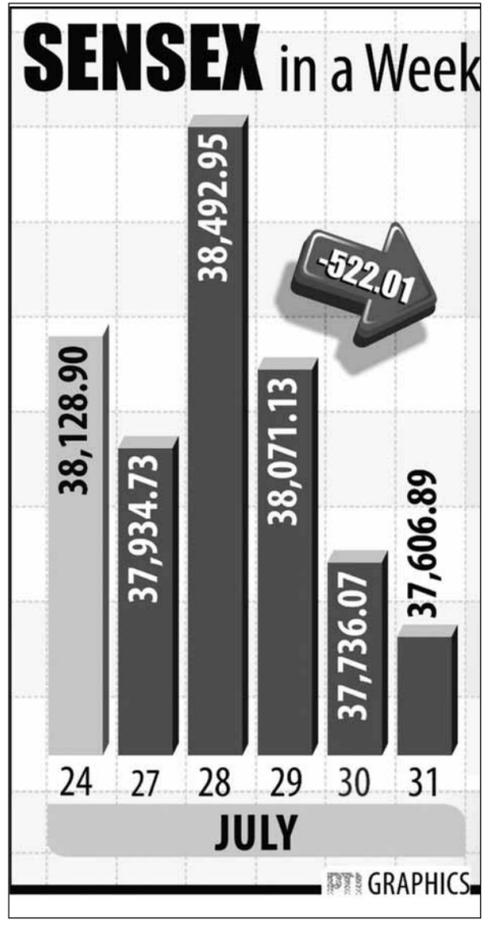
Mandar Pitale, Head, Treasury, SBM Bank India, said as hinted by one of the MPC members in minutes of the previous meeting, the panel may preserve some space in future when situation starts returning to normalcy and the fiscal and monetary boost measures start generating impacts to ease further to encourage the growth.

"There is still a small probability for a cut in reverse repo rate, acting as signaling rate at present," Pitale added.

Jyoti Prakash Gadia, managing director at Resurgent India, was of the opinion that as per the strategy ahead for the RBI, the policy stance should be accommodative monetary policy for now, implying the government increases the money supply in the economy keeping in consideration to steps to increase slowing Indian real GDP growth rate.

Shanti Ekambaram, Group President, Consumer Banking, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said the interest rate cuts have had little impact on demand stimulation or growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic is hurting both businesses and consumers alike and the uncertainty around when things will normalise has led to lacklustre and muted demand and supply disruptions, she said.



# Gadkari approves scheme to make India self reliant in agarbatti production

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has approved an employment generation programme proposed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission to make India self reliant in agarbatti production through the use of locally-made machines by manufacturers and trained workers.

The 'Khadi Agarbatti Aatmanirbhar Mission' aims at creating employment for the unemployed and migrant workers in different parts of the country, handholding artisans and supporting the local agar-

batti industry. The current consumption of agarbatti in the country is approximately 1,490 MT per day. However, per day production of agarbatti in India is just 760 MT. The deficit is met through imports primarily from China and Vietnam.

Elaborating on the scheme, which will initially be launched on a pilot basis, KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena told PTI that "100 per cent of the machines used in production of agarbattis were being imported from Vietnam".

Under the scheme, KVIC has decided to procure only locally-made machines by



Indian manufacturers which also aims at encouraging local production. KVIC will provide automatic agarbatti making machines and powder mixing machines to artisans through successful private agarbatti manufacturers who will sign

agreements as business partners.

The Commission will provide 25 per cent subsidy on the cost of the machines and recover the remaining 75 per cent of the cost from the artisans in easy instalments every month.

The business partner will provide raw material to artisans for making agarbatti and pay them wages on job work basis.

Saxena said the pilot project for the programme will begin this month. "Supply of raw material to the artisans, logistics, quality control and marketing of the final product will be the sole responsibility of the business partner. After recovery of the 75 per cent

cost, the ownership of the machines will automatically be transferred to the artisans," the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry stated.

A two-party agreement to this effect will be signed between KVIC and the private agarbatti manufacturer for successful running of the project on PPP Mode.

The cost of artisans' training will be shared between KVIC and the private business partner wherein the Commission will bear 75 per cent of the cost while 25 per cent will be paid by the business partner. "Each automatic agarbatti making machine

makes approximately 80 kg agarbatti per day which will provide direct employment to four persons. One powder mixing machine, to be given on a set on five agarbatti making machines, will provide employment to two persons," the MSME Ministry said. The wages to artisans will be provided by business partners on weekly basis directly in their accounts through direct benefit transfer only. The current job work rate for agarbatti making is Rs 15 per kg. At this rate, four artisans working on one automatic agarbatti machine will earn minimum Rs 1,200 per day by making 80 kg of agarbatti.

# Discoms' outstanding dues to power gencos rise 47% to ₹1.33 lakh cr in Jun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Power producers' total outstanding dues owed by distribution firms rose over 47 per cent year-on-year to ₹1.33 lakh crore in June 2020, reflecting stress in the sector.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total of ₹90,655 crore to power generation firms in June 2019, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procure-

ment for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

The portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between the generators and discoms. In June 2020, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 60 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at ₹1,20,041 crore, as against ₹72,362 crore in the year-ago period. According to the latest

data on the portal, total outstanding dues in June has increased over the previous month. In May 2020, the total dues of discoms stood at ₹1,26,963 crore. The overdue amount in June 2020 also increased from ₹1,13,869 crore in May 2020. Power producers give 60 days to discoms for paying bills for the supply of electricity. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

# IRB Infra gets award letter for executing ₹1,755 cr Vadodra-Mumbai E-way stretch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd on Sunday said it has received award letter from NHAI for executing a stretch of Vadodra-Mumbai Expressway at a cost of ₹1,755 crore.

With this award, the company's order book now stands at ₹13,755 crore. "IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd, India's largest highways infrastructure developers, has received a Letter of Award (LoA) from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for 27.5-km long Gandeva-Ena section of the upcoming greenfield project of

eight lane Vadodra-Mumbai Expressway," the company said in a regulatory filing. "We are happy to receive the LoA from NHAI; the second one for the stretch on prestigious Vadodra-Mumbai Expressway project under Bharatmala Pariyojana," IRB Infra Chairman and Managing Director Virendra D Mhaskar said. This will enable the company to initiate further necessary actions to sign the concession agreement as well as achieving financial closure for the project so as to receive appointed date and commence construction activity, he added. "It is a testimony to IRB's

capabilities, domain expertise, strict financial discipline demonstrated over the last two decades in developing world-class highways infrastructure across the nation.

We would continue to excel in our operations and would endeavour to complete the project in stipulated time span," Mhaskar said. Last week, the company had emerged as the preferred bidder for the said project, under hybrid annuity mode (HAM) with a bid cost of ₹1,755 crore, having concession period of 15 years, including 730 days of construction period.

# FPIs net buyers for 2nd month in July; invest ₹3,301 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: Foreign portfolio investors remained net buyers for the 2nd consecutive month in July by pumping in ₹3,301 crore in Indian markets amid hopes of a coronavirus vaccine. According to the depositories data, a net sum of ₹7,563 crore was invested in equities while ₹4,262 crore were withdrawn by FPIs between July 1-31. Net investment during month stood at ₹3,301 crore. In the previous month, FPIs put in a net ₹24,053 crore in Indian markets. Some factors that led to investment in July include surge in markets which provided FPIs good profit booking opportunity, improvement in sentiment on the back of rising hopes of a coronavirus vaccine, said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research, Morningstar India.

# Expect a supportive policy framework, says COAI DG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom industry body COAI expects supportive policy framework and ecosystem to be in place in new technologies in India as it looks towards journey for the next 25 years in the country, a top official of the body said.

COAI's newly-appointed Director General S P Kochhar told PTI starting from scratch 25 years ago the Indian telecom sector is the second

largest growing market globally after China with a huge subscriber base of over 120 crore serving them with the cheapest tariffs in the world.

Ever since the first mobile call, made on July 31, 1995, telecom service providers have always come through in difficult situations.

Keeping the citizens connected, the nation's economy buzzing, governments functioning and the networks running.

# Liquor sales decline up to 60% in May-June in States with high Corona cess: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

States which imposed more than 50 per cent COVID-cess on liquor after the resumption of retail trade post lockdown witnessed an average 59 per cent decline in sales in May and June due to higher tariffs, a report by trade association CIABC claimed.

States as Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, J&K and Puducherry, which had imposed a Covid-cess of 50 per cent and above reported a decline of 66 per cent in May and 51 per cent in June compared to the year-ago period, the report by Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said.

While, states as Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Kerala and Jharkhand, which had imposed a Covid-cess between 15-50 per cent reported an average decline of 34 per cent in sales, the report stated.

# Nafed procures 95,000 tonnes of onion to create buffer stock

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) on Sunday said it has procured 95,000 tonnes of onion directly from farmers at prevailing rates for creating a buffer stock on behalf of the Government.

Last year, Nafed had purchased a total of 57,000 tonnes of onion from the 2018-19 Rabi (winter) crop under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF). The target this time is to buy 1 lakh tonnes of key kitchen staple from the major producing states.

"We have procured 95,000 tonnes of onion so far for the buffer stock. We will complete the target of 1 lakh tonne in the



next 2-3 days," Nafed Additional Managing Director SK Singh told PTI. Onions grown in the Rabi (winter) crop can be stored and have a long shelf life when compared to the one grown in the Kharif season.

The Rabi onions have been procured largely from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat through farmers

Pradesh by 30,000 tonnes, with the support of State Governments.

Last month, Nafed had approached State Governments to send their requirements of lean months in advance to ensure timely evacuation of the stored onion in a planned manner to have a salutary effect on retail prices, which tend to go up in the period late August to November.

This will help in cutting the storage losses, as long duration of storage entails higher storage loss to the extent of 35 per cent, which gets compounded due to adverse weather conditions, as reported last year. Besides onion, Nafed is procuring pulses for buffer stock.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is for the Information Of General Public That: Our Firm, H.S. KALSI & BROS. 15/1 DDA Shopping Complex (RBC) Nangal Raya, New Delhi-110046, Was Being Managed By Three Partners. Since One Of The Partner Sh Amrit, Pal Singh Kalsi has Died on 16/08/2018. The Said Firm is, Now, Being Managed By Remaining Two Partners Sh. Rakesh Kumar Ahuja, and Inder Pal Yadav. Concerned Please Note.  
Inder Pal Yadav, Rakesh Kumar Ahuja

**OMKARA ASSET RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED**  
Corporate Office: C/515, Kanakia Zillion, Junction of LBS Road and CST Road, BKC Annex, Near Equinox, Kalina, Kurla (West), Mumbai-400070.

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
Description of secured asset (immovable property) Date and Amount Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised Officer of Omkara Asset Reconstruction Private Limited (OARPL) Under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorised Officer has issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the following Borrower(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the respective Demand Notice(s) issued to them that are also given below. In connection with above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to OARPL, within 60 days from the publication of this Notice, the amounts indicated herein below, together with further applicable interest from the date(s) mentioned below till the date of payment and/or realization, payable under the loan agreement read with other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to OARPL by the said Borrower(s) respectively.

S.N.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
1.	(Loan Account No. LNCGHKKDHL0000000108/ LNCGHKKDHL0000000356 of our Karkardooma Branch) Gaurav (Borrower) Sangeta (Co-Borrower)	21-07-2020 Rs. 34,92,719/-	All that piece and parcel of House No. D-440, Colony Indraprastha Tehsil & Dist. Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh 201010 Alongwith Construction thereon present and Future both.
2.	(Loan Account No. LNHLPDR0000002006 of our Pusa Road Branch) Rajesh Kumar (Borrower) Khushboo Devi (Co-Borrower)	21-07-2020 Rs. 15,36,350/-	All that piece and parcel of Flat No-401, 4th Floor, ARSH Eco Homes, Plot No-154 & 155, Vayusena Enclave, Kharsa No. 135, Shahber, Greater Noida West, Uttar Pradesh 201301 Alongwith Construction thereon present and Future both.
3.	(Loan Account No. LNCGHGHBHL0000001123 of our Ghaziabad Branch) Rajiv Kumar (Borrower) Orbit Group, Karan Sahani, Urmila Devi (Co-Borrower)	21-07-2020 Rs. 23,66,384/-	All that piece and parcel of Plot No-604, Block-K, Gali No. 3, Gautam Vihar, Vill Ghonda Gurjan Khadar, Shahdra, Mendu, Near Primary School, East Delhi, Delhi-110053 Alongwith Construction thereon present and Future both.
4.	(Loan Account No. LNCGHKKDHL0000000193 of our Karkardooma Branch) Rajni Sharma (Borrower) Krishna Kumar Sharma (Co-Borrower) Krishan Kumar Nimavat (Guarantor)	21-07-2020 Rs. 19,18,909/-	All that piece and parcel of Flat No. SF-202, 2 nd Floor, Plot No. 36, Kharsa No. 8M, Ward No 42, Green Avenue Village Harsau, Pargana Dasna, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201002 Alongwith Construction thereon present and Future both.
5.	(Loan Account No. LNLHMAV000015726 of our Mayurvihar Branch) Ramesh Kumar Jena (Borrower) Ajay Kumar Jena, Bijay Kumar Jena, Sasmita Jena (Co-Borrower)	21-07-2020 Rs. 36,83,552/-	All that piece and parcel of Property No-60 Upper Ground Floor Out Of Rect No 38, Kila No 20, Gali No-12, Sarojini Park Known As, Shastrri Nagar, Village Khureji Illaga, Shahdara, East Delhi, Delhi 110031 Alongwith Construction thereon present and Future both.
6.	(Loan Account No. LNCGHJHNL0000000748 of our Pusa Road Branch) Yadav Munnai Lal (Borrower) Sabitar Devi, Sabita Devi, Farender Yadav (Co-Borrower)	21-07-2020 Rs. 13,81,966/-	All that piece and parcel of Property No. 59A, New No. RZ-126-A, Kharsa No. 12/14, without Roof/Terrace Rights, Village Khayala, West Block EKTN 2, Vichnu Garden, New Delhi-110018 Alongwith Construction thereon present and Future both.

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to OARPL as aforesaid, OARPL shall proceed against the above secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act and the applicable Rules, entirely at the risks of the said Borrowers as to the costs and consequences. The said Borrowers are prohibited under the Act from transferring the aforesaid assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of OARPL. Any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the said Act Rules made the reunder, shall be liable for imprisonment and/or penalty as provided under the Act.  
Place : Delhi Date : 03.08.2020 Sd/- (Authorised Officer) For OMKARA ASSET RECONSTRUCTION PRIVATE LIMITED

Trend Glazer

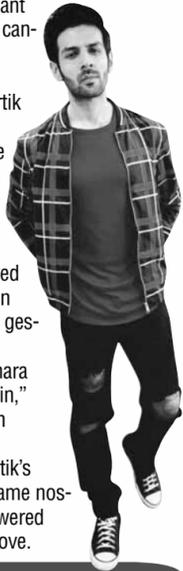
Kartik revisits Dil Bechara

Revisiting the final act of late Sushant Singh Rajput was too overwhelming an affair for KARTIK AARYAN.

Recently, Kartik watched *Dil Bechara* again, particularly a scene featuring Sushant that he simply cannot get over. Taking to Instagram, Kartik posted his favourite scene featuring Sushant in the film.

In the film still, a teary-eyed Sushant is seen giving an okay gesture. "This Scene#DilBechara #WatchingAgain," Kartik wrote on Instagram.

Seeing Kartik's post, fans became nostalgic and showered Sushant with love.



**'I have a fear that this will happen. When films started being shown on Doordarshan regularly, I thought that the day is not very far when films are going to premiere on television. Mahesh Bhatt's Janam did premiere on television and since then more films have premiered. It is foolish to imagine that the film palaces will last forever.**

—Naseeruddin Shah

Actor ALIA BHATT is a big cat lover, and she has surely turned into a cat paparazzo during the lockdown.



Recently, Alia took to Instagram and posted a few pictures of her black cat, Juniper and white cat, Edward. "When all else fails turn cat paparazzi," she captioned the post.

Reacting to the post, celebrity lensman Manav Manglani quipped, "Nice click. you can join my team."

On the work front, Alia will be seen in *Sadak 2*, which is directed by her father Mahesh Bhatt. The film is a sequel to his 1991 film of the same name.

Ryan pushes for more diversity

Hollywood star RYAN REYNOLDS has announced a new initiative to support aspiring filmmakers from the underrepresented communities.

Reynolds took to Twitter to share the news of the initiative through a two-minute video.

In the video, the *Deadpool* star acknowledged that despite its collaborative work, the film industry continues to leave out certain voices.

"Making a film, well it's a group effort," he said, adding: "But for entirely too long, that group has systematically excluded Black, Indigenous, people of colour and a whole host of other marginalised communities."



In keeping with the rapidly changing times, the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) has embraced new technologies. Thus, the Designer Stockroom, the anticipated sale, is now online, in its fourth edition.

Over 100 designers are retailing their collections at upto 70 per cent discount. The Design Council has created a one-stop portal for participating designers on its website, where customers will be directed to the "Designer Stockroom" section on the designer's website.

"With the fashion week not happening this time and the retail stores closed, this was the need of the hour. Though various designers prepared themselves with some available stock, the major issue was the lack of platforms to showcase the collections. So we thought of doing

ONE STOP SHOP

FDCI Designer Stockroom goes online with over 100 designers participating and upto 70 per cent off on merchandise. The idea is to get sales going. By TEAM VIVA

something for our members," said Chairman, FDCI, Sunil Sethi.

Interestingly, there was no application fee or revenue sharing for this initiative as the idea was to get the sales wheels rolling. "We wanted to have a sale where we wouldn't be charging anything from the designers as well as customers. Here what you see is what you get as the designer is able to sell directly without giving any percentage to the middlemen," Sethi added.



The basic idea is to get the designers going. He further shared that in the first three hours, almost 30,000 people had overviewed the products. And, by the very next day, the numbers increased to 50,000.

After tracking the buyers' pattern, it was seen that most of the sales were from the affordable and mid price level bracket. Sethi said, "The customer is very frugal and wants something worth the price. It seems that the market is hungry for Indian fashion designers' apparel but only at an affordable price. So we encourage the consumers to come and buy and the designers to do better pricing in order to increase their sales."

The FDCI is trying to help the country's designers to restart business and give them a platform to showcase their collec-

tions. It is planning to host the India Couture Week in the digital space later this year. "There we want to cater to a higher level and not only the affordable ones. That would be more of a specific interest. If someone is getting married or there's a special occasion, you have to be careful but you're not necessarily affordable. You are wanting to have the best and look the best. So the budgets are going to be enhanced in that case," added he.

The FDCI is also working on the Designer Showroom, which will be a B2B platform. It will connect designers with domestic and international buyers for future collections. This business platform will be live for the forthcoming season, taking the design council towards a digital transformation.

It's good to see how individuals have finally started believing in 'what you load on your body really impacts your well-being'. With the increasing consciousness about body positivity and self-care, the idea behind the beauty and personal care industry is undergoing a paradigm shift. It now acknowledges that mindfulness and consideration towards consumer wellness must gain precedence over the look factor. This has fuelled a subsidiary start-up empire dedicated to holistic health and grooming.

Breaking out of societal standards: A positive change in consumer behaviour

So far, both men and women have been conforming to certain set standards. Dipali Mathur Dayal, co-founder of Super Smelly, says, "For decades, these standards have been dictating the ideal way men and women should look and carry themselves. Truth be told, there is no 'ideal' body type." Fortunately, people are realising that beauty lies in loving your skin, being perfect in your imperfections and taking care of your health more than anything else. "Young customers no longer believe in the marvel of artificially glamorised photographs that make them look unnaturally beautiful and uncertain about their bodies," she adds.

"People are becoming aware now more than ever and embracing natural, organic, and chemical-free products that have health benefits. Ayurveda is being accepted all around the globe as a healing science. Ayurvedic products are considered to be the ones that work on the root of the problem rather than covering it up," says Parag Kaushik, Co-Founder, Upakarma Ayurveda.

With start-ups becoming torch-bearers of this change, even big brands like Hindustan Unilever and Johnson & Johnson, which recently abandoned their "fairness" label to shed colour prejudice, followed suit.

How are they leading the change?

The new age, aware consumer, believes in buying toxin-free, cruelty-free, natural and safe products rather than picking up anything that doesn't benefit the body but harms the planet instead. Many start-ups have come up with products that are environment-friendly, clean, vegan, cruelty-free, sustainable, toxin-free, and made with all-natural ingredients that have a positive impact on your health.

"The start-ups have brought about a boom in natural and chemical-free products and expanded the interest for natural and eco-friendly items. In contrast to synthetic items, natural offerings address further issues and help in cell reinforcement, pigmentation hindrance and antimicrobial action," says Dipali.

"When you choose Ayurvedic products over the market-based ones that are filled with harmful chemicals, it can surprise you by the multiple benefits it exerts. When your body maintains a natural balance, life becomes healthier. It may prevent various health ailments, inflammation, support beautiful skin, may improve concentration and can also help to de-stress the mind in natural ways," says Parag.

Beauty is no longer just skin deep but is about a healthy body, inner peace and sustainability. For personal care business visionaries, this niche market is set to develop exponentially. Simply because the urban millennials and Gen Z will be powering and driving it. Many of these brands are also employing green manufacturing processes, such as solar power. "The eco-conscious packaging utilises everything from recyclable paper to compostable



BEAUTY MORE THAN SKIN-DEEP

With the increasing consciousness about body positivity and self-care, start-ups are encouraging healthy and toxin-free products. By TEAM VIVA



**'FOR DECADES, CERTAIN STANDARDS HAVE BEEN DICTATING THE IDEAL WAY MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD LOOK AND CARRY THEMSELVES. TRUTH BE TOLD, THERE IS NO 'IDEAL' BODY TYPE'**

corn-based cellophane to help reduce our impact on the planet. And decrease the carbon footprint," says Dipali.

Moving away from toxic labels

When buying a personal care product, it is critical to read the labels. Toxins can be hidden in the most commonly-used ingredients such as sulfates and parabens, which are cheap preservatives and hence used to prolong shelf life of the beauty product that you use. These chemicals have various harmful consequences on your body, skin and hair and can lead to permanent damage. The synthetic substances make the skin and hair lose their natural oils and leave them rough and destroyed condition. The continuous use of such toxin-laden products is extremely dangerous to one's well being.

So it is important to look for labels that mention 'sulfate-free', 'paraben-free' and 'environment-friendly'. Furthermore, new-age brands are also encouraging customers to look for labels like 'Australia Certified Toxic Free', 'Not Tested On Animals', 'Made Safe', 'IFRA-compliant. These international certifications and tests indicate that products are the safest for use and the best for your body.

While these certifications are important for personal care products for all ages, when it comes to Gen Z, they need to be even more careful about what they apply to their body. "Since this is the age when the skin undergoes a lot of changes due to puberty, hormonal changes, exposure to dust, dirt, swimming pools, playgrounds, toxin-laden products can wreak havoc on their skin," says Dipali.

We are always just one step away from moving towards a big change and the start-ups have taken that foot forward to facilitate a world that is harmonious, sustainable, cruelty-free, natural and accommodative.

WEBBED

GUNJAN SAXENA: THE KARGIL GIRL

Flight Lieutenant Gunjan Saxena makes history in her journey from aspiring aviator to India's first female combat pilot in the Kargil War. Starring Janhvi Kapoor, Pankaj Tripathi and Angad Bedi, the film releases on August 12 on Netflix.



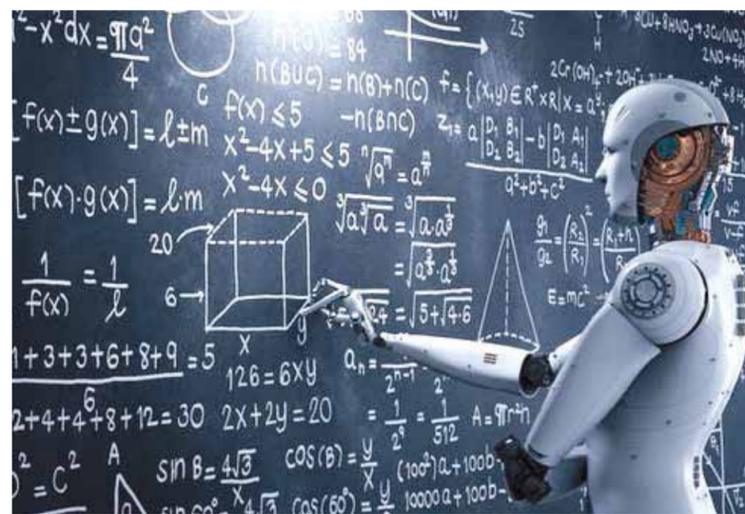
TEENAGE BOUNTY HUNTERS

Twin sisters Sterling and Blair balance teen life at an elite Southern high school with an unlikely new career as butt-kicking bounty hunters. Starring Anjelica Bette Fellini, Maddie Phillips and Kadeem Hardison, season one releases on August 14 on Netflix.



WORLD'S MOST WANTED

Suspected of heinous crimes, they've avoided capture despite massive rewards and global investigations. A docu-series profiling the world's most wanted. It releases on August 5 on Netflix.



# THE BOND OF LOVE

This Rakshabandhan, let's tie ourselves in a 'spiritual bond' that would liberate us from all bondages and help us regain our lost freedom, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI



Rakshabandhan is a special occasion to celebrate the selfless love between a brother and a sister. It's not just a festival, but a symbol of our tradition and culture that keeps us connected with our family sacraments. The original spirit of this festival lies in two words i.e. *raksha* which means to protect and *bandhan* which means bonding.

There have been many examples in history. The story of Rani Karnavati and Emperor Humayun is quite a popular one. When Rani Karnavati, the widowed queen of the king of Chittor, realised that she could in no way defend her kingdom from the invasion of the Sultan of Gujarat, she sent a *rakhi* to Emperor Humayun. In return, he honored this affectionate thread (*rakhi*) and at once sent his troops for her help. Another mythological reference is connected with Lord Krishna and Draupadi. According to the legends, Krishna loved Draupadi so much that he called her *sakhi*. Draupadi, too, had a lot of faith on Krishna. During the great battle of *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna threw a celestial weapon at Shishupala in order to punish him for numerous sins. However, during the act of hurling the *Sudharshan Chakra* from his index finger, he hurt himself. On seeing blood drops, Draupadi immediately rushed to protect him and she tore off a piece from her saree and wrapped it around his finger to stop the bleeding.



Krishna was touched by her gesture of devotion. He asked her what would she like in return of this favor. Draupadi, like a true sister, just asked for the lord's holy presence in her life forever. From that moment onwards, Krishna has been with Draupadi like a shadow protecting her from every small or big trouble. When the Kauravas tried to dishonor Draupadi through *cheer haran*, she prayed to Krishna continuously. Lord Krishna took care of her honour and punished the sinners during the battle of *Mahabharata*.

With the passage of time, this festival has acquired different expressions and connotations. In present times, where glamour is ruling people's heart and mind, there has been a major change observed in man's attitude and approach towards this festival. As a result of which mutual feelings of love, affection and most importantly piety has completely disappeared, because of which the current generations are asking questions like — 'how can one protect somebody just by tying a thread, which is easily breakable?' 'Do such rituals or practices seem practical in today's modern world?' Those who are posing these questions must first of all understand that *rakhi* is merely not a cotton thread but a sacred obligation to protect modesty.

While tying *rakhi* on her brother's hand, a sister does not just seek protection for herself only. No. She keeps much higher spirit of seeking protection for entire female community. Along with this, she also prays to god that her beloved brother becomes liberated from vices of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego, and attains true peace and happiness in life. Thus, it is important for those so-called modern and practical people to realise that tying *rakhi* is just a symbolic gesture. What's important in this ritual is the feelings of good wishes and prayers that comes out from a sister's heart, which further acts like a shield of protection for her brother. However, one wonders — are only females in need of protection? We often forget our true identity of being an infinitesimal point of the divine energy i.e. a soul. We get entangled in the web or bondages of five vices — lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego — which overpowers and influence us to perform negative actions. In turn which causes sorrow and misery.

So when almighty applies the *tilak* of soul-consciousness on our forehead, we become elevated and divine. We start seeing each other as souls and not body. This unlimited vision of brotherhood breaks all barriers of caste, creed, gender, religion and superstitions, thereby, purifying our consciousness and making our actions positive to receive his blessings. And stay under the canopy of his protection for eternity. So let's bind ourselves in this 'spiritual bond' that would liberate us from all bondages and help us to regain our lost sovereignty.

# TECH THE TEACHER

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) can play a major role in channelising remote education in times like these. BEAS DEV RALHAN explains how

Global pandemics like Chikungunya, Ebola Virus, SARS, Zika Virus, and now COVID-19 have shrouded various parts of the world, leaving them in a state of turmoil. Governments across nations have ordered complete lockdown, leaving adults and children trapped in their homes. The global economy is experiencing a slump like never before. The situation, which is getting beyond control, has profoundly affected global businesses and the education sector.

Children and old age people, due to their low immunity, are most affected by the contagious disease. To prevent the disease from spreading further, the WHO (World Health Organisation) advised limiting human intervention. As a result, schools, universities and coaching classes across the world have been shut, creating panic and anxiety among parents, teachers, students and educators.

The disruption in education affected students' learning, resulting in a loss of their life's precious time. The only option viable for the students and learners in the wrecked situation was to switch to online modes. With a massive surge in the number of users, it is the EdTech sector that has managed to face the unsettled economy by providing free access to their learning platforms. The situation of havoc is a perfect time for these EdTech startups to enhance the efficacy of their products

and services. One such solution that has opened new opportunities for them is the integration of Artificial Intelligence or Machine Learning with their platforms in channelising remote education.

## AI IN EDUCATION: A BOON IN DISGUISE

India, the second-largest country in terms of population, immensely lags in the number of education specialists available. The best solution to this is moving proactively towards remote learning. One of the government initiatives taken in this direction is the SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), which makes learning material accessible for teachers as well as students using cloud computing.

The integration of AI by e-learning platforms to their core products and services enables customisation of the entire learning experience as well as saves a lot of time. A perfect collaboration between AI and e-learning products expands the users' rate of engagement by making the online sessions much more interactive.

AI plays a significant role in providing teachers and tutors more time to monitor how individual students are using the concepts. The involvement of modern devices makes learning much more personalised by customising the content for each student, depending on their skills and capabilities, even in times of remote learning.

Though remote learning seems to be attractive in times like these, it appears that organising the learning processes is difficult in a remote learning scenario. This is where AI or ML comes into play too. Managing and coordinating the curriculum with the help of artificial intelligence is a much more comfortable and advanced solution. Effective management of the learning process makes these remote learning sessions engaging and enjoyable for both the teachers as well as the students.

Incorporation of machine learning to education helps in better analysis of a student's capabilities and performance. There are smart programmes that analyse a student's strengths and weaknesses, predicting their future performance. This, in turn, enables teachers to make a study plan focusing on the weaker areas of a student, which is not possible in the traditional classroom structure of education.

The problem of biased grading system is also solved with the successful integration of AI to education when imparted remotely. This increases the trust in the education system as the prejudice of teachers towards a specific student no longer affects the score of those deserving.

The entire process of imparting education, assessment and evaluation of student's performance, setting of

tests and exam papers and tracking the performance of each student becomes simple and less time-consuming. In turn, teachers and educators are left with more time to focus on improving the teaching quality and aptitude development. AI and remote learning, though, have emerged as a solution to the current situation, have a long way to go in the future.

## WITH OPPORTUNITIES COME CHALLENGES

Remote learning and integration of AI in the Indian education system have emerged as a profitable solution in a tough time like these. But with every opportunity, what comes along is a set of challenges that need to be met for its proper implementation. Remote learning seems to be a lucrative solution, which again leaves us questioning whether it is possible on a large scale or not. A significant chunk of the students comes from an area where internet connectivity is an issue. Though the mobile penetration in the country has increased, what remains to be a challenge is the digital divide prevailing in Indian society. Limited data usage, unavailability of laptops and tablets, lack of access to digital resources, and e-libraries are some primary hurdles that need to be resolved before remote learning becomes the norm.

(The author is the co-founder and CEO of Next Education India Pvt Ltd.)

# Against all odds

While women of Poonch in Jammu have been fighting for their basic right to education, will the New Education Policy be a game changer for them, questions YOUSUF JAMEEL



Asiya Firdous of Chitral village in Mendhar Tehsil of Poonch district, Jammu and Kashmir, is among other few examples of our country, who chose to fight against all odds to

brighten her future. Where, even today, families are skeptical about giving birth to a girl, she dared to dream of achieving a higher position. "I didn't know that the path of my education-

al life would be full of thorns," she said.

After completing her school, there was no easy way for Asiya to complete her higher education but she remained dedicat-

ed. "I passed the Class XII examination from the school in my village. After that, when I decided to further continue my academics, it was very unlikely to get permission from my family. But somehow, I still managed to convince them. After enrolling myself in college, life was still nowhere close to being trouble-free. I had to wait for long hours in order to get a proper mode of conveyance. Then, the majority on the bus usually consisted of men. They used to look at me with contempt. In spite of facing every kind of harassment on a daily basis, I continued my education," she shared.

What she attributed the lack of girls' education in India to the male-dominated society. Although the country is making progress, the belief that women belong in their homes is still widely clench. Undoubtedly, Asiya's educational journey was quite a challenge but she was a firm girl, who was committed to achieve something big in her life. She knew the value of education and was ready to fight despite the setbacks prevailing in the society.

"While I was on the verge of completing my graduation, another wall stood in front of me in the form of marriage. I still wanted to pursue my post-graduation degree but my family got me married. In not-so-developed areas, parents usually see their girls as more valuable to the family as workers and caretakers. Since the responsibilities often increase after marriage, I, now, began to imagine that I would not be able to complete my education like other

girls. The Government Degree College in Poonch only offers undergraduate courses. So for completing my further studies, I had to either commute to Rajouri or Jammu," said Asiya.

She almost thought that she would have to sacrifice her career because of added duties but all thanks to her in-laws, who very well understood the importance of education. "Today, I am pursuing my MA in Urdu at Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Rajouri. I am also blessed with two children. I just hope that my hard work pays off," she said and added that many of the evils that thrive in our society affect girls' education, which is why they have to give up on their basic right. But remember, success comes to those who are willing to invest in their future without any excuses."

It is unfortunate that Poonch district has long been neglected by the leaders. Millions of girls are being deprived of education because they are exploited, discriminated against or simply ignored. Like Asiya, there are many girls from different areas of Poonch, who have their stories of struggle and success to share but their stories, like their villages, are tucked away in the mighty mountains.

Now the question is — can the new education policy be a game changer for such locations and the girls living there, who are denied even the basic right to education? Let's hope for the best.

(This article is written under the Sanjay Ghosh Media Fellowship.)

—Charkha Features

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.

—Mark Twain

## BLOOD CLOTS IN COVID +VE PREGNANT WOMEN

In a fight against the novel coronavirus, researchers have revealed that COVID-19 may increase the risk of blood clots in women who are pregnant or taking estrogen with birth control or hormone replacement therapy.

According to the researchers, the novel Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, has proven unusual with respect to the spectrum of its pathological effects.

"In addition to the damage inflicted on the lungs, kidneys, heart and other organ systems, reports have emerged of hypercoagulable states in patients hospitalised with COVID-19," said study author Daniel I. Spratt from the Tufts University in the US.



## BREATHING EXERCISES HELP MANAGE STRESS

Researchers have revealed that well-being strategies such as breathing exercises can improve mental health in college students and manages stress and anxiety.

The research team evaluated three classroom-based wellness training programmes that incorporate breathing and emotional intelligence strategies, finding that two led to improvements in aspects of wellbeing. The most effective programme led to improvements in six areas, including depression and social connectedness.

The researchers, who reported findings in the journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, said such resiliency training programmes could be a valuable tool for addressing the mental health crisis on university campuses.

"Student mental health has been on the decline over the last 10 years, and with the pandemic and racial tensions, things have only gotten worse," said study lead author Emma Seppala from the Yale University in the US.



## SEARCHES HINT AT FUTURE INCREASE IN SUICIDE

Researchers have found that Google searches for information about financial difficulties and disaster relief have increased sharply compared to the pre-pandemic times while googling related to suicide decreased. Because previous research has shown that financial distress is strongly linked to suicide mortality, the researchers fear that the increase may predict a future increase in deaths from suicide.

The findings were published in the journal *PLOS One*.

"The scale of the increase in Google searches related to financial distress and disaster relief during the early months of the pandemic was remarkable, so this finding is concerning," said study author Madelyn Gould from the Columbia University Vagelos in the US.

Researchers in the US and elsewhere have begun studying the effects of the pandemic on mental health, but the impact on suicidal behaviour and deaths is difficult to assess due to lag time in the availability of mortality data.



## CHILDREN ARE HIGH VIRUS CARRIERS

Contrary to the previous findings which stressed that children are not a major source of COVID-19 transmission, a new study has now claimed that young kids can spread Coronavirus as much as older children and adults.

The research, published in the journal *JAMA Pediatrics*, discovered that children younger than five years with mild to moderate COVID have much higher levels of genetic material for the virus in the nose compared to older children and adults.

"We found that children under five with the virus have a higher viral load than older children and adults, which may suggest greater transmission, as we see with a respiratory syncytial virus, also known as RSV," said study lead author Taylor Heald-Sargent from the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

For the results, the research team analysed 145 cases of mild to moderate COVID-19 illness within the first week of symptom onset.



## TIPS FOR MONSOON SKIN CARE FOR BABIES

As the monsoon brings humidity and dampness that can lead to certain skin-related issues in babies, such as rashes, itchy scalp, an Ayurvedic expert has shared key tips for baby's skin care this monsoon season.

According to the expert, with a change in the season, it is advisable to change your baby's skincare routine to include season-friendly products.

Babies have very sensitive skin, and this makes it important to take extra care of their skin by ensuring that it is moisturised and nourished. "Following a monsoon skincare routine for your little one can help tackle skin concerns, right from diaper rashes to cradle cap and itchy scalp," said Dr Prathibha Babshet, Ayurveda Expert, R&D, The Himalaya Drug Company.

"A proper monsoon head-to-heel skincare routine using safe and gentle products will help you tackle the common skin concerns during the season," Babshet added.



# 14 DELIVERS 14

## Auba's brace help Arsenal sink Chelsea in FA Cup final

AP ■ LONDON

The only time Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang looked uncertain was when it came to collecting the FA Cup.

Two goals from the forward had turned around the final for Arsenal, sealing a 2-1 victory over Chelsea on Saturday in the first cup final to be staged without fans.

The coronavirus restrictions also meant there was no Prince William at Wembley Stadium to hand over the silverware in the royal box.

So Aubameyang had to pick up the cup himself on the field as captain. Taking the base as well, no wonder Aubameyang dropped it.

"I saw him walking with the bottom bit attached," Arsenal defender Rob Holding said, "and I was like, 'You need to take that off!'"

The cup was soon raised aloft, with gold streamer showing the Arsenal squad in a mostly-empty 90,000-capacity stadium after the 139th final of the world's oldest football competition.

"He needs more experience with trophies, we can get him more used to that," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said.

"He knows what I think about him. I want to build the squad around him. I think he wants to stay and it is just about getting the deal done."

That is no certainty, with Aubameyang yet to commit to staying beyond the end of his



contract next year.

"I am really not thinking about this," he said.

Winning the record-extending 14th FA Cup does at least give Arsenal a spot in the Europa League, after missing out on qualifying through the Premier League after an eighth-place finish.

"The journey has been long," Aubameyang said. "But today we enjoy it."

A competition that began on August 9, 2019, featuring teams from ninth and 10th tiers, ended later than it had ever done before - two months after the final was scheduled.

Never before had the FA Cup final been staged in August. And never before without fans.

When the team buses arrived, just one man in an Arsenal supporter was singing by the entrance.

Inside the stadium, not even the traditional cup final anthem - "Abide With Me" - was sung live. Instead a pre-recorded version was played out, dedicated to the victims of COVID-19 and racial injustice and performed by Emeli Sande on the stadium roof.

"Love Justice Unity" appeared on the big screen on the stadium exterior that looks down Wembley Way where the only crowds were heading into the shopping mall.

Supporters were still heard inside Wembley before kickoff when an amalgamation of men-

tal health conversations filled the silence at this final named after the Heads Up initiative spearheaded by Prince William, the FA president.

Not even the second-in-line to the British throne could secure a ticket to Wembley with the capacity limited to a few hundred, including players, club executives, media and medics. Instead the prince held a viewing party on the lawn of Sandringham House.

"I'm thinking 2-1 Arsenal," he said before the match. How right he was. Chelsea's celebrations were short-lived.

It had been the dream start for Christian Pulisic, who has been a revelation since the three-month shutdown of foot-

ball ended in June.

Set up by Olivier Giroud's back-heeled flick, Pulisic slotted in from close range after five minutes for his 11th goal in all competitions. The American emulated compatriot Carli Lloyd, who netted in the Women's FA Cup final in 2017 for Manchester City.

While Lloyd got to pick up the trophy after a 4-1 victory over Birmingham, this showpiece ended in agony for Pulisic.

Pulisic pulled up a minute into the second half with a hamstring injury, shouting in pain. He managed a shot before going down clutching his right knee. He had to be helped off the pitch, with support either side while he grimaced.

## Immobile matches scoring record

AP ■ ROME

Helped by a rule change that led to more penalty kicks, Ciro Immobile matched the record for goals in a Serie A season with 36.

In his last match of the season, Immobile finished off an exchange with Adam Marusic with one touch midway through the first half of a 3-1 loss at Napoli on Saturday.

Current Juventus striker Gonzalo Higuain also scored 36 in 2015-16 while with Napoli, improving by one goal on the previous mark set by Gunnar Nordhal 66 years earlier.

However, while Higuain scored only three of his goals in 2015-16 with penalties, Immobile had 14 penalties this season - around 40 percent of his total goals. Cristiano Ronaldo, who finished second on this season's scoring list with 31 to match Juventus' club record, had 12 penalties.

The plethora of penalties was a product of a rule calling for involuntary handballs to be whistled as fouls. The rule is expected to be revised for next season.

Immobile also sealed this season's European Golden Shoe award. Fabian Ruiz, Lorenzo Insigne and Matteo Politano scored for Napoli.

The loss saw Lazio finish in fourth place - having trailed leader Juventus by just one point entering the break for the coronavirus pandemic.

### INTER SECOND

Inter Milan sealed second place with a 2-0 win over high-scoring Atalanta, which hadn't been held to a clean sheet since November.

Daniilo D'Ambrosio scored with a header and Ashley Young found the target from outside



the area in the opening 20 minutes.

Inter finished the season one point behind Juventus, which sealed its record-extending ninth straight title last weekend. Atalanta finished third for the second straight season, four points behind Inter.

### RONALDO RESTS

Cristiano Ronaldo and Juventus strike partner Paulo Dybala were rested in a 3-1 home loss to Roma.

After Higuain's opener, Roma struck back with a goal from Nikola Kalinic and two from Diego Perotti.

Still, it was a celebratory night for Juventus, which received the Serie A trophy after the game inside the empty Allianz Stadium.

### ZLATAN FOREVER

Despite playing only half the season, Zlatan Ibrahimovic became the oldest player to score 10 or more goals in a single Serie A season.

At age 38, Ibrahimovic played a role in all three of AC Milan's goals in a 3-0 win over Cagliari, including a powerful shot of his own that made it 2-0.

Ibrahimovic also used his strength to hold off a defender and enable Rafael Leao to shoot from a sharp angle. The ball bounced off the post and rebounded off Ragnar Klavan for an own-goal. For Milan's final goal, Ibrahimovic set up Samu Castillejo.

Also, Sampdoria drew 1-1 at already-relegated Brescia.

## We are going ahead with women's IPL on time: Ganguly

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BCCI President Sourav Ganguly on Sunday said the women's IPL or the Challenger series, as it is better known, is "very much on", ending speculation about the parent body not having a plan for Harmanpreet Kaur and her team.

The men's IPL will be held between September 19 and November 8 or 10 (final date yet to be locked in) in the UAE due to the surge in COVID-19 cases in India. The women's IPL will also be fit in to the schedule, according to the BCCI chief.

"I can confirm to you that the women's IPL is very much on and we do have a plan in place for the national team also," Ganguly told PTI ahead of the IPL Governing Council meeting later on Sunday.

The BCCI president, who is awaiting a Supreme Court verdict on waiver of the cooling off period to continue in the position, did not divulge details but another senior official privy to the development said that women's Challenger will be held during the last phase of IPL like last year.

"The women's Challenger series is likely to be held between November 1-10 and there could be a camp before that," the source said.

The former India captain also said that the centrally contracted women players will have a camp which has been delayed due to the prevailing situation in the country.

"We couldn't have exposed any of our cricketers - be it male or female to health risk. It would have been dangerous," Ganguly said.

"The NCA also remained shut because of COVID-19. But we have a plan in place and we will have a camp for women, I can tell you that," he added.

## Eng beats Ireland by 4 wickets

AP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Opener Jonny Bairstow smashed 82 off 41 balls as England beat Ireland by four wickets in the second one-day international to take an unassailable 2-0 series lead.

England overcame a middle-order wobble to finish on 216-6 in 32.3 overs in reply to Ireland's 212-9 at the Rose Bowl on Saturday.

After Adil Rashid had taken 3-34 to reach 150 ODI wickets, Bairstow equaled the record for the fastest 50 in this format by an Englishman off 21 balls.

Bairstow, Eoin Morgan and Moeen Ali were dismissed as England lurched from 131-3 to 137-6, before an unbroken 79-run stand between Sam Billings and David Willey helped the hosts to their target with more than 17 overs to spare.

The pair had been the stand-out performers in Thursday's opener and came to the rescue here, Billings finishing on 46 not out while Willey followed up his 2-48 with an unbeaten 47 in the evening sunshine.

Earlier, Ireland overcame another poor start after winning the toss and being reduced to 91-6 before Curtis Campher led the recovery. Campher, in only his



## Trying to fit the best XI in white ball format: Morgan

IANS ■ SOUTHAMPTON

England captain Eoin Morgan hailed the depth in his squad after they beat Ireland by four wickets at the Aegon Bowl in Southampton to claim a 2-0 lead in the three-match series. England are playing with a side that has none of the players from the Test team that played the West Indies

in a three-Test series in July.

"We have a lot of guys who can change the match with the bat at the top of the order, they have the potential. These guys take the game away from the opposition," said Morgan in the post-match presentation ceremony.

"I was going to bat at 4 and then we changed it. I am more than happy to give guys opportu-

second ODI, scored an 87-ball 68 with eight fours before being dismissed by seamer Saqib Mahmood (2-45).

Campher shared two key partnerships late in the innings - a seventh-wicket 60-run stand with Simi Singh (25) and 56 runs for the eighth wicket with Andy McBride (24).

Players again took a knee to support Black Lives Matter before the game.

The three-match series, which is being played with no fans present, marks the start of the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League.

The third ODI is on Tuesday.

## IPL can't be selection criteria for MS: Nehra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mahendra Singh Dhoni at this year's IPL can be a talking point but the tournament cannot be a selection trial for the enigmatic former India captain, reckons former pacer Ashish Nehra.

Dhoni has retired from Test cricket and has not played for India in the limited overs format since last year's World Cup, where India ended semifinalists.

His comeback and retirement has been a matter of intense speculation. His much-awaited comeback is expected to be with Chennai Super Kings at the upcoming IPL, set to be held in the UAE from September 19.

"For me, MS Dhoni's game never came down," Nehra said on Star Sports show 'Cricket Connected'.

"He knows how to run the team, he knows how to push youngsters forward and all these things I don't need to repeat again and again but I don't think this IPL makes any difference in MS Dhoni's stature or his aura as a player," added the 41-year-old Nehra, who played 17 Tests and 120 ODIs.

"I don't think a tournament like the IPL should be MS Dhoni's selection criteria, it's probably just a talking point," "As far as MS Dhoni's international career I don't think this IPL has anything to do with it. If you're a selector, you're a captain, you're a coach and MS Dhoni...if he is ready to play, he will be my number one name on the list," he said.



The former left-arm pacer said players will have to behave responsibly during the IPL to avoid protocol breaches like that by England's Jofra Archer during the recently concluded England-West Indies series.

## Rahane won't mind family's absence in UAE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ajinkya Rahane would want his wife and daughter to be around during the IPL in the UAE but mindful of the risk it poses amid the COVID-19 pandemic, he wouldn't have an issue if the BCCI bars players' families from the event.

The IPL is all set to be played from September 19 to November 8 in the UAE, a move forced by the rising COVID-19 cases in India.

Rahane, who has changed base to Delhi Capitals from Rajasthan Royals, said health should be top priority.

"As an individual, you take COVID-19 situation aside, you would want your family to travel with you, but because of this situation, safety is important, safety of your wife, family and daughter, obviously safety of your teammates is really important," Rahane told India Today's show 'Inspiration'.

"Right now, I feel first health and then cricket is really important. We had a good 4-5 months with our family (during the lockdown)."

"As I said, safety of our family, safety of our players and safety of each and every individual is important. The decision is completely up to the franchises and the BCCI.

"But as I said, there is still corona around, you got to think about each and every individual, think about your



family especially about my wife and daughter. Safety is really important," he said.

Rahane moved to Delhi Capitals in the lead up to the upcoming IPL edition and the 32-year-old right-hander said he is looking forward to working with the "exciting bunch of players" and head coach Ricky Ponting.

"I am really excited to play for Delhi Capitals. I got an opportunity. Last year when I was playing for Hampshire, Delhi Capitals asked me if I was interested in playing for them.

"I took my time and I thought it's an opportunity for me to learn something new. To take my game forward, to take my T20 game forward," he said.

## Kyrgios won't play US Open

AP ■ SYDNEY

Nick Kyrgios has withdrawn from the US Open because of concerns over the coronavirus and in honor of the "hundreds and thousands of Americans" who have died from COVID-19.

Kyrgios said in an Instagram post on Sunday that he had no problem with the United States Tennis Association proceeding with its plans to hold the tournament from August 31 to September 13.

But he cited health and safety concerns amid the coronavirus pandemic as he joined fellow Australian and world No. 1 Ash Barty in opting out of the Flushing Meadows Grand Slam tournament.

"I will not be playing this year at the US Open. It hurts me at my core not to be out there competing in one of the sport's greatest arenas, Arthur Ashe Stadium," Kyrgios said in the video.

"But I'm sitting out for the people, for my Aussies, for the hundreds and thousands of Americans that have lost their lives, for all of you. It's my decision."

"We can rebuild our sport and the economy," Kyrgios adds, "but we can never recover lives lost." Kyrgios also criticised players who have continued to play exhibition tournaments in the past several months, chastising them for "dancing on tables, money grabbing your way around Europe, trying to make a quick buck hosting an exhibition."

There have been a number of exhibition events held, the most high-profile one organised by No. 1-ranked Novak Djokovic. It was held in several countries and photographs of spectators at the events showed poor social distancing.

## Bajrang tips wrestlers to win 3-4 medals at Olympics

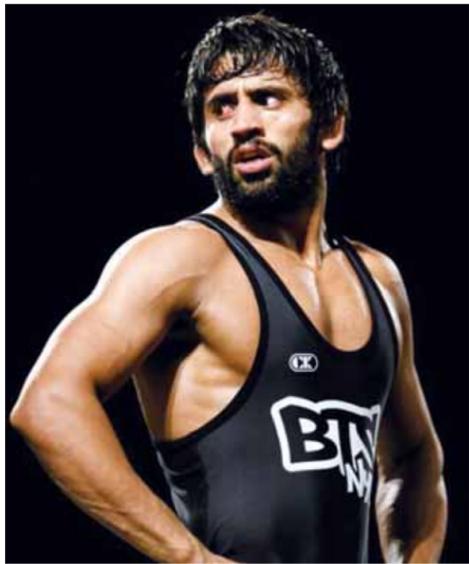
IANS ■ MUMBAI

Asian Games Gold medalist Bajrang Punia is confident of Indian wrestlers performing well and winning medals at the Tokyo Olympics next year.

The star grappler believes India's performances at the World Championship shows they are in good form.

"I think we will win three to four medals from wrestling in the Tokyo Olympics. The World Championship is a tougher tournament than the Olympics but we performed well there. So I think Indian wrestlers are in top form which makes them strong contenders for a medal haul in Tokyo," Punia said during the 17th episode of budding international paddler Mudit Dani's online live chat show 'In The Spotlight' on Saturday night.

The Olympic Games, which were initially scheduled to take place in 2020, have been postponed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with Punia (Bronze, 65kg), Deepak Punia (Silver, 86kg), Vinesh Phogat (Bronze, 53kg) and Ravi Kumar Dahiya (Bronze, 57kg) also won medals at the 2019 World Wrestling Championship in



Kazakhstan and secured an Olympic berth in the process.

During a freewheeling chat with Dani, 26-year-old Punia said he would have lived a normal village life if he had not pursued wrestling. He also rated his first World Championship medal as the

most memorable accolade of his career so far. The Haryana boy had an impressive outing at the 2013 World Championship where he won bronze at the age of 19.

The online live Instagram chat series 'In The Spotlight', that 21-year-old Dani has

begun with the sole purpose of delivering inspiration to other young athletes and fans, has seen champion athletes like Abhinav Bindra, Leander Paes, PV Sindhu, Sathiyam Gnanasekaran and Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju participate, among others.

Talking about the competition in his current weight category 65kg, Punia said: "I feel 65kg is the toughest category in the world. There is no wrestler who has successively won world championship titles or Olympic gold medals. There is always a new champion in every edition. There are strong wrestlers in this category who can beat anyone on their day."

The grappler further praised government and sports federations for organising events such as Khelo India. It has provided a much-needed platform for young athletes to showcase their talent.

"The way we have been organising events at the grass-root level such as Khelo India, a lot of youngsters are getting much-needed support from it which was not there earlier. And if they keep getting this kind of support, not only in wrestling, India will win medals in every sport at the Olympics," he concluded.