

OPINION 6
BEING
HUMANE

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

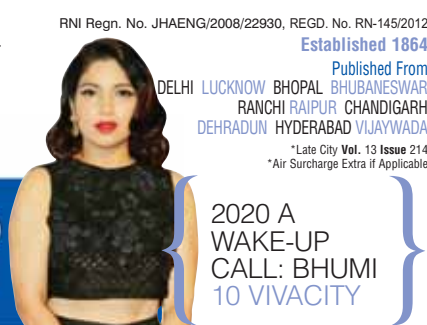
SPORT 12
INDIA TO HOST 2021
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RANCHI, SATURDAY AUGUST 8, 2020: PAGES 12 13



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2020 A
WAKE-UP
CALL: BHUMI
10 VIVACITY

16 die as AI plane breaks into 2

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

PNS/PTI ■ KOCHI

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

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

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

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



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

Bureau," said Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

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

Kozhikode. The front portion of the aircraft had to be cut open to take the body of the pilot from the cockpit. According to information coming out of the airport, the aircraft crash landed on the runway from where it skidded

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Bihar seeks in SC dismissal of plea to transfer case

NEW DELHI: The Bihar Government on Friday sought in the Supreme Court dismissal of Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty's plea for transfer of the Patna FIR against her to Mumbai in actor Sushant Singh Rajput death case, terming it 'premature, misconceived and non-maintainable'.

The 28-page affidavit of Patna SP Upendra Sharma, filed through Bihar's advocate Keshav Mohan, said the state police has the jurisdiction in the case as the consequences of the offence are in Patna as well as in Mumbai.

She spoke 287 times with the late actor's domestic help where the old father of the deceased actor resides. PTI

Rhea's call details spark up debate

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

'Won't pass order without hearing victim families'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

When the bench insisted that adequate compensation

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

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

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

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

16 die in Idukki landslide as heavy rain batters Kerala

PNS ■ KOCHI

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

All 16 who died in the landslide were workers of tea plantation in Bhagamandala district and were sleeping in their company quarters (known in local parlance as laayam) when the mishap happened. Though the landslide and the disaster occurred early morning, the outside world came to know about the mishap after five hours.

The NDRF from Tamil Nadu reached the site by 4.30 pm and was engaged in rescue operations when reports last came.

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



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

Priest among 5 missing in Karnataka landslide

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Five people, including the priest at Talacauvery, have gone missing due to massive landslide at Bramhagiri hills, in which two houses of the temple priests were buried.

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

Covid-19: Govt ready for any situation: CM

Watchful eye over corona spread in State: Soren

PNS ■ RANCHI

Chief Minister Hemant Soren today reiterated that the government has kept a watchful eye on the Covid-19 situation in the State and is ready for any contingency situation. The CM, while talking to media persons here on Friday said, "Increase in the Covid 19 cases is not a matter of surprise as we have accelerated the speed of testing and people are getting cured fast too".

"We have been taking minute to minute details of the corona infection spread in the State... and certainly if anything appears (alarming) to us we are prepared to take any decision that is required," said the CM adding that a high level committee has been taking care of day to day developments.

Earlier in the day, the CM inspected Nehru Park and Police Headquarters on the HEC campus. He said that the Nehru Park should be beautified as in the absence of maintenance; the condition of the park has become very bad. Shrubs and grasses have grown here, which should be cleaned so that common people can use it. Soren said that the identity of this park is associated with the construction of the HEC plant. So, steps should be taken towards its cleanliness and



Chief Minister Hemant Soren takes stock of Police headquarters with Chief Secretary Sukhdeo Singh in Ranchi on Friday Pioneer photo

beautification.

After inspecting the Nehru Park, the CM took stock of the Police Headquarters campus. In an informal discussion with the officials here, he insisted on bringing all the buildings of the Secretariat, including the project building, into one campus. There should be connecting gates for all buildings along with the gates, he said. The CM also emphasised on building a common parking lot. He asked the officials to closely consider all the options related to it so that initiatives are taken to prepare it in a planned manner.

The CM reviewed the roundabout from the roundabout at the HEC campus to the Police Headquarters. He said that adequate arrangements should be made for street lights on both sides of the road. The entire campus should be mon-

itored through CCTV cameras. He also said that both sides of the road wherever the hoardings are installed, they should be removed. A place should be identified for installation of these hoardings. He also directed to take special care of cleanliness here. On this occasion, the officials told the CM that they would also be widened.

Chief Secretary Sukhdeo Singh, Principal Secretary of Road Construction Department Sunil Kumar, ADG of Special Branch Murari Lal Meena, IG Naveen Kumar, IG Priya Dubey, IG Saket Kumar Singh, DIG Vijayalakshmi, Police Headquarters Superintendent of Police Shams Tabrez and Press Advisor to the Chief Minister Abhishek Prasad were present on the occasion.

618 new infections, State reports 16,500 Covid cases

Six lives lost, death toll reaches 151

PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand reported six Covid casualties and 618 fresh cases of novel coronavirus on Friday. With six deaths on Friday, the death toll in the state due to corona infection has crossed 150 marks.

The final death toll at per health bulletin stands at 151, while the number of active cases is 8840, at the same time 7491 persons have won the battle against corona after they were discharged from hospital on recovery from infection. The six deaths include one each from Dhanbad, East



Singh, Ramgarh and Palamu, while two persons from Hazaribag district died today.

On Friday 618 positive cases were reported from different parts of the State while at the same time 809 persons recovered from infection. This is the second consecutive day in the last few weeks that the number of single day recovery

of patients is more than the number of persons admitted in hospitals.

With the rise in recovery of patients the recovery rate of the State in the last three days has jumped to 45.44 per cent. Few days back the Covid recovery rate had gone to 34 per cent.

However, despite a spike in the recovery rate in the past few days, the State recovery rate is still much below than the national average. The national recovery rate is 67.62 per cent, while Delhi recovery rate is 89.84 per cent.

But the state mortality rate

is lower than the national average. The State mortality rate is 0.91 per cent while the national mortality rate is 2.07 per cent.

Sources said that with the return of striking paramedics to work there will be improvement in health services to corona patients.

In a big relief the three day long strike of contractual paramedical staff came to end on Friday after written assurance from the health minister and health secretary to look into the demands of striking paramedics. The minister and health secretary agreed to provide Rs 50 lakh insurance cover on death of paramedics due to corona infection. Earlier, the chief minister had a meeting with the health minister, chief secretary, and health secretary in this connection.

SII plans ₹225/dose Covid-19 vaccine

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

Created in 2000, Gavi is an international organisation, a global Vaccine Alliance, bringing together public and private sectors with the shared goal to improve access to new and improved vaccines for children living in the world's poorest countries.

Trump cites India's action, bans Tik Tok

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump, citing India's recent ban on Chinese social media apps, has signed executive orders that would prevent Tik Tok and WeChat from operating in the US as they threatened America's national security and economy. The ban comes into effect in 45 days, Trump said in two separate executive orders signed on Thursday.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to the Congress, the third company called ShareIT Technology has been called ShareIT. It was banned by the Government last month for being a threat to the 'sovereignty and integrity' of India.

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

the Line of Actual Control in East Ladakh.

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

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

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

The apex court asked the petitioner to file his plea before Congress charged.

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

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

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

He alleged that even during the Doklam border standoff with China, Congress leaders' conduct was suspect. In line with Nadda's assertions, Patra said, a businessman according to the MoU, both the parties were to exchange information on all regional and international issues.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

PTI

Modi: NEP has potential to transform entire nation



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LoR launched to benefit street vendors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

It holds importance also for India where the



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

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

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

immobility, and sensory problems and sleep deprivation.

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

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

India opens to and fro travel with 4 countries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

EC settles matter over Baldev Singh appointment as SEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AHEAD OF WB ASSEMBLY POLLS

Join BJP parivar: Nadda to people

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With the Assembly elections less than a year away the BJP on Friday mounted fresh attacks on the Mamata Banerjee Government holding it responsible for all round deterioration of socio-political and economic situation in Bengal and asked the people to join the saffron outfit in hordes to effect a second Parivartan (change) in the State.

Firing salvos at the ruling Trinamool Congress party president JP Nadda said "Bengal has gone into an

eclipse ... today there is an all round deterioration in law and order situation, the students do not get jobs, the farmers do not get right prices for their produce."

Calling the people to "join the BJP parivar" he said "today cut and corrupts reigns supreme in Bengal and whoever wants to protest is either silenced by the goons or the police. This situation cannot run for long and the people of the State have to come together to change the government by allowing the BJP to take the lead in doing so."

Nadda was speaking ahead of the beginning of a membership drive by the saffron outfit. The party on Friday launched a massive membership drive keeling in view the next year's Assembly elections.

Speaking on the occasion Bengal BJP president MP Dilip Ghosh said, "we (BJP) are referred to as a non-Bengali party ... but they forget that our main ideology Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was from Bengal ... As the Vice Chancellor of the Calcutta University he requested

Rabindranath Tagore to give a lecture in Bengal ... and today they say we are a party of non-Bengalis."

Saying how "thousands of people are joining the BJP not just in Bengal but across the country" he accused the TMC of running a goonda raj saying how the TMC government was indulging in vendetta politics. Ghosh said, "Our supporters are not safe. Either BJP workers are homeless or in jails in false cases. They are ruining Bengal's tradition, culture and education system."

Appealing to the TMC

supporters to join the BJP in hordes he said "you had once dreamt of bringing a change in Bengal not only by removing the Marxist Government but also by doing social work but your dreams were shattered by the present Government. But we want to assure you that your dreams will come alive once again when you join the BJP ... because after coming to power we will unleash a massive development drive in the State."

The BJP has plans to recruit more than 3 crore members in the State in the coming one year or so.

TMC rejects Modi's claims on NEP debate

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday rejected claims made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the State or its Government was consulted before bringing about the new education policy (NEP).

Speaking about the issue, Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee said that "no one from Bengal was consulted on the New Educational Policy" and added whether anyone was privately consulted was beyond his knowledge.

"Insofar as the new education policy is concerned ... to

my knowledge, nothing has happened nor one was consulted ... not even a single time ... with respect to our honourable Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) I can say with my full voice that none from Bengal was included."

Regarding the draft resolution of the NEP he said it being said that "discussions were held with states for 3 to 4 years but no such discussion took place" and added "may be discussion was held with someone but not with us." The Minister also said that the State had formed a 6-member expert committee which will give their views by 15th August.

Kerala likely to see hike in cases: CM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala is in for tough times as the number of Covid-19 cases in the State are likely to see a hike, according to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Briefing the media on Friday, Vijayan disclosed that the State would see a hike in the number of Covid-19 cases in days to come. "It is the considered opinion of medical experts that situation in Kerala would worsen in days to come," said Vijayan.

The Chief Minister had on Monday lambasted the State authorities and frontline health workers charging that the Covid-19 preventive measures had gone out of control because of the indifferent and irresponsible attitude of the Government staff deputed to tame the pandemic.

On Friday, the State saw 1,251 new persons testing positive for Covid-19, said the Chief Minister. Out of the 1,251 new patients, 1061 contracted the pandemic through local transmission. There were 73 persons who could not tell the source from where they contracted the pandemic," said the Chief Minister. Five persons succumbed to the pandemic on Friday and this took the fatalities to more than 100.

The 1,251 included 77 expatriates and 94 persons who returned to Kerala from other parts of India. "There were five deaths in the State on Friday during the last 24 hours and this took the total fatalities in the State to more than 100," said Vijayan. On Friday, there were five districts in the State each testing more than 100 cases. The last 24 hours ending Friday evening saw the testing of 27,608 persons in the State.

119 succumb to virus in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu on Friday saw 119 persons succumbing to Covid-19 and 5,880 new persons joining the list of coronavirus patients, according to a press release by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

The casualties registered on Friday make it the highest number of deaths on a single day in the State. 115 patients who breathed their last on Friday had comorbidities (pre-existing chronic diseases). Till date Tamil Nadu has lost 4,690 lives to covid-19.

The number of new patients diagnosed with covid-19 on Friday is on the higher side, when compared to that of Thursday (5,684).

But the total number of active cases on Friday, (52,759) is less than that of Thursday (53,486) which is encouraging to the authorities.

As 6,488 patients were cured and returned home from hospitals, the number of patients recovered from the pandemic rose to 2,27 lakh.

A single day saw Tamil Nadu health authorities testing 65,189 persons and the number of testing centres functioning in the State rose to 126. While the number of new persons diagnosed with Covid-19 came down to 984 in Thursday (which was 1,000+ every day till yesterday), the same cannot be said about the constituents which make the large cluster of four districts.

While Chengalpatt tested 319 positive cases, Kancheepuram saw 166 new patients and Thiruvallur (388).

PUBLIC NOTICE
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Big win for Mahinda

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



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

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

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

COVID spiral

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



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

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

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

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



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The passage quoted from *The Srimad Bhagavata: The Holy Book of God* applies especially to those who inveigh ceaselessly

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

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

Finally, how many haters of stray dogs have any idea of the love and loyalty that most dogs unconditionally lavish on people? Not surprisingly, Konrad Lorenz writes in *Man Meets Dog*, "The whole charm of the dog lies in the depth of friendship and the strength of spiritual ties with which he has tied himself to man." Author of the landmark book *On Aggression* and perhaps the best-known authority on animal behaviour, he should know.

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

SOUNDBITE

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

Former cricketer
—Yuvraj Singh

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

Actor
—Chunky Panday

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

US President
—Donald Trump

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

Congress leader
—Shashi Tharoor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

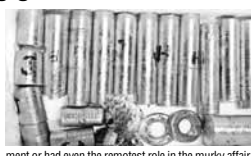
Stand firm

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

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

Gold smuggling gets murkier

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



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

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

Tough questions

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

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

Sritama
Via email

Crisis within crisis

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

Prathna
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Transparency is long overdue

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



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT



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

Embrace the circular economy

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



SHILPI KAPUR BAKSHI PRAHLAD TEWARI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recycling plants are mostly shut or are operating at limited capacity with a lot of the informal sector workers, who played the role of aggregators (such as the junk collectors) leaving urban centres for their native places. Procurement of recyclable waste has also become a challenge. Among plastics, virgin plastics may have been even cheaper than secondary raw material plastic due to falling prices of hydrocarbon fuels resulting from the current low demand. This will also affect the economic viability of many plastic recyclers. Efforts would be required to stimulate the demand for recycled materials and close the price gap between virgin and recycled plastics.

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

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

Maintain a healthy digital diet

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



PRAKRITI PODDAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

Take control: It is natural to feel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to rise above challenges, take smart decisions and experience a sense of accomplishment and success. Hence, people must use this opportunity to take online courses, learn new skills and do things that engage them.

People must consider using digital technology to look after their body and mind during this period of confinement. They may not be able to hit the gym but they can use digital reminders and prompts to move and exercise more — even if they are confined inside a restricted environment. People can consider downloading a nutrition app, exercise, mindfulness or meditation app. They must think about how they can use digital technology to improve exercise, sleep and diet regimes.

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

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

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

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

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



FOREIGN EYE



YETI A BOON TO TOURISM

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

Sensex, Nifty end flat on negative global cues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

After touching a low of 37,787.58 during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex clawed back loss to end at 15,12 points or 0.04 per cent higher at 38,040.57.

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

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

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

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

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

Global markets tumbled

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ NEW YORK

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

The S&P 500 was edging 0.1% lower in early trading after a five-day winning streak had brought it back within 1.1% of its record for the first time since February. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 73 points, or 0.3%, at 27,317.45, as of 9:30 a.m. Eastern time, and the Nasdaq composite pulled 0.1% back from its record.

Markets around the world

latter half of this week, on expectations of RBI policy easing, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. BSE power, telecom, utilities, industrials and basic materials indices rose as much as 1.21 per cent, while con-

sumer durables, IT, tech and healthcare closed with losses. Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices rallied up to 1.44 per cent. In rest of Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended in the red, while Seoul finished with gains.

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

Its Director for Ratings, Vydhyanth Ramaswamy, said, in a "negative carry" for banks as the total exposure will exceed the value of the pledged gold.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gold, silver prices continue to climb; touch record levels

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices surged for the 16th straight session on Friday and touched an all-time high of ₹576 compared to ₹570 in the national capital, according to HDFC Securities.

Silver too continued its upward movement, with the price touching a record-high of ₹77,840 per kilogram. Silver for the 16th consecutive day moved up to ₹576 compared to the closing level of ₹77,264 per kg on Thursday.

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

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

Sebi revises eligibility, shareholding limit for clearing corp at IFSC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Under the norms, any Indian recognised stock exchange or clearing corporation, or any recognised stock exchange or clearing corporation of a foreign jurisdiction, will form a subsidiary to provide the services of clearing corporation in IFSC wherein at least 51 per cent stake is held by such exchange or clearing corporation, Sebi said.

IFSC guidelines stipulate that the clearing corporation must be acquired or held by any other person, whether Indian or of foreign jurisdiction.

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

It added that in line with

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

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

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

There is likely to be

a slowdown in electricity demand and investments in the sector in 2020-21 amid the Covid-19-induced disruption but recovery is expected from 2022 onwards, he said. ICRA said the private sector's share is expected to witness a healthy growth over the next four-five years, while Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) and other state transmission utilities are likely to remain major players in the power transmission segment.

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Smriti Irani on Friday said the government is aiming to develop 10 Craft and Handloom Villages in the country to promote the crafts from across the globe can visit them and learn the rich legacy of Indian weavers and lend support to the Make in India initiative.

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

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

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

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

Bhubaneswar.

She said it is the government's endeavour to ensure upgradation of all weavers' service centres through NIFT students to strengthen the rich legacy of handloom in India. Irani said the portal launched on the occasion will help in connecting state government undertakings, agencies and cooperative societies with the Centre's schemes for weavers to know about their status and benefits.

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

After deducting the marketing fee from the amount received towards the sale of a product, the remaining amount can be transferred to the weaver's bank account through direct benefit transfer, Capoor suggested. Irani also launched a mobile app and backend website for Handloom Mark Scheme. The minister said the Handloom Mark is being promoted to provide collective identity to the authentic handloom products. Textiles Committee Mumbai has developed the mobile app with a backend web portal to completely digitise the process of registration. The app is in English and 10 Indian languages and will enable the weavers of the country to apply for Handloom Mark registration from the comfort of their homes.

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

RAJ CM TAKES IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Tax exemption for vehicles deprived of permits during lockdown

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

CM approves 400 more in new veterinary sub-centres

588 new posts will be created in subdivision offices

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the NSE, it settled the day 6.66 per cent higher at ₹8.80. During the morning trade, it had cracked 7.87 per cent to ₹76.60. Value-buying at lower levels may have led to

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

PTI

UJVN LIMITED
(An Unlisted Govt. Enterprise)
"Uttam Janakalyan Nigam Limited"
UJVN Limited, 11/2020-21 Annual up-keeping and maintenance of Chhrob field hostel
Tender No. 488 Date: 07.08.2020

TENDER NOTICE
Office of the Executive Engineer (Maint.), Chhrob Power Station, Dakpatthar (Dehradun), invites sealed tenders for following works:
Tender No. CH(Maint.): 11/2020-21 Cleaning of pits, clean water tank, and miscellaneous work.
Tender No. CH(Maint.): 12/2020-21 Annual up-keeping and maintenance of Chhrob field hostel
Estimated cost: (1) ₹2,45,590/- GST extra (2) ₹7,98,048/- GST extra
Date of availability of bid on website: 08.08.2020, 11:00 hrs.
Last date for submission of tender: 31.08.2020 upto 13:00 hrs.
For further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com".
(Executive Engineer, Maint., Chhrob)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

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

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

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

SEARCH FOR MISSING

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

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

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

Web: http://cbi.nic.in, Email: cbi@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638/24368641, Fax: 011-24368639
Police Station, Mahendra Park, Delhi
Ph: 011-27632501, 27632501, 8750879227

SHORT CIRCUITS



BHUMI PEDNEKAR

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



MAHESH BABU

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



SHALMALI KHOLGADE

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



RAJA KUMARI

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

VAAANI KAPOOR

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



CONVERSATION 45 MINUTES



BEYOND THE DARK WHIMS

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

The term 'Churail' has been used to refer to witches or to a woman who practises dark magic. You might have heard women being called as *churail*, *dayan*, *bhootni*, spellcaster and other such names for their "wrong" actions. But how often have you heard them being used to question the patriarchal status quo and represent strong-willed women?

Pakistani filmmaker Asim Abbasi, who is now foraying into the web series space with his series *Churails*, believes that the term rightly represents his lead protagonists as it has nothing to do with dark magic. Says he, "The term has historically been used to label women negatively for their courage, aggression, ambition — all the qualities that I associate with a strong woman, were deemed negative. She is the uncanny outsider who comes to shake up the patriarchy. And it is the fear that she elicits in the guardians of the status quo

(often men), that drives men to label them in a derogatory way. So our characters are taking this term, ripe with symbolic value, to give it a positive spin. Every woman, according to me, should aspire to be a *churail*."

Set in Karachi, it is a story of four women from different walks of life who come together to open a covert detective agency to expose cheating husbands amongst the city's elite. These self-proclaimed women run their operations under the guise of a fashion store named 'Halal Designs' that specialise in conservative women's attire. As their operations expand, they come to be the saviours of abused, mistreated and harassed women, and their search for a missing girl brings them face to face with the exploitative world of talent agencies, escort services, and cosmetic companies. It features Pakistani actors Sarwat Gilani, Nimra



Bucha, Yasra Rizvi and Mehar Bano. Excerpts:

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

open a detective agency under the pretext of a burqa shop. How did you conceptualise it?

The themes of gender politics, particularly power dynamics, between a man and



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

Q The poster of the project has a caption: 'Hojayen tayaan, khwateen aur hazrat. Especially hazrat, Jald urahi hain kuch rangeen churailien, apki deep-rooted misogyny ki band bujaanay.' Another scene showed a sign at a store: 'Pets and men not allowed.' How do such strong statements establish the idea of the series?

The store titled 'Halal Designs' is a safe space that women have created for other women. The clients need to feel protected, hence, the idea of it not being open to men. The sign for the store is a replay of boards saying 'women and dogs not allowed' that actually existed in prestigious members clubs in the subcontinent before the Partition, under the British Raj.

Q Your narratives have usually centred around strong female characters. Are there any personal instances that have shaped your choices?

I have grown up in a household of a lot of women and have been surrounded by them all my life. So I tend to gravitate towards their experiences. As a filmmaker, it is my duty to tell stories about those who are under-represented or the ones I believe are not represented fairly in the mainstream media. Female-centric stories Pakistani television rarely regurgitate the same trope about a damsel in distress who needs rescuing by a prince. Those stories are not a representative of the women I know. And those are not the stories I believe our daughters should grow up with.

Q In one of your interviews you mentioned, 'It's not message per se, I prefer to raise questions.' What do you aim to achieve through your work?

Well, apart from entertaining audience by providing a thrilling, edge-of-your-seat experience, I hope that the show stays with them long after the 10 hours of viewing experience is over. They should be able to reflect on the questions the series raises. I wish them, particularly men, to become

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

Q There has been a surge of grey roles in online content now. Filmmakers and actors don't like putting characters in a box. Do you think the same can be said about your four leads?

Absolutely. I deliberately set out to tell a tale of four very flawed individuals. They are not always going to do the right thing. They are going to make mistakes and may not even apologise for them but these traits are all very human to have. All good content, which seeks to create empathetic characters that the audience can root for, should be moving away from the binaries of black and white.

Q You had earlier said, "It's very difficult to put Churails into a genre. It's discussing serious issues, but the show itself doesn't take itself too seriously." What did you mean?

In terms of genres, I would say the series has elements of drama and thriller but I tend to find the whimsy in the darkest of moments, and I feel my work reflects that. The themes that the series addresses are posed as questions rather than preachy messages. My characters find something to smile about even when everything around them is falling apart.

Q On the artistic front, are we ready to nurture cross-boundary collaborations, irrespective of the political environment?

Yes, because art has nothing to do with institutional politics. Its sole purpose is to provide a cathartic experience for the public by emphasising our shared humanity and it aims to do that by bridging the differences.

Q Do you think the audience for the series might get affected from the Pak-India rivalries?

I don't think so. People on both sides of the border are well aware that they have similar life realities and are eager to have a dialogue and cultural exchange.

Q Can we call this an opportunity for the country to attract other global platforms and entertain the idea of producing Pakistani content?

Absolutely. We have not had web content come out of Pakistan that could compete in the global market before. This is a small but important step in getting our stories out to the world. I am hopeful that it will attract more investment into Pakistani talent and filmmakers.

(The series will stream from August 11 on Zee5.)

STUDIO CHAT 15 MINUTES

Celebs go vocal for local

On the occasion of National Handloom Day, Bollywood actresses including Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Kangana Ranaut, Vidya Balan, Dia Mirza, Taapsee Pannu and Janhvi Kapoor urge people to support Indian weavers and Indian organic fabric industries. The handloom sector is one of the major symbols of the cultural heritage of India.

"Most of us have more than we can consume. Fashion industry has become one of the most damaging industries for our environment. New challenges call for new resolves. Let's promote our own Indian organic fabric industries and preserve the planet. When we choose hand-

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

Priyanka posted a picture in a green saree and wrote on Instagram stories, "Indian handlooms are known to be

unique and a work of art. Let's support our support to the weavers and artisans of the textile industry."

Janhvi shared an image of her most favourite handloom saree. "The weavers and artisans in our country are truly unmatched in skill and creativity. The best in the world," she wrote.

Dia Mirza said she is proud of Indian heritage. "Our weavers need all our support and love. This National Handloom Day, let's celebrate the rich legacy of our Indian weaves and textiles. There is nothing like a handloom saree," she wrote along with an image.

—With inputs from agencies



Open to new ideas: Anushka

Actor Anushka Sharma became the youngest female producer in Bollywood with the age of 25 with the clutter-breaking revenge thriller *NH10* and she has since then only shown her passion to tell remarkably new stories. From experimenting with genres to backing fellow outsiders to shine bright in Bollywood, Anushka, through Clean Slate Filmz, has been an entrepreneur who at her core is a diverse storyteller. Anushka feels her Army background has shaped her content choices majorly. "Being Army kids, we are always open to new ideas and all that travelling really helped us understand local stories. Such experiences has not only helped us in storytelling, but it also makes you look at things in different ways rather than a set societal perspective," says Anushka, who runs the business with her brother Karanesh.

She adds, "Watching films doesn't always help you understand movies better. Our life experiences have helped us in this business. We have approached everything with a fresh mind. If we have taken the less travelled path, it is because we have followed our instincts."

Anushka is riding on back to back suc-



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

ARTWALK 60 MINUTES

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

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

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

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

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

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



Lockdown realisations

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



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

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

In his second work that exempli-

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

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

CELEB TALK 30 MINUTES

Notes from 1930

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



Who is Lois?

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

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

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

How would you describe Lois' relationship with her family?

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

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

What made you select the script?

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

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

resonates with you?

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

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

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



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

How was it working with Jonah Hauer-King?

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

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

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

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

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

is going to look like. Lois gets separated from Harry so she's lost. When Harry brings Jan back to Manchester, Lois starts to wonder why he has a small child in tow. There are little things in some of the things that he's saying. She goes through all the scenarios in her head without wanting to grasp onto the worst one, which is the fact Harry might have found someone else.

Did you have to learn many songs for filming?

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

What was your favourite song?

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

Were any of your family a part of the Second World

War in any way?

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

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

Peter told me that Lois and Connie are loosely based on his grandma and her best friend. It was really special to understand that this was a real friendship at the time, especially between a White woman and a Black woman. They're both so bubbly and a great support system to each other. Lois doesn't have many friends and Connie is the one person that can see right through her, she knows everything that's going through her head because she knows her so well. To see them working together in the factory, and then at night, transform and sing on stage, is very exciting. Yrsa Daley-Ward, who plays Connie, is just a wonderful person. I could really find a great friend in her.

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

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

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

SonyLIV from August 14)

PERFECTPAC LIMITED					
Regd. Office: 910, Chinnajpur Tower-43, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019					
Phone No. 011-26441018, Website: www.perfectpac.com					
Email: compliance@perfectpac.com					
CIN No.: L27100DL1972P20005971					
EXTRACT OF UN-AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED JUNE 30, 2020					
PARTICULARS	Quarter ended		Year ended		EPS (Rs. in lakhs) except EPS
	30.06.2020	31.03.2020	30.06.2019	31.03.2020	
	Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited	
Total Income from operations	620.77	1579.28	2216.08	7354.55	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before Tax and Exceptional Items)	(65.29)	4.12	143.92	361.08	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional Items)	(65.29)	4.12	143.92	361.08	
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (after Tax and Exceptional Items)	(47.13)	3.26	103.63	260.86	
Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)	(47.13)	0.89	103.63	258.49	
Equity Share Capital	133.26	133.26	133.26	133.26	
Earnings Per Share (Face Value of Rs. 10/- each) for continuing and discontinued operations -					
1. Basic (Rs.)	(3.54)	0.24	7.78	19.58	
2. Diluted (Rs.)	(3.54)	0.24	7.78	19.58	
NOTES:					
1. The above unaudited financial results, were subjected to limited review by the Statutory Auditors of the Company, members of the Audit Committee and approved and taken on record by the Board of Directors at its Meeting held on August 07, 2020.					
2. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Un-audited Financial Results for the quarter ended June 30, 2020, filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Un-audited Financial Results along with review report of the Statutory Auditors is available under the investor section of our website at www.perfectpac.com and on the website of the stock exchanges i.e. www.bseindia.com and www.cseindia.com					
For Perfectpac Limited Sanjay Rajgaria (Managing Director) DIN: 00154167					
Place : New Delhi Date : 07 August, 2020					

PUBLIC NOTICE

CANCELLATION OF AGREEMENT
This Deed of cancellation of Agreement is executed at New Delhi on this 27 day of July 2020, by Mr. Gaurav Singh Bhat (S/o Late Shri Kumar Singh Bhat H.No. 1110, Sector-7, R.K. Puram, New Delhi at Present H.No. 5-18/14, Shyam Vihar, Phase-II, Dindarpur, New Delhi-110043, New Delhi-110043) (Hereinafter called the ascendants/first party)

Whereas I had executed an Agreement in respect of Ground Floor (Built up Property) bearing Plot No. S-18/14 & 50% Road Rights of Second Floor Land Measuring 84 Sq.Yds. out of Khaura No. 1042, Situated in The Revenue Estate of Village Dindarpur Delhi State Delhi Area about known as A-Block, Shyam Vihar, Phase II, Dindarpur, New Delhi-110043, with free hold rights of the land under the said property and which is bounded as under:

East: Other's Plot West: Road 18/15 North: Plot No. S-18/13 South: Plot No. S-18/15 In favour of Mr. Anurag Kumar Singh Sh. Narinder Singh Rawat (S/o Sh. Gaurav Singh Bhat) K/o S-18/14, Shyam Vihar, Phase II, Dindarpur, New Delhi-110043, duly attested by Notary Public, Delhi on 27.12.2015.

And whereas now I want to cancel and revoke the said Agreement executed by me in respect of the above said property in favour of the said beneficiary absolutely and forever.

B.R. Arora (Advocate)
Reg. No. 17652, Delhi

North Eastern Railway
Notification Notice, C/434/JTBS/PTFACHARIZN/2017

(This Notification is not for employment)

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, N.E. Railway Izatnagar Bareilly on behalf of President of India invites application for the selection and appointment of 1389 Nos. Jan Sadharan Ticket Booking Sevaks (JTBS) location of 38 important serving stations over Izatnagar Division to issue computerized unreserved tickets only through UTS (Unreserved Ticketing System).

Interested persons fulfilling the stipulated conditions may apply in the prescribed format. The Reservation criteria will be applicable as per existing rule. Name of Work : Allotment of JTBS at Railway stations. Name of Stations (JTBS) for which Applications are invited:-

1. Faridkot 2. Kasimganj 3. Pilibhit 4. Budaula 5. Kannauj 6. Kichha 7. Rudain 8. Bazar 9. Sikandra Rao 10. Kathgodam 11. Khatima 12. Raigarh City 13. Faizgah 14. Ujhani 15. Haldwani 16. Izatnagar 17. Ramnagar 18. Baheri 19. Bhujpura 20. Soron 21. Chitaura 22. Daryaganj 23. Kalyanpur 23. Barrajpur 24. Hathras City 25. Mathura Cant. 26. Kanpur 27. Kanung 28. Patiyali 29. Lalitpur 30. Ganjdundera 31. Bilhaur 32. Kamalganj 33. Bareilly City 34. Gursahaiganj 35. Roshanpur 36. Tanakpur 37. Saharua Town 38. Rawatpur. Period : 3 years; Tender Form Cost : 500/- (Rs. Five Hundred only) for each station; Earnest Money : 5000/- (Rs. Five Thousand only) for each station.

1. Sale of application form : From the office of Divisional Rail Manager (Commercial) N.E. Railway Izatnagar Bareilly in any working day between 10.00 to 16.00 pm till 28.08.2020 on payment of Application form fee which will be deposited in cash in booking office at Izatnagar station. 2. Applications submission date & time : 28.08.2020 to 31.08.2020 upto 14.00 Hrs. 3. Applications Opening date & time : 31.08.2020 at 15.30 Hrs. 4. This Application form & document is available on N.E. Railway & Government website www.northeasternrailways.gov.in The person who are interested to submit their applications from website he can download the documents and the cost of application form & Earnest money should be deposit necessarily with application form through Demand Draft issued by nationalized bank in favor of F.A. & C.A.O. N.E. Railway Izatnagar paid in Bareilly. The railway administration reserves the right to cancel the application without assigning any reason.

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager CPRO-Comm-18 N.E. Railway, Izatnagar (About any Passenger, Assembly complaint) S.O. No. 07/2017/2018

Do not travel with inflammable article in train



India to host 2021 T20 World Cup

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

PTI ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

confirmed that the T20 World Cup 2020-21 will be held in Australia in 2021. India will host the T20 World Cup 2021 as planned," the ICC stated in a press release.

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

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

uling of lost international and domestic cricket.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

have been difficult to hold the qualifiers in time.

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

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

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

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

The qualification event will now be held in 2021.

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

Eng tour of India postponed until early 2021

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

about the impact of the pandemic.

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



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Conor Coady embraces Olympiakos' Omar Elabdellattoui after the Europa League match. AP

Wolves send Olympiakos packing

AFP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pak opens 127-run lead

AP ■ MANCHESTER

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

At the Pakistan stretched its lead by another 20 runs, the first day of the first Test at Old Trafford on Friday.

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

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

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

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

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

Tentatively, the fifth-wick-



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

et stand crept up to 65, every run hard-earned, before Naseem produced a memorable delivery to claim his deserved reward.

Pope was hardly to blame, reeling back and fending to gully after the teenager got one to kick viciously off the surface. Barring an early blow to the helmet for new man Chris Woakes, the remainder of the session was better for England as they eased the score out to 159-5.

Buttler had scrapped his way through to 38 but fell to his second ball after lunch, leaving a gap between bat and pad that allowed Yasir enough room to part the stumps.

The experienced spinner was buoyed by the success and made short work of Dom Bess, producing the turn and bounce that left Asad Shafiq with a diving catch at slip. He claimed his

third wicket of the spell and fourth overall when Woakes lost his patience and his shape, bowled for 19 swinging hard to leg.

England were in turmoil at 170-8 but had Stuart Broad to thank for two tail-end stands that added 49 to the total.

He finished unbeaten on 29, with three boundaries in a row off Shaheen and a slogswept six off Yasir under his belt, but all-rounder Shadab did enough at the other end to see off Jofra Archer and James Anderson.

Broad then chipped in with the ball, getting Masood caught down the leg-side for a duck to go with his career-best 156 from the first innings.

Anderson should have made it two down by tea but Ben Stokes dived in front of Root and spilled the chance to leave Pakistan 20 for one.

Barca may need youth to get past Napoli

AP ■ BARCELONA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sinhu, Praneeth & Sikki resume training

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

Pulla Gopichand said.

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

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

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

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

"She has been training at home so physically she is in

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

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

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

"It is great to hear that the

good shape but there are no tournaments till October, so she can afford to go easy, no point exerting too much. We

have to be careful."

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

Svitolina, Bertens withdraw from US Open

AGENCIES ■ NEW YORK

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

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

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

"The situation around Covid-19 is still worrying and



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

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

Murray, Clijsters get wild cards

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

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

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

While Clijsters will be

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

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

Bertens said.

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

NSW offers to host 2021 Aus Open

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

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

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

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

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Manpreet, 4 other players test corona +ve

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

A SAI source, however, said that the camp will resume from August 20 as



planned with the fit players.

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

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

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

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