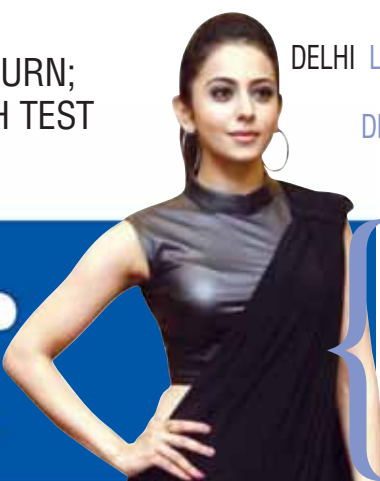


**OPINION 6**  
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MILITARY CAMPAIGN IN AF**SPORT 12**  
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TIMES HAVE  
CHANGED:  
RAKUL  
10 VIVACITY

# US takes out bomber headed for airport

Military says air strike targeted vehicle loaded with explosives

AP ■ KABUL/WASHINGTON

The US military confirmed on Sunday that it targeted an "explosive laden vehicle" headed towards Kabul's international airport where the American military is involved in an evacuation operation. "US military forces conducted a self-defence unmanned over-the-horizon air strike today on a vehicle in Kabul, eliminating an imminent ISIS-K threat to Hamid Karzai International airport," said Captain Bill Urban, spokesman of the US Central Command.

"We are confident we successfully hit the target. Significant secondary explosions from the vehicle indicated the presence of a substantial amount of explosive material," Urban said. The US is assessing the possibilities of civilian casualties, though it has no indications at this time. "We remain vigilant for potential future threats," Urban said in a statement.

Earlier, the Taliban's official spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in a message to journalists in Afghanistan that the US strike targeted a suicide bomber in a vehicle who wanted to attack the Kabul international airport amid the



Afghan people survey the damage after a rocket struck a neighbourhood near the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday AP

American military's evacuation there. However, Mujahid offered few other details about the incident, as well as about another rocket that struck a neighbourhood just northwest of the airport, killing a child. The two strikes initially appeared to be separate incidents, though information on both remained scarce.

US President Joe Biden has vowed to keep up air strikes against the Islamic State extremist group whose suicide bombing at the Kabul airport killed scores of Afghans and 13 American service members. "Our commanders informed me that an attack is highly likely in the next 24-36 hours," Biden said, adding that he has instructed them to take all possible measures to protect their troops, who are securing the airport.

Continued on Page 2

## Surprise as UN note on Af drops T-word

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant development, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), chaired by India, has dropped a reference to the Taliban from an earlier paragraph in its statement that asked Afghan groups not to support terrorists "operating on the territory of any other country."

India, which is the president of the UNSC for this month, signed off on the statement and issued it in its capacity as the chair.

On August 16, a day after the Taliban came to power in

the country, the UNSC had said, "The members of the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan to ensure the territory of Afghanistan should not be used to threaten or attack any country, and that neither the Taliban nor any other Afghan group or individuals should support terrorists operating on the territory of any other country."

But on August 27, the UNSC removed reference to Taliban in the previous statement.

Continued on Page 2

## 'Taliban rise forcing India to rethink Af policy'

New Delhi fears Pak-backed outfit may target J&amp;K with US arms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover is a "challenge" for India and the Government has been forced to rethink its strategy, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Sunday.

Reflecting these concerns,

senior commanders, including the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat and the three Services chiefs, are likely to review the situation in the coming week.

Apprehensions are that the Taliban fighters, aided and abetted by Pakistan, and equipped with the US weapons seized by them may foment trouble in Jammu & Kashmir. In a related development, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday spoke to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan.

"Spoke to US Secretary of



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington on Sunday PTI

State Blinken. Continued our discussions on Afghanistan. Also exchanged views on the

agenda of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)," Jaishankar tweeted.

Expressing the concerns of the security establishment to the Defence top brass, Rajnath said the changing equation in Afghanistan is a challenge. "The country is now rethinking its strategy," he said while addressing the prestigious Defence Services Staff College, Wellington.

He also said the recent developments resulted in India forging an alliance with the countries forming the Quad. It comprises the US, India, Japan and Australia.

Continued on Page 2

## Lathi-happy SDM in soup for 'bust heads of farmers' order

Opp up in arms, Haryana Dy CM promises action

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after Karnal Sub-Divisional Magistrate Ayush Sinha, a 2018 batch IAS officer, was caught on camera instructing policemen to "crack the heads" of farmers at a protest, Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Sunday assured strict action against the officer.

"The use of such terminology by an officer is condemnable and action will definitely be taken in this regard. Maintaining law and order is the job of the Government and the administration. The behaviour of the SDM is contrary to the training of an IAS officer," said Chautala while talking to mediapersons here.

The statement came amid



the Opposition's mounting attack against the BJP-JJP led Haryana Government after the brutal lathi-charge on farmers in Karnal on Saturday.

Reacting to the justification given by the SDM over the language used in the video, Dushyant, who is the JJP's senior leader, said: "The explanation for the lathi-charge is that the officer did not sleep for two days. He should know that the farmer is unable to sleep 200 nights in 365 days of the year."

Continued on Page 2

## Other posters will have Nehru's photo: ICHR tells Opp

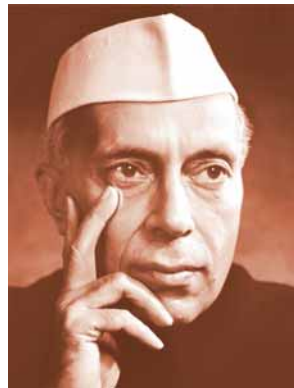
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Facing flak from Opposition parties for excluding Jawaharlal Nehru's image from a poster celebrating the 75th year of Independence, the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) said the controversy over the issue is "unnecessary" as other posters being released in the coming days will feature the first Prime Minister.

"We are not trying to undermine anyone's role in the movement," a top ICHR official said, dismissing criticism on the issue, and added the poster was one of the many released as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations.

The Congress, however, questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue and demanded that he rise above his prejudices and intervene. Opposition parties had said the omission was deliberate.

ICHR, an autonomous body under the Ministry of



Education, has been running a series of lectures and seminars on the theme of the Independence struggle under the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebration.

"This is only one of the posters released as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations. There will be several others and Nehru will be featured in them... Controversy around this is unnecessary," the ICHR official said.

Continued on Page 2

## Economy opens but joblessness still rises

Unemployment up to 8.1% in Aug as against 6.95% in July

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The national unemployment rate rose to 8.1 per cent in the week ended August 28 as against 6.95 per cent in July.

This is despite the fact that most of the States and Union Territories have fully reopened their economy after a decline in the ferocity of the second Covid-19 wave.

Rural unemployment took a sharp upward turn to 7.3 per cent from 6.34 per cent and urban joblessness rose to 9.7 per cent from 8.30 per cent during the same period. Experts and economists have been arguing that decent jobs are still missing, and their return will depend on the revival in the economy, growth in consumption and the pandemic situation.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data show that unemployment remained between 7.16 per cent and 8.07 per cent at the national level from August 5 to August 28. Urban unemployment was registered between



8.38 per cent and 9.71 per cent while rural unemployment remained between 6.53 per cent and 7.31 per cent during the same period. According to the CMIE, the unemployment percentage in Haryana was 28.1, the highest in the country followed by 21 per cent each in Goa and Rajasthan.

According to experts, even so, unemployment, mainly due to the effects of restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, remains high. But though most of the sectors have started resuming functioning gradually, the percentage of unemployment in India is still high.

Since the beginning of July, unemployment in urban India

has stayed below 9 per cent, and at the national level, it has remained under 8 per cent. The unemployment scenario in July is relatively better than the previous three months when India battled the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. The progress of the monsoon and the reopening of economic activity across formal and informal sectors have contributed to a comparatively better situation in July.

In June, the monthly unemployment rate was 9.17 per cent at the national level, 10.07 per cent in urban India, and 8.75 per cent in rural India.

Continued on Page 2

### CAPSULE

#### BAN ON INT'L FLIGHTS EXTENDED TILL SEPT 30

**New Delhi:** The suspension of scheduled international passenger flights due to the coronavirus outbreak has been extended till September 30, aviation regulator DGCA said on Sunday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on select routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," it added. **P4**

#### NPS BECOMES MORE SUBSCRIBER FRIENDLY

**New Delhi:** Making the National Pension System (NPS) more attractive for subscribers joining it after 65 years of age, the PFRDA has permitted them to allocate up to 50 per cent of the funds in equity, besides easing the exit norms. **P9**

#### NCB ARRESTS ACTOR ARMAAN KOHLI

**Mumbai:** The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Sunday said it arrested actor Armaan Kohli in connection with a drugs case after questioning him at its office in south Mumbai for a few hours following the recovery of cocaine at his residence, an official said.

#### METRO OPENS TOILETS FOR TRANSGENDERS

**New Delhi:** In a bid to enhance accessibility for passengers belonging to the transgender community, the DMRC has allowed them access to separate toilet facilities at its Metro stations, which were hitherto meant only for persons with disability, officials said. Besides, any transgender who wishes to use gender-based toilets as per self-identified gender can also continue to do so. **P3**

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MYSURU GANG-RAPE CASE

Bus tickets, phone call records help police nab rapists

**Mysuru:** Bus tickets and liquor bottles near the crime scene and call detail record from mobile towers are said to have led the police to the gang that was allegedly involved in the rape of a college student near here on August 24, official sources said on Sunday.

Police on Saturday announced the arrest of five people from neighboring Tamil Nadu, including a juvenile, while they are on the lookout for a sixth suspect.

According to sources, police had begun the investigation based on the information provided by the victim's male friend, who was assaulted during the crime, that the culprits were speaking in Tamil.

During a search of the crime scene, police stumbled upon bus tickets from Talwadi in Tamil Nadu to Chamarajanagar in Karnataka, and also some liquor bottles found at the scene bore the seal of Tamil Nadu excise department.

Besides, analysis of the call detail record from mobile towers close to the scene of the crime, Chamarajanagar and Tamil Nadu, led them to finally zero in on the suspects, they added. With all these leads, police left for Tamil Nadu on Friday and upon reaching there in the mid-night, they swung into action which resulted in the arrest of the five suspects early on Saturday, sources said.

The five, who frequented Mysuru often for labour jobs, even did loading and unloading at the APMC yard, and were reportedly involved in robbing lone travellers, young couples and women, before returning to their native place.

They accosted the college students and her male friend near the Chamundi foothills on the outskirts of Mysuru on August 24 and tried to rob them. **PTI**

SC issues fresh SOP for resumption of physical hearing of some cases from Sept 1

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court has issued fresh standard operating procedures to accord final hearing of cases in physical mode from September 1, and will employ a hybrid option from Tuesday to Thursday amid strict observance of Covid appropriate norms.

The top court has been hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the pandemic and several bar bodies and lawyers have been demanding that physical hearings should resume immediately.

The SOP, issued by the Secretary General on August 28, made it clear that the courts would keep hearing miscellaneous cases through virtual mode on Mondays and Fridays.

"Wearing of mask, frequent use of hand sanitiser and maintaining physical distancing norms are mandatory for all entrants into the Supreme Court premises, including into the Courtrooms," the SOP said.

The procedures mandated that once litigants and the lawyers opt for the hearing through physical mode then "hearing through video/tele-conferencing mode to the party concerned will not be facilitated".

The SOP has been issued on the directions of Chief Justice NV Ramana who took note of the recommendations of the Judges' Committee set up earlier to consider representations and requests of bar bodies that the hearing through physical mode be started keeping in mind the financial and technical difficulties being faced by many lawyers.

"With a view to gradually facilitate resumption of physical hearing, the final hearing/regular matters listed on non-miscellaneous days may be heard in the physical mode (with hybrid option), as may be decided by the Bench, considering the number of parties in a matter as well as the limited capacity of the Court rooms; further, any other matter may be heard in physical mode on such days, if Bench directs likewise.

"All other matters, including those listed on miscellaneous days shall continue to be heard through video/teleconferencing mode," it said. The bench, hearing cases through physical mode, may decide taking break during the hearings for a period of about 15 minutes, so that the courtroom may be sanitized, it said.

If the number of advocates for parties are more than 20, the average working capacity of the courtrooms as per Covid norms, the bench "at any given time" resort to virtual mode of hearing, the SOP said.

"In a matter listed for physical hearing..., one AOR (or his nominee), one arguing counsel and one junior counsel per party will be allowed entry; one registered Clerk per party, as may be chosen by the AOR, shall be allowed entry to carry paper books/journals etc...,," it said. **PTI**

Jammu Kite Festival 2nd edition held



**Jammu:** Directorate of Tourism, Jammu, in collaboration with JKTDC organised Jammu Kite Festival 2nd Edition at Tawi River Front Park on Saturday. Owing to the enthusiasm Jammuites have for kites the festival witnessed huge crowd from various parts of Jammu.

The event was inaugurated by Dr. Raghav Langer, IAS, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu by releasing the string of a kite.

Speaking on the occasion he said, "Kite flying has been an integral part of the Culture of India. Kites have the ability to drag us out of our homes and go back to childhood for a while."

UP cops bust international human-trafficking racket

12 women brought back to India since April

**Noida:** Nargis (45, name changed) from Unnao district in Uttar Pradesh was living separately from her husband after several years of marriage, along with her two daughters and a son.

Financially weak, the woman came across an opportunity to work as a domestic help in Oman that would help her earn ₹25,000 per month.

In February, with the help of a travel agent based in Kanpur, she reached the Gulf country, only to realise that she had fallen into the trap of a human-trafficking nexus.

"As soon as I reached Oman, my phone was taken away and I was subjected to physical and mental torture. Ayesha, a Sri Lankan woman, was handling me. I begged her to let me return to India, but she demanded ₹4 lakh for my release," Nargis told PTI over the phone.

Her daughter Sophia (name changed) said, "Ammi somehow informed us about her ordeal over the phone, after which I reported the matter to the Kanpur police, along with details of the travel agent."

On August 15, as the country marked its 75th Independence Day, Nargis returned home, along with two more women, courtesy the Kanpur police and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

During investigation, the police found a larger human-trafficking nexus spread across several countries and targeting women aged between 24 and 50 years on the pretext of getting them employed as domestic helps for a good salary in Gulf countries such as Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, officials said.

The victims are not only from Uttar Pradesh, but also from other parts of India like Punjab, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, while the nexus has also trapped women from neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan as well as from some African nations, they claimed. **PTI**

166 children among 880 new Covid patients in Mizoram

**Aizawl:** At least 880 more people, including 166 children, tested positive for Covid-19 in Mizoram in the last 24 hours, pushing the tally to 57,522, a health department official said on Sunday.

The death toll rose to 212 as three fresh fatalities due to the infection were reported during the period, he said. At least 166 children, six health professionals and a Border Security Force jawan were among the new patients, the official said.

Aizawl district reported the highest number of fresh cases at 386, followed by Mamait at 138 and Lunglei at 118. The daily positivity rate was at 8.32 per cent as the new cases were detected from 10,575 sample tests. Eight new patients have travel history, while the remaining 872 were found to have locally contracted the disease, the official said. **PTI**

US takes out bomber headed for airport

**From Page 1**

The US soldiers are helping bring onto the airfield Americans and others desperate to escape Taliban rule. The US evacuated approximately 2,000 people from the Kabul airport in the last 24 hours.

After an Islamic State affiliate's suicide attack that killed over 180 people, the Taliban increased its security around the airfield as Britain ended its evacuation flights on Saturday. US military cargo planes continued their runs into the airport Sunday, ahead of a Tuesday deadline earlier set by President Joe Biden to withdraw all troops from America's longest war. The Pentagon said the remaining contingent of US forces at the airport, now numbering fewer than 4,000, had begun their final withdrawal ahead of Biden's deadline for ending the evacuation on Tuesday. On Friday, 32 U.S. Military aircraft, 27 C-17s and five C-130s departed with approximately 4,000 personnel. Combined with 34 coalition aircraft and departures, an additional 2,800 personnel left Kabul for various intermediate staging bases. Sixty-six flights left out of Kabul on Friday in that 24-hour period with 6,800 evacuees.

After getting briefed on a US drone mission in eastern Afghanistan that the Pentagon said killed two members of the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate early Saturday, Biden said the extremists can expect more. "This strike was not the last," Biden said in a statement. "We will continue to hunt down any person involved in that heinous attack and make them pay." He paid tribute to the "bravery and selflessness" of the American troops executing the hurried airlift of tens of thousands from Kabul airport, including the 13 US service members who were killed in Thursday's suicide bombing at an airport gate. Since August 14, the US has evacuated and facilitated the evacuation of approximately 113,500 people. Since the end of July, it has re-located approximately 119,000 people, it said.

Economy...

**From Page 1**

Due to rainfall deficiency, area sown to paddy has dipped 1.23 per cent at 388.56 lakh hectares so far. In the same period, area sown to coarse cereals, oilseeds and cotton remained lower, while that of pulses, sugarcane and jute/mesta rose marginally. The fall in paddy sowing was due to the large deficit in rainfall in Odisha, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir and Mizoram.

Unemployment data from the CMIE, a widely cited gauge, are not considered to be official, but the country doesn't put out similar high-frequency employment/unemployment data.

During the second wave in April and May, India lost around 23 million jobs across formal and informal sectors as States and Union territories imposed strict lockdowns.

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Novice Buddhist monks offer prayers at the Mahabodhi temple after it reopened for the public, in Bodhgaya on Sunday **PTI**

Lathi-happy SDM in soup for 'bust heads of...

**From Page 1**

At the same time, the Deputy Chief Minister said that farmers also used sharp weapons and pelted stones at policemen on Saturday.

In the video, Karnal SDM Ayush Sinha was seen standing in front of a group of policemen and instructing them that no protesting farmer should go beyond a certain barricade in the area. "Just pick up your lathi and hit them hard... It's very clear, there is no need for any instruction, just thrust them hard. If I see a single protester here, I want to see his head smashed, crack their heads..." Sinha was heard saying in the viral video.

The SDM was deployed as Duty Magistrate at the spot to maintain law and order near a hotel in Karnal, where State BJP leaders, including Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and State party president Om Prakash Dhankar, were to attend a meeting.

Vehicular traffic on various State and National Highways had come to standstill for several hours after farmers were lathi-charged by police at Karnal's Bastara toll plaza. As both sides clashed, at least 15 farmers and 13 policemen had received injuries in the incident.

Referring to the Karnal incident, Dushyant said he was "saddened by the events" but questioned the ultimate motive of farmer leaders.

"I am saddened by the events, but I want to ask through the media where are those 40 farmers' leaders? After all, what is their ultimate motive?" he asked.

Lashing out at the Congress, Dushyant said that some political people want to weaken the farmers of Haryana. They want to weaken Haryana's agrarian economy, they want to break its system. They want to put Haryana under turmoil. Why is this movement not going to Punjab, Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh, why are the people of Haryana being provoked?" he further asked.

Dushyant also insinuated that the farmers' agitation in Haryana will last till the Punjab polls.

Notably, the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had on Saturday evening defended police action and said it is not legitimate to block highways.

"Nobody should create a disturbance in the programme of anyone. They (farmers) should protest peacefully. If they pelt stones on police and block roads, it is the duty of the police to maintain law and order situation in the state," Khattar had said.

Meanwhile, Karnal Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav on Sunday defended SDM Sinha saying that he is an upright and sincere officer. But in the heat of the moment, he used such words.

"I express my regret over the language used by the officer," the DC told mediapersons in Karnal.

Two separate FIRs have been registered against the farmers for unlawful assembly, rioting and other charges and 27 people have also been named in these FIRs.

On reports that a farmer had died due to lathi-charge, the District Administration clarified that the farmer died due to heart attack late Saturday night.

Condemning the police action on farmers, former Chief Minister and Leader of opposition in Haryana Assembly, Bhupinder Singh Hooda has demanded a high-level inquiry into the incident in Karnal. Hooda said, "Any problem can be resolved by talks only, not by suppressing people's voices. There must be a high-level inquiry into whatever happened in Karnal. Culprits must be punished."

On the other hand, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha has demanded SDM Sinha's dismissal.

Police encounters continue in Assam; two dacoits killed

**Goalpara (Assam):** Two suspected dacoits were killed and another was injured in a police encounter in Assam's Goalpara district, an officer said on Sunday.

The incident took place near Goalpara town late on Saturday night when five armed robbers opened fire on a team of policemen and tried to escape from there, he said.

Since the second BJP-led government assumed power three months ago, at least 23 suspected militants and criminals were killed and 35 others injured in police encounters in the state as they allegedly tried to snatch service weapons or attempted to escape from custody.

Acting on a tip-off, the group of police personnel started chasing a car carrying the armed robbers from Rongsa area but the dacoits fired on the police vehicle and moved towards Goalpara town, the officer said.

They got off their vehicle in

Gobindapur-1 area and tried to flee the spot after the policemen fired at their four-wheeler to stop them. "They again opened fire and we retaliated. Two were shot dead in the encounter and one suffered bullet injuries. Two others managed to escape from the spot," the officer said.

The injured person, who initially fled the encounter site, was caught by the local people and handed over to the police, he said.

The accused is currently undergoing treatment at Goalpara Civil Hospital, the officer said, adding that one died on the spot, and the body of the other deceased was found this morning at a nearby place.

A rising number of police encounters, which have seen several suspected insurgents and criminals being shot dead as they "tried to escape" from custody since May, has whipped up a political furore in Assam. **PTI**

Other posters will...

**From Page 1**

As part of the lecture series, the council has invited various historians and academicians to speak on different topics related to India's freedom movement.

Arvind Jamkhedkar, whose tenure as ICHR Chairman ended in March this year, said not mentioning Nehru is inadvertent on part of the council.

"It is inadvertent. Nobody can miss a person like Nehru when we talk about freedom struggle. It could be due to carelessness but definitely not deliberate. No political motives should be seen behind it. I reiterate this must not be deliberate," he told PTI.

The Ministry of Education has not appointed Jamkhedkar's successor yet.

Opposition parties had targeted the government for the exclusion of the image of the country's first prime minister from the poster and suggested that it had been done deliberately.

"Why is Prime Minister silent on omission of Nehru's picture from ICHR's celebration of India@75. This goes against all facts and authentic history. We know PM wants to obliterate Nehru's legacy, but this is unconscionable! He must rise above his prejudices and tell ICHR to fix it," said Congress leader Jairam Ramesh.

Party leader P Chidambaram also hit out at ICHR over the controversy and said the explanation given is ludicrous.

He accused the member secretary of ICHR of bowing to hate and prejudice and asked him whether he would omit Henry Ford while celebrating the birth of the motor car or Wright brothers while celebrating the birth of aviation.

Ford was the first to invent the motor car and the Wright brothers were credited for building and flying the world's first aircraft.

"ICHR Member-Secretary's explanation for the omission of Jawaharlal Nehru from the first digital poster to celebrate 75 years of independence is ludicrous," he said on Twitter.

"After bowing down to prejudice and hate, it is best the Member-Secretary shuts his mouth," he also said.

Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said, "Petty politics once again! May I remind the ruling dispensation that any celebration of our nation's glorious freedom movement is ahistorical without the mention of the progressive and undeterred contributions of Nehru ji. You may omit his name, but can never erase his ideas."

Several other Congress leaders, including Shashi Tharoor, Gaurav Gogoi and Pawan Kherra, took to social media and shared the screenshot of the ICHR website showing photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, B R Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Madan Mohan Malviya and V D Savarkar while Nehru's picture was missing.

Surprise as UN...

**From Page 1**

It now reads, "The members of the Security Council reiterated the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan to ensure the territory of Afghanistan should not be used to threaten or attack any country, and that no Afghan group or individual should support terrorists operating on the territory of any country."

Pointing out the difference, India's former permanent representative at the United Nations Syed Akbaruddin tweeted, "In diplomacy, a fortnight is a long time. The 'T' word is gone. Compare the marked portions of UN Security Council statements issued on August 16 and on August 27."

Sources said the change of USC stance comes from Taliban's cooperation with major countries in evacuation process.

'Taliban rise forcing India to rethink Af policy'

**From Page 1**

Rajnath said alignment and re-alignment of global powers have added to the already changing security challenges and the changing equations in Afghanistan are a recent and important example of this.

"The changing equations in Afghanistan are a recent and important example of this. These circumstances have forced every country to think about its strategy today. Quad has been constituted keeping these things in mind," he said.

On the ceasefire now on at the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir, Rajnath without naming Pakistan said the ceasefire was successful today "only because of our strength".

"In 2016, cross-border strikes changed our reactionary mindset into a proactive mindset, which was further strengthened by the Balakot airstrike in 2019," the Minister said. He also said India will not hesitate to conduct "counter-terrorism operations" against its adversaries if needed. Despite the challenges on the Indian borders, Rajnath said the national security "will not be compromised". Coming to Pakistan, he said, "After losing two wars, one of our neighbouring countries (Pakistan) has launched a proxy war, and terrorism has become a central part of its policy. It is targeting India by giving arms, funds and training terrorists."

Referring to the stand-off along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in Eastern Ladakh, Rajnath said a unilateral attempt was made last year to change the status quo in the

northern sector too. "Here too we have faced our adversary with a new dynamism away from our past response," he said.

Outlining some of the measures to fight modern-day war, Rajnath said the defence ministry is actively considering the creation of integrated Theatre Commands, formation of "Integrated battle groups (IBGs) for unified war fighting and Tour of Duty" initiative for recruitment.

He said these reforms were needed for quick decision-making during wars. These groups will not only facilitate faster decision-making but also increase the number of integrated fighting units, the Minister said.

Delivering the keynote address, the Minister said India is ready to face the changing security dynamics of the world due to the reforms taken by the Government.

On the creation of Joint Commands, Rajnath termed the deci-

sion as another major structural reform, the progress of which is progressing rapidly, he said.

On the modernisation of the Armed forces, he said the induction of Rafale ended the long wait for next generation aircraft. He added Arjun Main Battle Tank, Light Utility Helicopter, developing counter measure systems for Armored Fighting Vehicles and modernisation of Air Defence guns are other steps taken to modernise our military.

Sharing his insights on cyber warfare and biological attacks, Rajnath said the perception of linking national security to geographical boundaries has changed and the alignment and re-alignment of global powers add to the already changing security challenges. He said the Government is making all efforts to develop capabilities to deal with these new and emerging threats to national security.



# 2020 DELHI RIOTS

## Probe standard very poor in riot cases, says court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A court here has said the standard of investigation in a large number of 2020 north-east riots cases is “very poor” and sought the intervention of the Delhi Police Commissioner. Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav made the observations while framing charges against one Ashraf Ali for allegedly attacking police officials with acid, glass bottles and bricks during the communal violence on February 25, 2020.

“It is painful to note that in a large number of cases of riots, the standard of investigation is very poor,” the Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) said, adding that in a majority of cases investigating officers (IOs) have not been appearing in court.

Furthermore, ASJ Yadav said the police hardly bother about taking the investigation to a logical end after filing half-baked charge sheets, due to which the accused, who have been named in multiple cases, continue to languish in jails.

“This case is a glaring example, wherein victims are police personnel itself, yet the IO did not bother to collect the



sample of acid and to have its chemical analysis. The IO has further not bothered to collect the opinion about the nature of injuries,” he noted in an order dated August 28.

Besides this, the judge said that IOs of the riot case have not been briefing the prosecutors for arguments on charges and are merely e-mailing pdf of the charge sheet to them on the morning of the hearing.

He also directed the copy of the order in this matter to be sent to the Commissioner of Delhi Police “for his reference and directing the taking of remedial steps”.

The sessions judge further said that it is high time that the

DCP of North-East District and other higher officers take notice of the observations taken by him and take immediate remedial action required in the matters.

“They are free to seek the assistance of experts in this regard, failing which there is a likelihood of injustice being caused to the persons involved in these cases,” Vinod Yadav added.

Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi in February 2020, after violence between those supporting and opposing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and over 700 injured.

# Transgenders get separate toilets at Metro stations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to enhance accessibility for passengers belonging to the transgender community, the DMRC has allowed them access to separate toilet facilities at its metro stations, which were hitherto meant only for persons with disability, officials said on Sunday.

Besides, any transgender who wishes to use gender-based toilet as per self-identified gender can also continue to do so, they say.

At present, Delhi Metro has 347 such separate toilets across its stations, a senior official said.

“In its efforts to provide safe space and prevent gender discrimination against transgenders, Delhi Metro on a priority basis has designated its existing toilets meant only for ‘Divyangians’ so far, to be accessible for the transgenders too,” the DMRC said in a statement.

To guide transgenders to these toilets, bilingual signages (English and Hindi both), along with symbols for both categories -- ‘Persons with Disability’ and ‘Transgenders’ -- have been installed adjacent to these toilets.



The DMRC later tweeted about this move, and shared pictures of a toilet facility with signages for both the categories of commuters.

“DMRC has made the provision of allowing them (transgenders) access to separate toilets, which were meant for ‘Divyangians,’” Delhi Metro tweeted.

The provisions of section 22 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, mandates adequate welfare measures for the transgender persons at all public buildings including public toilet facilities, the statement said.

The Delhi Metro network spans about 390 km with 285 stations (including the Noida–Greater Noida Metro Corridor and Rapid Metro, Gurgaon).

# AAP: North civic body planning to sell hospitals to Centre

## DELHI BJP REJECTS CHARGE

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday accused the BJP-ruled north corporation of planning to “sell” 10 hospitals and medical colleges to the Centre.

However, Delhi BJP rejected the charge saying that the proposal for standing committee was prepared by the executive wing of the corporation on the direction of Commissioner.

Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that north corporation political leadership has no intent to handover municipal health services to Delhi Government. “The standing committee agenda has been prepared by the bureaucratic wing but BJP leadership will not allow any agenda in the standing committee meeting to table the proposal recommending transferring of health services to the Delhi Government,” he said.

Earlier, AAP Chief Spokesperson and MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj while addressing the media said that on one hand the Delhi Government is preparing to set up seven new hospitals and 6,800 ICU beds, whereas the NMC is preparing to sell Delhi’s hospitals.

The BJP is preparing to sell all the MCD’s assets at throwaway prices before leaving the MCD, Bhardwaj alleged, adding that corporations have failed in all the revenue collection mechanisms be it toll, parking and property tax.



# Former Unitech promoters Ajay, Sanjay shifted from Tihar



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the Supreme Court order, former Unitech promoters Sanjay and Ajay Chandra have been shifted from Delhi’s Tihar prison to Mumbai’s Arthur Road Jail and Taloja Central Jail.

According to Sandeep Goel, the Director General (DG), Delhi Prisons, Sanjay and Ajay Chandra both were taken under police escort to Mumbai by train on Saturday morning.

“They reached Mumbai and were lodged in the jails there in the early hours of Sunday,” said the DG.

Earlier, a bench of justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah had said that two reports of the Enforcement Directorate about the conduct of Sanjay and Ajay Chandra and the connivance of Tihar Jail staff in flouting orders and undermining the jurisdiction of the court have raised some “serious and disturbing” issues.

“In the circumstances, we order and direct that both the accused, Sanjay Chandra and Ajay Chandra be shifted from Tihar Central Jail to the premises of Arthur Road Jail, Mumbai and Taloja Central Jail, Mumbai, respectively,” the bench said in its 27-page order.

It directed the Delhi Police commissioner to personally hold an inquiry into the conduct of Tihar Jail staff in regard to the Chandras and submit a report to the court within four weeks.

“In this backdrop, we are of the view that the Commissioner of Police must make an immediate enquiry into the contents of the communication dated August 16, 2021 addressed to him by the Directorate of Enforcement so that all the officers and staff of Tihar Central Jail who may be complicit in the violation of law are held accountable,” the bench said.

# 11k Covid vaccine doses administered in Delhi’s 3 jails, say officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Prison department on Sunday said over 11,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses have been administered to inmates of Mandoli, Rohini and Tihar prisons in the national Capital so far.

According to data shared by prison officials, a total of 11,525 doses of Covid-19 vaccine have been administered and as on Friday, 1,710 Tihar jail inmates aged above 45 and 6,328 below the age of 45 years were given Covid-19 vaccine.

“Similarly in Rohini jail, 172 inmates above 45 years and 600 below that age were administered the vaccine while in Mandoli jail, 483 inmates aged above 45 and 2,232 below it have been inoculated,” the data stated. The prisons department launched a Covid vaccination drive for the inmates in the 45-plus age category on March 18, while the inoculation of prisoners in the 18-44 age group began on May 18.

Since March, around 383 coronavirus cases have been reported among the inmates of the three jails and eight of them have succumbed to the infection, officials said, adding 225 prison staff have been infected.

# HC pulls up prison authorities over failure to place facts of rape convict’s case before SRB

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has asked the prison authorities here to file an affidavit stating why the correct facts relating to a man’s conviction being modified from gang rape to the offence of rape were not placed before the Sentence Review Board (SRB).

The Court directed the Delhi Prisons Director General to file the affidavit also indicating the reasons why the SRB was informed that the case was for the offences of gang rape and robbery.

“In view of the fact that complete and correct facts were not brought to the notice of the SRB, Director General (Prisons) is directed to ensure that while putting up the case of the petitioner before the SRB in its next meeting, the judgment of conviction passed by the trial court as also the judgment of this court in appeal, whereby, the petitioner has been convicted only for the offence punishable under section 376 IPC and the gist thereof will be placed before the committee,” Justice Mukta Gupta said.

The man’s counsel told



the court that though he was convicted for the offence of gang rape, the high court later modified the charge to rape based on an appeal but maintained the life imprisonment.

The counsel said the man’s case was repeatedly being rejected by the SRB as correct facts were not placed before it by the authorities.

He further said the man’s conduct in prison was exemplary, and he has not misused the concession granted to him in the form of parole and furlough.

The court asked the authorities to file a status report with the outcome of the next SRB meeting before the next hearing in the case on October 22.

# Man arrested for cheating people through schemes offering high returns

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police have arrested a man for allegedly cheating people of their investments through schemes offered by him promising high returns.

The accused has been identified as Murari Kumar Srivastav. Police said that he was arrested from Humayunpur village, Sitamari district in Bihar.

According to R K Singh, the Additional Commissioner of Police, EOW, the arrest was made on a complaint by 38 people, who alleged that a company called ‘Progress Producer Company Limited’ and its directors cheated them of their money invested in the schemes offered by the firm.

“Around 531 victims invested money in these schemes. The directors of the company collected around Rs 3.5 crore from duped investors and fled. Srivastav, along with his acquaintances, operated the company from Paharganj and targeted people from Delhi-NCR,” said the Additional CP.

# G’gram murder: My sister was killed over property by her in-laws, alleges brother

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Five days after the brutal killings of four persons in Gurugram’s Rajendra Park area in which the prime suspect Rao Rai Singh, who killed his daughter-in-law Sunita Yadav and three members of his tenant family, Sunita’s brother has filed a complaint against her in-laws and husband Anand Yadav at the Rajendra Park police station in Gurugram.

“Her in-laws, her husband had murdered my sister to grab her property. Her husband is a lawyer who killed my sister in the conspiracy. He alleged that Sunita’s in-laws constantly picked fights with her over household chores because she refused to sell the property. Sunita often complained that her husband ill-treated her and in-laws assaulted her, but each time, we consoled her and told her things would get better,” Kumar alleged in his police complaint.

The complainant Ashok Kumar told the police that Sunita Yadav married Anand Yadav, the son of murder suspects Rao Rai Singh and Bimlesh Yadav, in 2010. She was a resident of Kanina in Mahendragarh and moved in



with her in-laws at their Rajendra Park residence after getting married.

Kumar alleged in his police complaint that

she was deliberately ill-treated and assaulted by her husband and in-laws allegedly because she owns one acre of land in her native place in Kanina in Mahendragarh.

The complainant said following their father’s death, the property was transferred to him and Sunita. Ashok is a farmer who undertakes agricultural work on three acres, of which one acre belonged to Sunita.

“The land is at a prime location on Kanina-Kosli main road and has a value of ₹1 crores. Her in-laws and husband were forcing her to sell it. Her husband even had threatened me in February 2021 to handed over money after selling Sunita’s property and If she will die the property will be transferred to him,” Kumar alleged in the police complaint.

# 3 teenagers drown in Yamuna in North Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a tragic incident, three teenagers who had gone for a bath drowned in Yamuna River in North Delhi on the early hours of Sunday.

The deceased have been identified as Sameer (16), Pankaj (15) and Sumit (15), all residents of Karawal Nagar.

According to a senior police official, around 5 AM on Sunday morning, the deceased along with Sumit’s brother Bunty (15) came from their homes at Yamuna river while Bunty was behind the three when they drowned in the river.

# SI suspended over video showing men drinking liquor in lock-up

New Delhi: A sub-inspector of Delhi Police Special Cell has been suspended after a video purportedly showing some men consuming liquor and snacks inside a lockup surfaced on social media earlier this week, officials said on Sunday.

The sub-inspector was suspended after he was found responsible for allowing people to meet the accused in the lock-up, officials said.

A video surfaced on Wednesday in which the men were seen having liquor, snacks and cigarettes inside what appeared to be a lock-up with the people sitting on a mattress and one of them making the video. The video was allegedly shot at the Special Cell office at Lodhi Colony in the capital. PTI



ISKCON temple is illuminated on Krishna Janmashtami festival in New Delhi on Sunday

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# ‘Blasts in Kabul could have been handiwork of Taliban’

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Counter-terrorism experts there are not surprised at the ISIS (Khorasan) claiming responsibility for the August 26 blasts at the Kabul airport even as a second attack close to the airport in the Afghan Capital was reported on Sunday, turning true the US’ alert about such a possibility.

While the Afghan and Pakistan Taliban are also the ISIS (Khorasan) are all linked, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has created the distinction to allow Taliban gain international recognition and subsequently, receive grants.

In fact, the blasts at the Kabul airport could have been the handiwork of Afghan Taliban itself or executed by ISIS-K with knowledge of Taliban, in order to expedite the pending evacuation of foreign nationals and terrorise the locals not to flock the airport, the experts suspect.

Experts tracking developments in Afghanistan said as many as 27 Taliban fighters were killed in the Kabul bombings earlier this week but it conveniently shifted the blame to ISIS-K as part of the larger ISI ploy of denying violence since the Taliban has now wrested power from the erstwhile Abdul Ghani led government. Both the Taliban and the ISI-K share similar ideology.

The ISIS (Khorasan), also a splinter group and an extension of the Taliban, will be used by the ISI for the abduction of foreign nationals still working on pending projects there. The ISI will then offer to broker



ransom deals with the ISI-K and extort hefty sums of money for such abducted foreigners, sources said.

In addition, the ISIS (Khorasan) will also be used for legitimising the drug money generated from the opium cartel operating out of Taliban under the patronage of ISI through its terror affiliates like the Lashkar-e-Tayabba and Jaish-e-Mohammad as also Taliban, they said.

Counter-terrorism expert Dr Rituraj Mate told The Pioneer, “The discrimination between the Taliban and ISI-K and portrayal of their separate identities is an ISI conspiracy to allow Taliban the elbow room to collect funds from white channels like international funding agencies and for evading scrutiny from the FATE.

The ISI-K will be in charge of the dirty games of generating funds from illegal drugs trade and extortion bids as also to perpetrate killings and bombings.”

Assessments here suggest the tacit understanding and coordination between the

Taliban and the ISI-K could also be unraveled as the former swiftly took control of Nangarhar, one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, from the latter that controlled the area.

However, it cannot be ruled out that ISI-K could be seeking its share of the spoils of the capture of Afghanistan by Taliban that is yet to form a governance mechanism for cooperation in takeover of Nangarhar.

Counter-terrorism expert of Afghan origin and founder of the Afghanistan Republican Salvation Front, Ajmal Sohail, said, “The control of Kabul and the airport there rests with the Haqqani Network, so the attacks on Kabul airport being blamed on the ISI-K could just be an eyewash and could be a result of some behind-the-scenes negotiations between the CIA and Taliban in the run-up to the Kabul bombings.”

The August 26 blasts have so far claimed 170 lives even as the US has claimed to have killed the ISIS-K planner behind the bombing in a retaliatory drone strike.

# Modi lauds experimental zeal of Indian youths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the experimental zeal of today’s Indian youth who, he said, is ready to choose a ‘new and unknown goal’ and determined to achieve it, be it in science, business, sports or any other field.

“India’s youth is giving emphasis to quality. Today’s youth does not want to walk on the pre-decided road. They want to step into the unknown world. Their destination is new, their goal is new, their path is new and their desire is new. Once our youth gets determined, they work hard to achieve that goal. They start working day and night on it,” the Prime Minister said in his monthly radio talk ‘mann ki baat’.

“Not long ago, India opened its space sector and on seeing that, the youth of our generation grabbed the opportunity and benefitted from it. The students of colleges, universities and young people working in the private sector stepped forward as well. I am sure that in the coming days, a large number of such satellites will be used by our youth. Our students, our colleges, our universities, students are working in labs in this regard,” Modi said.

Similarly, he said, the recent Olympic performance has been fired by Indian youth and cited Indian hockey men’s winning prize in Tokyo.

Modi said the passion for sports in the youth of the country at the present times is the greatest tribute to hockey wizard Major Dhyan Chand.



“Irrespective of the number of medals won, no citizen of India enjoys victory until a medal is won in hockey. And this time, in the Olympics, the medal that was won for hockey came our way after four decades,” he said.

“This time, Olympics have created a major impact. The events at the Olympics are over; the Paralympics are going on. Whatever our country earned in this world of Sports may be little in comparison with the world, but enough has happened to bolster our belief,” Modi said.

Modi on Sunday also spoke to Para table tennis player Bhavina Patel, 34, and congratulated her on winning a silver medal at Tokyo Paralympics.

“In the country now, sports and games sportsman spirit is not to stop. In family life, in social life, in the life of the Nation, this momentum has to be permanence...infusing it with energy...replenishing it with relentless new energy,” he said.

Continuing to speak on Indian youth, Modi said they have also made big global impact on the toy industry that has a huge market of around ₹ 6 to 7 lakh crore.

He said that youth today is focussing on improving the processes, variety and technology in toy-making and experimenting with new things.

The Prime Minister extended greetings on Krishna Janmashtami and urged the countrymen to carry forward the great traditions of the nation.

He said about 3-4 kilometres away from Somnath temple there is the Bhalka Teerth which which is the place where Lord Krishna spent his last moments on earth.

He further mentioned Jadurani Dasi, a US citizen who he said is an American and is connected to ISKCON Hare Krishna movement and one of her major specialities is that she is skilled in Bhakti Arts. He said it is ‘our responsibility’ to preserve culture and traditions.

# IMD: Rainfall in August deficient by 26%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) data has shown that rainfall in August has been deficient by 26 per cent so far, with shortfalls in two successive months triggering fear of a below normal monsoon this year.

The rainfall in July was seven per cent less than normal. “August recorded 26 per cent deficiency till yesterday (August 28),” IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said, adding that the shortfall has been recorded in north and central India. June recorded 10 per cent more rainfall. The IMD will soon release a forecast for September, he said.

Presently, of the 694 districts, 251 witnessed deficient rainfall or drought like situation due to lack of rainfall. India received 630 mm rainfall as against the normal of 696.6 mm since the onset of the southwest monsoon on June 1, a deficiency of 10 per cent. Punjab, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Lakshadweep are among the rain deficient States and Union Territories.

The shortfalls in two successive months in the four-month Southwest Monsoon season from June 1 to September 30 have triggered fear of a below normal monsoon this year.

The IMD had earlier predicted a normal monsoon this year. Skymet Weather, a private weather forecasting agency, has downgraded their forecast to a “below normal” mon-



soon this year.

According to the IMD data, the country received 10 per cent less rainfall from June 1 to August 28. The IMD had predicted normal rainfall for August (94 to 106 per cent of Long Period Average or LPA), but it appears that the forecast will be off the mark.

Rainfall over the country as a whole during the second half (August to September) of the 2021 Southwest Monsoon season is most likely to be normal with a tendency to be in the positive side of the normal, the IMD had said earlier this month.

The IMD has four meteorological divisions covering different parts of the country. The northwest India which covers the north Indian plains and the hill states has recorded 13 per cent less rainfall than normal.

The central India division which encompasses Gujarat, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra has recorded 14 per cent deficiency.

The east and northeast India division that includes Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and the northeastern states has recorded eight per cent deficiency.

The south peninsula division which covers all the southern states has recorded 5 per cent more rainfall than normal.

# Covaxin maker seeks int’l partners to make billion doses



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech is seeking international manufacturing partners as it targets a billion doses of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin each year even as the first commercial batch of the jab was released on Sunday by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya from the pharma company’s new plant at Ankleshwar in Gujarat’s Bharuch district. The jabs manufactured at Ankleshwar facility will be available for supply starting September 2021.

Covaxin is one of the five vaccines that have been approved for emergency use approval in India. However, Bharat Biotech has struggled to boost output, missing supply commitments to the Indian government.

“We want to ensure that Bharat Biotech can ably meet the demand for Covaxin such

that individuals across the country, and the globe, have access to the vaccine,” the company’s chairman and managing director Krishna Ella said in a statement here.

On Sunday, the company rolled out the first batch of Covaxin shots from a facility in Ankleshwar in western India that has the capacity to produce more than 1 crore doses per month.

After the launch, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said: “We want to ensure equitable access of the vaccine to every Indian citizen, and the expansion of Covaxin production facilities by Bharat Biotech will take us closer to this goal.”

He took to Twitter to talk about the importance of vaccination drive in fighting the pandemic and said the launch “will increase the supply of vaccine in the country and will help in reaching the vaccine to

every Indian.”

Bharat Biotech has already deployed multiple production lines at its Hyderabad, Malur, Bengaluru, and Pune campuses. “We want to ensure that Bharat Biotech can ably meet the demand for Covaxin such that individuals across the country, and the globe, have access to the vaccine and can secure their health and safety. Our goal to develop a vaccine with global safety and efficacy standards has now been achieved, we are now marching towards the goal of the annualised capacity of one billion doses,” said Ella.

Presently major share of Covid-19 vaccination drive is being handled by the Serum Institute of India which has provided over 55 crore Covishield jabs with Bharat Biotech lagging far behind by contributing just over 7 crore jabs of Covaxin till now since January 16 when the national programme was launched.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eighteen months since they stopped, there is no sign of resumption of international flights from India even as there is now an apprehension of a third wave of coronavirus.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Sunday extended the suspension on international scheduled commercial flights till September 30 owing to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic. The ban was to end on August 31.

“In partial modification of circular dated 26-06-2020, the competent authority has further extended the validity of circular issued on the subject cited above regarding Scheduled International commercial passenger services to/from India till 2359 hrs IST of September 30, 2021,” the DGCA circular said.

“However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis,” it added.

However, the restriction doesn’t apply to international all-cargo operations as well as flights specifically approved by the DGCA. Scheduled international passenger flights



were suspended in India on March 23 due to the coronavirus pandemic. But special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May 2020 and under bilateral “air bubble” arrangements with selected countries since July 2020. India has formed air bubble pacts with around 25 countries including the US, the UK, the UAE, Kenya, Bhutan and France.

Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories. However, some countries that had ‘air bubble’ arrangements with India banned air travel to and from the country at the peak of the second wave.

These countries were Australia, Canada, Bangladesh, Germany, France, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Italy, Kuwait, Iran, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the

United Arab Emirates, and Singapore.

While some countries lifted the ban later, many others are yet to do so. The UK recently elevated India to its amber list of countries. The elevation means travellers from India no longer have to undergo institutional quarantine upon entering the country.

Meanwhile, after a long hiatus, flights between India and Bangladesh will resume from September 3, 2021. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) said that passenger airlines can resume operations after four months under an air bubble agreement signed by the two countries last year. “The air bubble may be resumed w.e.f. 03.09.21 till resumption of scheduled International passenger flights,” MoCA letter read. Sri Lanka has also decided to resume flight from nine cities in India.

# Experts for adopting front-of-pack labels on all processed foods

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

If India is to safeguard its people’s lives, particularly children, from the looming crisis of deadly non communicable diseases (NCDs), it needs to urgently and mandatorily adopt front-of-pack warning labels (FOPL) on all ultra processed foods (UPF), health experts said here on Friday.

They have reasons. According to Euromonitor estimates, the sale of UPF has increased from 2 kg per capita in 2005 to 6kg in 2019 and is expected to grow to 8kg in 2024. Similarly, beverages have gone up from less than 2 Litres in 2005 to about 8 Litres in 2019 and are expected to grow to 10 Litres in 2024. Unchecked consumption of these UPF is leading the country’s youth to overweight and obesity.

At a webinar held here to discuss the issue threadbare, experts felt that though simple consumer-friendly moves, FOPL can allow for a paradigm shift in the food consumption pattern of the country and as a result, avert an impending NCD crisis, saving many lives.

“Right-to-health is a fundamental right of every person. Therefore in Indian context, states are required to adopt regulatory measures such as front-of-package warning labelling on foods and beverages containing excessive amounts of

**‘FOPL can allow for a paradigm shift in the food consumption pattern’**

wasteful nutrients such as sugar to tackle the rising burden of obesity and NCDs,” said Dr.Suneela Garg, President , Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine (IAPSM), at the webinar.

Presenting evidence from around the world, Neha Khandpur, faculty of public health from University of Sao Paulo, Brazil’s Centre for Nutrition informed, “Warning labels have consistently been shown to be most effective at improving consumer understanding, at influencing their purchase decisions and at supporting healthy food choices. They also are most likely to encourage product reformulation. Warning labels are the strongest nutrient-based label that India should consider implementing.”

Dr Arun Gupta ,convenor of Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPi), a national think tank working on nutrition policy, said, “This is happening at a time when India is showing a tremendous rise in sales of UPF items both in the category of food and beverages.

# Neeri-KFT restores damaged kidney: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ayurvedic poly-herbal formulation, Neeri-KFT, has the potential to not only slow down the progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD) but also restore normalcy in functional parameters of the vital organ, a team of researchers has claimed. Their review is published in the latest edition of Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences.

They concluded that “Phytopharmacological evaluation of Neeri-KFT suggests that it exhibit substantial potential against oxidative and inflammatory stress induced apoptosis by exerting antioxidant, nephroprotective and

immunomodulatory effects...in the patients associated with renal dysfunction or chronic kidney disease (CKD).”

The Neeri-KFT, a herbal medicine extracted from plants has been found to correct oxidative as well as inflammatory stress known for reducing body’s immunity, said the authors after drawing data on the formulation for kidney ailments from more than five electronic databases such as Science Direct, Google Scholar, Elsevier, PubMed, Springer, ACS publication from published database between 2000 and 2020.

The study, ‘A systematic review on nephroprotective AYUSH drugs as constituents of

NEERI-KFT’ also highlighted the herbal drug’s efficacy in reducing “serum creatinine, blood urea, and serum uric acid as compared to placebo group” and described “its well-tolerated effect with no adverse hematological or biochemical abnormalities occurred to any subjects during clinical trial.”

“It can be suggested that NEERI-KFT can be an alternative and complementary therapy at end-stage renal disease (ESRD) or complete loss of kidney function where frequent dialysis of renal transplant remains only a single option for continued survival CKD patients,” researchers noted.

KK Sharma, MD of the AIMIL Pharma explained that



**KK Sharma, MD of the AIMIL Pharma explained that the herbal formulation comprised of herbal extracts of more than 20 different potent medicinal plants**

the herbal formulation comprised of “herbal extracts of more than twenty different potent medicinal plants like Haridra, Varuna, Shirish, Gokhru, Punarnava and Anantamul to name a few, known for their Nephro Corrective, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and

reparative regeneration of kidney cells.”

Head of BHU’s Department of Dravyaguna, Dr K N Dwivedi, felt that the herbal ingredients in Neeri-KFT are loaded with many anti-oxidants besides medicinal values which not only strengthen kidney but liver also. “This is a very unique drug and we have found it very effective in our study also,” he added.

As per the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2021, 15% of adults and 14% of women are estimated to have CKD which is associated with a high prevalence of risk factors in the patients such as hypertension, diabetes and depression.



# Kerala doctors fire salvo at State Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A day after Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that all was well in Kerala despite the daily hike in the number of people afflicted with Covid-19 cases and the State was a shining example to the rest of the country, discontentment from the medical fraternity came out in the open.

Kerala Government Medical Officers Association (KGMOA), the biggest apolitical organization of doctors working in the Government service fired the first salvo on Sunday about the impending agitations.

"We are overworked, exhausted, tired and being over-exploited by the authorities. On an average, more than a hundred medical staff get afflicted with Covid-19 every day as doctors, nurses and other supporting staff are forced to work without break," said Dr G S Vijayakrishnan and Dr T N Suresh, president and general secretary respectively of

the KGMOA on Sunday.

The doctors said that despite their pleas to the Government, especially the Chief Minister, during the last 18 months highlighting the shortcomings faced by the public health sector in the State, the Government has not done anything to resolve the issues. Meanwhile the situation has gone from bad to worse with more and more doctors coming under attack from the patients as well as their relations for no fault of the doctors or the hospital staff.

"The Government is duty bound to adopt policy decisions which will strengthen the health infrastructure, retain and encourage the services of doctors with professional experience in public health," said the statement.

They pointed out that instead of strengthening the public health sector, what the Government has done during the last 18 months was to weaken the sector beyond

recognition. "Public health sector in Kerala is crumbling and fretting day by day.

The Government, instead of taking steps to strengthen the sector is allowing it to get disintegrated day by day. What has happened is that most of the doctors who are frontline warriors in the fight against Covid-19 have got afflicted with the pandemic of course through contacts," said the statement.

The doctors as well as their family members are falling victims to Covid-19, they said. "While other States in India are in the forefront to help and inspire the doctors by hiking salaries, perks and risk allowances, the Kerala Government has cut down the remuneration and done away with risk allowances and the insurance safety net. Our requests to recruit 1,000 doctors, at least on temporary scale, have fallen on deaf ears," rue the doctors association.

An office bearer of

KGMOA said that Health Minister Veena George denying in the floor of the Legislative Assembly about physical assaults on doctors was proof of how indifferent the Government is towards their grievances.

The statement further said that the Government instead of encouraging the good works done by the doctors fraternity have drastically deducted their entry level pay and cut short whatever little allowances they were getting.

## 29,836 new cases in State

KOCHI: Kerala on Sunday diagnosed 29,836 persons with Covid-19, said Health Minister Veena George in a release. She said more than 1.5 lakh samples were tested during the last 24 hours while the Test Positivity Rate on Sunday evening was 19.67 per cent. The State saw 75 persons succumbing to the pandemic taking the fatalities till date to 20,541.

Causing concern among the medical fraternity, 98 health professionals ended up in hospitals after getting afflicted with Covid-19. There are 2.12 lakh undergoing treatment for Covid-19 across the State. As

part of tightening the rules to restrict the movement of people in the State, curfew orders have been slapped across Kerala from Monday night. The prohibitory order would be in place from 10 pm to 6 am till further orders.

The Government is launching an awareness programme to make more and more people to get vaccinated. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that it has been found that only persons who have refused to undergo vaccination have been afflicted with Covid-19 in the State, which is doing otherwise better than all other States in the country.

# Ayodhya is nothing sans Lord Ram, says Kovind

Lucknow: Ayodhya is nothing without Lord Ram, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Sunday as he visited the city, where a Ram temple is under construction.



President Ram Nath Kovind offers prayers at Ram temple in Ayodhya on Sunday

"Without Ram, Ayodhya is not Ayodhya. Ayodhya exists where there is Ram. Lord Ram resides permanently in this city, and hence in the true sense, this place is Ayodhya," the president said while inaugurating a Ramayan conclave there.

He was also scheduled to visit the Ram Janmabhoomi construction site where the temple is coming up, after a historic verdict by the Supreme Court in 2019.

Apparently referring to his name, Kovind said, "I feel that when my family members named me, they were possibly having the feeling of respect and affection towards Ram Katha and Lord Ram, which is seen in the common public."

Elaborating further on

Ayodhya, the President said, "The literal meaning of Ayodhya is the one with whom it is impossible to wage a war. Owing to the courage and power of Raghuवंशी kings Raghu, Dileep, Aj, Dashrath and Ram, their capital was considered unconquerable. Therefore, the name of this city as 'Ayodhya' will always remain relevant."

Highlighting the love of Lord Ram towards tribals, he said, "During his days of exile, Lord Ram did not call armies of Ayodhya and Mithila to fight the war. He gathered the Kols, Bheels, Vaanars and formed his army. In his campaign, he included 'Jatayu' (vulture). He strengthened love and friendship with the tribals."

# Maha logs 4,666 new corona cases

Mumbai: The daily Covid-19 deaths climbed marginally to 131 in Maharashtra on Sunday and the infections came down to 4,666, even as 3,510 patients were discharged after full recovery from various hospitals across the State.

A day after the State logged 126 deaths and 4,831 infections, the daily deaths went up to 131 and the infections rose marginally to 4,666.

With 131 fresh deaths reported on Sunday, the total number of deaths in the state increased from 1,37,026 to 1,37,157, while the total infections - with 4,666 new cases - went up from 64,52,273 to 64,56,939.

As 3,510 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since

the second week of March last year increased from 62,59,906 to 62,63,416. The recovery rate in the State came down from 97.02 per cent to 97 per cent. The total "active cases" in the state increased from 51,821 to 52,844. The fatality rate in the State stood static at 2.12 per cent.

Pune with 13,503 active cases emerged as the first in the state in terms of maximum number of "active cases" in the state, while Thane with 7283 cases stood second in the state, followed by Satara (5515), Ahmednagar (5168), Sangli (4,712), Solapur (4224) and Mumbai (3378).

Of the 5,36,59,613 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 64,56,939 have tested positive (12.03 per cent) for Covid-19 until Sunday.

# ED summons Maha Min, Raut links it to Rane episode

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that the ruling Shiv Sena linked to Union Minister Narayan Rane's recent arrest, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Sunday summoned Sena leader and State Transport Minister Anil Parab for questioning on Tuesday.

Notwithstanding Shiv Sena's spokesperson Sanjay Raut's allegation linking the ED summons to Rane's arrest during the latter's recent "Jan Ashirwad Yatra", official sources said that Parab had been summoned for questioning in connection with the allegations of corruption made incarcerated police officer Sachin Vaze against Parab. Disclosing that ED had summoned Parab to appear before it for questioning, Raut tweeted: "Shabhaas! As expected, the ED has issued a notice to Parab as soon as

Rane's Jan Sangarsh Yatra ended. The government above (Centre) has got down to work now. Epi-centre of the earthquake was Ratnagiri. Parab is the guardian Minister of Ratnagiri district. You should understand the chronology. We will fight the battle in the courts".

On his part, Leader of Opposition in the State Legislative Council Pravin Darekar of the BJP denied Raut's allegations and said the ED notice could in no way be linked with the recent political turmoil witnessed during Rane's "Jan Ashirwad Yatra" the ED must have been based on a complaint lodged with the central investigating agency against him.

It may be recalled that Rane was arrested at Sangamner in Ratnagiri district on August 24 for his "tight-slap" remark against Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena President Uddhav Thackeray.

However, Rane was granted bail by a Mahad court on the same night.

Following Rane's arrest, the BJP had charged that Parab, as a guardian minister of Ratnagiri district, had mounted pressure on the district police administration to arrest Rane. The principal opposition party had also demanded a CBI probe into a CBI probe into a video clip that purportedly showed the minister speaking to a senior police official and asking the latter to arrest Rane.

Rane resumed his "Jan Ashirwad Yatra" from Ratnagiri on August 27. While Rane threatened to unravel the mystery surrounding the deaths of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's ex-manager Rajput Disha Salian and Tik-Tok star Pooja Chavan, and

"expose" the two MVA ministers' role in the two deaths.

Rane continued to target the Sena and Chief Minister Uddhav

Thackeray while Raut wondered why BJP was "shielding" the Rane family.

During the course of his yatra, Rane had gone on record saying that several MVA leaders are on the radar of the ED and CBI and tough times awaited for the Shiv Sena-led MVA government.

However, informed sources in the ED said that the summons issued to Parab related to an allegation that Vaze had made in April this year that the minister had asked him to collect Rs 50 crore to close a preliminary inquiry against Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT).

It may be recalled that in a four-page handwritten letter to the Special Judge of the NIA court on April 7, 2021 Vaze - who is currently in the central investigating agency's custody in the twin SUV planting and alleged Manshukh Hiran murder cases - had claimed

that Parab had called him July-August, 2020 to his official bungalow and look into a complaint concerning the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT), which was under preliminary enquiry and asked him to bring the SBUT trustees to him for negotiations about the enquiry.

"He (Parab) also insisted to initiate primary talks to get Rs.50 crore from the SBUT in order to close the said enquiry. I had expressed my inability to do any such things as I do not know anyone from the SBUT and also I did not have any control over the enquiry," Vaze contended in his letter to the NIA court.

Even at that time, Raut had defended Parab by charging that "a new letter writing trend" had started in the state to destabilise the MVA government by writing letters from behind the bars.

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FIRST COLUMN

AFGHAN TAKEOVER

AND IMPACT ON INDIA

The Indian borders with Pakistan in J&K would require more security investments



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The murky Afghan situation has raised serious concerns for India. It was never a strong player but was able to make a niche among Afghans with its humanitarian aid and \$3 billion investments since 2001 for rebuilding a devastated country. Rightly India avoided the US prodding to be a military ally. The security stakes were always high. What can India do now? India has been investing in a relationship in an unstable regime and the Afghans coming to India for training have always acknowledged the warm gesture. Indian diplomacy played a critical role of emotional security, cultural ties and whatever level of trade and rebuilding mechanism it could provide. Thousands of Afghans are in India for work, training, re-skilling, education and medical treatment. Over 2,200 students of Afghan-origin studying in India on scholarship stare at an uncertain future. The Indian Council



of Cultural Relations would continue to extend the help. Pakistan that was feeling run down by the US for giving preference to India would now not miss an opportunity to embarrass India. And Iran, for whom Taliban is a matter of concern and has to protect its interests, has its embassy open in Kabul along with the missions of Russia and China. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited five countries in the region - Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan - last year. An additional \$1 billion line of credit to widen connectivity and energy sectors was issued and a business council was formed. The present flight detours and difficult land travels might affect the ties and business deals might become expensive. That India is not friendless is testified by the safe passage it could arrange for its envoy diplomats and Indian nationals. Still, it is a foreign policy setback and national security concern. The engagement with Afghanistan and adjacent regions has to be reworked. An immediate concern is whether its borders with Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir would require more investments to secure it or not as J&K remains high on the Mujahideen agenda. Taliban raiding the embassy in Kabul and consul office in Herat speaks volumes as also the alleged kidnapping of Indians from around the airport. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan will bear an adverse impact on India's bilateral trade with it, according to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT). Trade between the two nations amounted to \$1.4 billion in 2020-21 and \$1.52 billion in 2019-20. It has hit Afghan traders also. Their exports for now are thawed and restoration depends on how situations normalize. Afghans sell dry fruits like dried raisin, walnut, fig, pine nut, almond dried apricot, pistachios and medicinal herbs. Confederation of All India Traders says that prices of some commodities may also go up in the Indian markets due to uncertainty over bilateral trade and relations with Afghanistan. Exports from India stood at \$826 million whereas imports amounted to \$510 million in 2020-21. The not-so-large volume of trade may not look monetarily important but strategically, they help both the countries. India's significant contribution in its rebuilding and investments in Afghanistan too would be missed there. India had an ambitious plan with the initiative of International North-South Corridor spanning Iran, central Asia and Eurasia. It is supposed to emerge as a major connector with Modi's concept linking the corridor to Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran rail link, now operational. It is also supposed to be linked to Chabahar and dedicated freight corridor having special economic zones on its flank being built by India. The Chabahar-Sistan-Baluchistan-Central Asia/Afghanistan route till recently was considered less risky than the high-risk provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. With the changing political scenario this too is likely to become a challenge.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

# Asia and its new arc of instability

Anti-Americanism brings China, Pakistan, Iran and the Taliban together but, given one another's self-serving politics, how long will the relationships last?



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

The Chinese backing of the Taliban, Pakistan, and Iran presents to the world a new 'arc of instability'. It is highly unlikely that the European Union, the US, and its allies would recognize the Taliban's brutal regime. Developments such as Iran-Russia missile sales agreement, Pakistan-Iran pipeline, and Russia's military cooperation agreement with Pakistan set the tone for a new convergence of interest: anti-Americanism. However, today, both Pakistan and Iran seem to be approaching their diplomatic endgame.

In 2010, Pakistan was able to capitalize on the differences between the US and Afghan governments when it convinced the latter to remove anti-Pakistan Afghan spy chief Amrullah Saleh and Interior Minister Hanif Atmar from power. In 2011, Islamabad asked the Karzai government to disengage with both India and the US, and give Haqqani network an upper hand in its intelligence and security agencies. In return, Pakistan spoke of Taliban's adjustments by politically accommodating some elected representatives.

Similar demands were put forth to Ashraf Ghani. Although initially refused, Ghani eventually recognised the Taliban as a political party, and Saleh was again ousted from the government. Those demands of Pakistan have now been fulfilled, and, with an anti-India approach, Pakistan will aim for destabilising Kashmir. The statement of Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Neelum Irshad Sheikh on the Taliban and Kashmir echoes their larger sinister plans. The strategic axis between China, Pakistan, the Taliban, and Iran might ensure that the important routes to Central Asia and Eastern Europe which India aimed for bypassing Pakistan may now be no longer available or even if they are, through other possible routes, would be more prone to sabotage. However, this phase might not last long.

The Taliban regime is not yet recognised and its initial euphoria of an 'Islamic Emirate' may soon fizzle out. Pakistan's ambition to carve out a space for itself from the shadow of Saudi Arabia and OIC seems to have reinforced its anti-Americanism and a pro-Taliban stand. Today, Saudi Arabia has strengthened its defence relations with India and is largely unwilling to support Islamabad's case on the Kashmir issue. Wearing the blinkers of an 'India-centric' approach and following the killing of Osama Bin Laden, it did foresee the deterioration of its relations with the US and its allies. Raising slogans of Jihad from the UNGA platform, sanctions of the Trump administration, the non-recognition of Israel, and the UAE-Israel deal are the other factors that have cut short Islamabad's strategic manoeuvring at a regional level. By attempting to normalise its relations with Iran, it has tried to capitalise on the



THE TALIBAN, PAKISTAN AND IRAN MIGHT JUST SERVE THE PURPOSE OF TRANSPORTING CHINESE PRODUCTS TO EASTERN EUROPE. THIS HAS BEEN THE LARGER GEOPOLITICS OF CHINA WHEREIN IT HAS REAPED ADVANTAGES ON ONE COMMON GROUND — ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



Saudi-Iran rivalry. Once the western evacuation is complete, the West will have no strategic inclination to continue their favourable policies for Pakistan. Thus, FATF blacklisting and the termination of its Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status is definitely on the cards.

Islamabad faces serious uprisings in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (former NWFP) and Balochistan. There are increasing chances that coordination between anti-Pakistan establishments such as TTP, BLA (Balochistan Liberation Army), BLF (Balochistan Liberation Front) and BRA (Baloch Republican Army) might increase and become a single, focused force. Afghanistan may now be a sanctuary for anti-Pakistan forces too. On the other hand, the increasing grip of its 'good Taliban' (Haqqani Network, Quetta Shura Taliban etc.) may choke the domestic society and perhaps may even endanger the 'democratic regime' of Imran Khan. Once its strategic utility of the recognition is over, Taliban in the coming few months may attempt to establish itself as a political party in Pakistan and get the support of its armed forces and ISI?

Whether Pakistan is ready to transform itself into an 'Islamic Emirate' from being an Islamic Republic is a question for the future. Will the international economic backlash and growing political restlessness result in another military coup in Pakistan? In both situations, China will try to benefit geo-strategically.

Concerning Iran, the new strategic uncomfortable accommodation of the Taliban is all set to change the geopolitical equations

of West Asia. First, the economic viability of dealing with the Taliban and Pakistan is going to prove costly for Tehran. In 2020, Kabul and Tehran agreed on a shared vision "to support peace and stability in both countries and the wider region" which had included Iran. Later that year, Afghanistan and Iran inaugurated the Khaf Herat Line that sprung from a previous agreement between Iran, Afghanistan, and India to develop Chabahar. Iran invested around \$666 million in it as Tehran aimed to integrate itself with the world. Today, as it finds itself in China's geo-economic embrace, there are more chances that its precious raw materials will soon find their way to China via this line. Moreover, with Beijing's circular lending, there will be no financial transfers to Iran and neither will Iranians get the jobs in the BRI Projects. Iran might just serve the geographical utility of connecting to China via Afghanistan and Pakistan. The same fate awaits Afghanistan. The three countries might just serve the purpose of transporting Chinese finished products to Eastern Europe. This has been the larger geopolitics of China wherein it has reaped advantages on one common ground -- anti-American sentiment -- of two countries via a terrorist organisation.

Secondly, Iran is all set to lose its leadership role of the Shias in the region. Iran would probably not be comfortable to align with Pakistan for a longer time. Tehran is fundamentally opposed to an 'Islamic Emirate' for it challenges its political and religious role in the region. Its aspirations to continue as the leader of a 'Shia Crescent' will take a backseat with Pakistan's

and Afghanistan's Taliban culture.

In such circumstances, how long will Iran continue to provide oil to Afghanistan remains the big question. Do the Taliban have the resources to pay for the oil and food imports? Further, the Turkish-Pak cooperation will ensure that Iran would play a minimal role in its immediate neighbourhood and they might together downplay the Shia interests in the region.

Turkey's refusal to adjust the Afghan refugees and the construction of its wall on its border with Iran is all set to destabilise the region further. How does Iran then financially manage the refugees? Most of the able Shia refugee men might opt for being a part of Iran-led Fatemioun brigade or other proxy war organisations, yet, given its volatile economic situation, it could probably end up being another client state of the dragon.

During the "peace talks", the Taliban had previously provided guarantees that they would not prosecute the Hazara community once back in power. In early 2021, Taliban leaders had visited Tehran and that had drawn a lot of criticism in the country. The people and the religious leaders have still not forgotten the inhumane treatment given out to the Shia community during the reign of the Taliban from 1996-2001. So, for how long can this 'trust' factor continue? With the tables turned, such promises seem to be far from reality.

In these circumstances, the sharp polarisations within Asia can end up compromising security of the region, particularly in India. The 'New Great Game' is thus all set to be replayed with different players and alliances.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

TODAY MARKS 7 YEARS OF #PMJANDHAN. THE SCHEME HAS ENSURED FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT OF COUNTLESS INDIANS. — PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



IT IS ACTUALLY THE 7 YEARS OF RENAMING THE UPA'S BASIC SAVINGS BANK DEPOSIT ACCOUNT. THE PM IS AN EXPERT IN RENAMING AND RELAUNCHING. — SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER JAIRAM RAMESH

# Watering the droughts with Israel

It is now India's responsibility to provide the right platform and allocate necessary resources to expedite the implementation of water projects

Towards the actualisation of the Indian Prime Minister's envisaged Water Mission, it is argued that an autonomous "Institute of Indo-Israel Strategic Partnership in Water" be given official sanction at the earliest. It is believed that this proposed institute can be the catalyst in the achievement of India's water-security objectives.

In the face of rising water scarcity, the issue of water security has become a focus area. Pollution, climate change, population growth, and groundwater depletion are putting pressure on water resources making water management a big challenge. And to overcome this, the country requires suitable technological interventions. India, by going for a projected institutionalised



PADMALOCHAN DASH

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water-partnership with Israel, can attain this objective.

There are areas where the prospects of Indo-Israel water cooperation are high. These include the areas of water conservation, water recycling, integrated water infrastructures in the field of irrigation, advance transportation and networking models for drinking water, advance water practices, and building a sustainable water eco-system. These are some of the critical areas which demand promising research and innovation.

Restoration of Water Ecosystem: Freshwater ecosystems are subject to multiple anthropogenic threats, and restoration initiatives are important to break the impending ecological crisis and protect the biodiversity for



the future generation to sustain. A modern water infrastructure system is needed to contribute to the enhancement and restoration of the water ecosystem.

Critical desalination initiative (CDI): There is a pressing need for curtailing the pressure on freshwater reserve; and as an alternative, it requires harnessing water through the desalination process. Sea water harvesting, if catalysed and then channelised for the regular household, industrial and agricultural usages, can help in

minimising scarcity fears. India, with a 7,500-kilometre coastline, has a huge potential for CDI. It is envisioned that CDI can enhance the green water inventiveness, thus fulfilling the impending water deficiencies.

The field of water management necessitates things like domain knowledge, precise technologies, and the already-implementing confrère of efficacious proficiencies. Israel has excellent technological solutions and innovations in the field and has emerged as the true world leader in the field of water management and water recycling. It generates state-of-the-art water infrastructure and alternative sources of water and India, by going in for a strategic water partnership, can greatly bene-

fit from Israel's best water practices.

Areas requiring technological intervention which Israel can provide include water efficiency, water assessment, monitoring, measurement and management, wastewater treatment, water recycle and reuse, groundwater assessment and recharge, real-time detection and situational awareness, accurate water flow data, drip irrigation, and precise agro-water solutions.

While, the Bundelkhand water management project, the Indo-Israeli Agricultural Project (IIAP), and the Israeli-given drip irrigation technology are some of the starters, Israel is keen to further its offer for large-scale solution to water problems in India. When Union Minister of Jal Shakti

visited Israel to attend the "WATEC" event, it was realised that with necessary stimulating incentives from the Indian government, Israel's expertise can become the effective intervention into India's several water projects.

Israel has been in the process of identifying joint areas of undertakings and is fairly leading the water solution projects in India. It is now India's responsibility to provide the right platform and allocate necessary resources so that the incubation as well as the implementation of large-scale Indo-Israel water projects becomes quicker.

Although India and Israel have established cooperation channels and joint programmes of implementation, such collaboration has to be

intensive. Meanwhile, the transfer and acquisition of incubated models and technologies must be institutionally streamlined. The model National Water Scheme and Water Infrastructure Grid are the envisioned water programmes that require close attention. This will only become possible when state-of-the-art research facilities are set up under an autonomous institutional body.

India, having a huge set of diverse topographic settings and water bodies, can provide 'ample possibility of incubation' for the model water projects. In the long run, such experiments and models can be the answer to the hastily approaching water crises in India as well as across the globe at large.



# Britain ends 20-year military campaign in Af

## Troops fly back

**London:** The last remaining UK troops began landing back from Kabul in Britain on Sunday, ending the country's 20-year military campaign in Afghanistan where the Taliban have seized power.

The Taliban insurgents stormed across the country on August 15, capturing all major cities in a matter of days, two weeks before the US was set to complete its troop withdrawal after a costly two-decade war.

A Royal Air Force (RAF) plane left Kabul airport on Saturday night and arrived at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, including with British ambassador to Afghanistan Sir Laurie Bristow who had been assisting the

evacuation process.

Vice-Admiral Sir Ben Key, who ran the UK's evacuation dubbed Operation Pitting, said there was a "sense of sadness that we haven't done all we would have wished".

In a video posted on Twitter on Sunday morning, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the end of Operation Pitting was the "culmination of a mission unlike anything we've seen in our lifetimes", and that British troops and officials had "worked around the clock to a remorseless deadline in harrowing conditions".

"They have expended all the patience and care and thought they possess to help people in fear for their lives," said Johnson. "They've seen at first hand barbaric terrorist attacks on the queues of people they were trying to comfort,

as well as on our American friends. They didn't flinch. They kept calm. They got on with the job," he said.

In a letter to the armed forces community, Johnson acknowledged the fall of Kabul to the Taliban would have been hard for them to watch and "an especially difficult time for the friends and loved ones of the 457 service personnel who laid down their lives" during the war.

He noted that the UK's involvement in Afghanistan "kept Al Qaeda from our door for two decades and we are all safer as a result".

Paying tribute to the efforts of UK forces since 2001, he added: "Though we would not have wished to leave in this way, we have to recognise that we came in with the United States, in defence and support

of the US and the US military did the overwhelming bulk of the fighting."

"Together with our allies in America and Europe and around the world, we will engage with the Taliban not on the basis of what they say but what they do," Johnson said.

Describing the conclusion of the military campaign launched by former British prime minister Tony Blair as a time for reflection, Johnson reiterated a previous statement that if the new regime in Kabul wanted diplomatic recognition, or to unlock the billions that are currently frozen, they will have to ensure "safe passage" for those who wish to leave the country, to respect the rights of women and girls and to prevent Afghanistan from becoming "an incubator for global terror". **AP**

## Biden to pay respects to US troops killed in Afghanistan

**Washington:** President Joe Biden is embarking on a solemn journey on Sunday to honour and mourn the 13 US troops killed in the suicide attack near Kabul airport as their remains return to US soil from Afghanistan.

Biden was travelling to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware for a "dignified transfer" movement, a military ritual of receiving the remains of fallen troops killed in foreign combat.

The dead ranged in age from 20 to 31, and came from California and Massachusetts



President Joe Biden returns a salute as he and first lady Jill Biden arrive at Dover Air Force Base, Del. on Sunday. Biden embarked on a solemn journey on Sunday to honor and mourn the 13 U.S. troops killed in the suicide attack near the Kabul airport **AP**

## Toll from attack on Yemeni base rises to 30

**Sanaa:** The death toll from a missile and drone attack on a key military base in Yemen's south on Sunday climbed to at least 30 troops, a Yemeni military spokesman said.

Mohamed al-Naqeeb, the spokesman for the Yemeni southern forces, told *The Associated Press* that the attack on the Al-Anad Air Base in the southern province of Lahj wounded at least 65 others.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

The officials said at least three explosions took place at the air base, which is held by the internationally recognised Government.

Yemen has been embroiled in a civil war since 2014, when Houthi rebels swept across much of the north and seized the capital, Sanaa, forcing the internationally recognised Government into exile. The Saudi-led coalition entered the

war the following year on the side of the Government.

A ballistic missile landed in the base's training area, where dozens of troops were doing morning exercises, the officials said.

Medics described a chaotic scene at the base following the explosions, with soldiers carrying their wounded colleagues to safety fearing another attack.

The officials blamed the Houthis for the attack on the base. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media. The military spokesman for the Houthis did not confirm or deny the attack, which carries the hallmarks of the Iranian-backed rebels. The Houthis have previously launched similar attacks including one by a bomb-laden drone on the Al-Anad in Jan. 2019, killing six troops. **AP**

## Taliban kill Afghan folk singer in restive province

**Kabul:** A Taliban fighter shot dead an Afghan folk singer in a restive mountain province under unclear circumstances, his family said on Sunday. The killing reignited concerns among activists that the insurgents would return to their oppressive rule in the country after their military blitz toppled the Government.

The slaying of Fawad Andarabi comes as the United States winds down a historic airlift that saw tens of thousands evacuated from Kabul's international airport, the scene of much of the chaos that engulfed the Afghan capital since the Taliban took over two weeks ago. **AP**

## Ex-UK Marine leaves Kabul with dogs, cats but no local staff

**London:** A former UK Royal Marine who waged a high-profile campaign to leave Afghanistan with almost 200 rescued dogs and cats has flown to safety — with the animals, but without his charity's Afghan staff, who were left behind in Kabul.

A privately funded chartered plane carrying Paul "Pen" Farthing and his animals landed at London's Heathrow Airport on Sunday after a saga that gripped and divided Britain, raising difficult questions about the relative value placed on human and animal lives.

Iain McGill, a veterinarian involved in the effort, said the animals appeared healthy and had been placed in quarantine. **AP**

## Instagram star helped rescue dozens

**Washington:** Dozens of desperate Afghans who had been trying to flee the Taliban before Tuesday's deadline for the US withdrawal from Kabul made it to safety with help from an

unexpected place: Instagram influencer Quentin Quarantino.

Quarantino is the alter ego of 25-year-old Tommy Marcus of New York City, previously

best-known for his liberal memes and his jokes about opponents of Covid-19 vaccinations.

Along with his followers, Quarantino raised USD 7 mil-

lion within days on GoFundMe to launch rescue missions into Afghanistan to evacuate as many people as possible, many of whom said they had been threatened by the Taliban. **AP**



Militiamen loyal to Ahmad Massoud, son of the late Ahmad Shah Massoud, take part in a training exercise, in Panjshir province, northeastern Afghanistan on Sunday **AP**

## Israel strikes Hamas targets in Gaza after border protests

**Jerusalem:** Israeli planes struck Hamas militant targets in the Gaza Strip on early Sunday, hours after violent clashes between Palestinian protesters and troops along the border.

The Israeli military said in a statement that planes bombed a Hamas militant facility in the Gaza Strip in response to the launching of incendiary balloons into southern Israel and violent protests staged for a second consecutive week.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett spoke to reporters in Washington before he boarded a flight to Israel, wrapping up a state visit that culminated with a face-to-face meeting with President Joe Biden. It was the first since Bennett took office in June.

"We will operate in Gaza according to our interests," he said in Hebrew on the tarmac.

Bennett said he "achieved all the objectives for the trip" to Washington, including strategic cooperation in preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons.

On Saturday, hundreds of Hamas-backed activists staged a nighttime protest along the Israeli border, throwing explosives toward Israeli forces who responded with live fire. Gaza health officials said three people were injured by Israeli fire.

Additional protests were planned through the week.

Organizers said the protests are meant to increase pressure on Israel to lift its blockade of the Palestinian territory. Israel and Egypt have maintained the blockade since Hamas, a group sworn to Israel's destruction, seized control of Gaza in a 2007 coup after winning Palestinian elections. Israel and Hamas have fought four wars since, the most recent in May.

The blockade restricts the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza and has ravaged the territory's economy. Israel has tightened the closure since an 11-day war in May, demanding the return of the remains of two dead soldiers and freedom for two Israeli civilians believed to be in Hamas captivity.

Egypt is working to shore up a cease-fire to end May's fighting and appeared to be making progress last week.

At least 260 Palestinians were killed during May's Hamas-Israel war, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier. **AP**

## Educators call on Taliban not to replace system

**Kabul:** Former officials and lecturers at Afghanistan universities have called on the Taliban to maintain and upgrade the country's education system instead of creating a new one.

Former minister of higher education Abas Basir said Sunday at a conference on higher education held by the Taliban that starting over is a mistake made by previous Governments. He says: "Lets not reject everything, starting a new system, we should work more on what we already have."

Taliban caretaker higher education minister Abdul Baqi Haqqani criticised the current education system founded by

the international community, saying that religious education was considered insignificant. "World tried to take religion out of scientific education which harmed the people," Haqqani said. He added that "every item against Islam in the educational system will be removed."

The Taliban policy on women's education was not clear but Tariq Kamal, chancellor of a private university, said women were very interested in some higher education fields and "we need the guidance of Taliban leadership on them." Kamal spoke for private universities in Afghanistan. **AP**

## Hurricane Ida rapidly intensifies into dangerous Category 4

**NEW ORLEANS:** Hurricane Ida was rapidly intensifying early Sunday, becoming a dangerous Category 4 hurricane on track for a potentially devastating landfall on the Louisiana coast while emergency officials in the region grappled with opening shelters for displaced evacuees despite the risks of spreading the coronavirus.

The National Hurricane Center predicted Ida would become an extremely dangerous Category 4 hurricane with 130 mph (209 kph) winds — that happened early Sunday ahead of an expected afternoon landfall. The storm arrived on the exact date Hurricane Katrina ravaged Louisiana and Mississippi 16 years earlier.

Ida rapidly intensified as it moved into the northern Gulf, going from top winds of 115 mph (185 kph) in a 1 a.m. update to 140 mph (220 kph) a few hours later.

The storm was centered about 75 miles (120 kilometers) south of the mouth of the Mississippi River, and 145 miles (235 kilometers) southeast of coastal Houma, Louisiana. It was traveling northwest at 15 mph (24 kph).

Ida threatened a region already reeling from a resurgence of COVID-19 infections, thanks to low vaccination rates

and the highly contagious delta variant.

New Orleans hospitals planned to ride out the storm with their beds nearly full, as similarly stressed hospitals elsewhere had little room for evacuated patients. And shelters for those fleeing their homes carried an added risk of becoming flashpoints for new infections.

Gov. John Bel Edwards vowed Saturday that Louisiana's "resilient and tough people" would weather the storm.

He also noted shelters would operate with reduced capacities "to reflect the realities of Covid."

Edwards said Louisiana officials were already working to find hotel rooms for many evacuees so that fewer had to stay in mass shelters. He noted that during last year's hurricane season, Louisiana found rooms for 20,000 people.

"So, we know how to do this," Edwards said. "I hope and pray we don't have to do it anywhere near that extent."

In coastal Gulfport, Mississippi, a Red Cross shelter posted signs displaying directions for evacuees along with warnings about COVID-19. With skies still sunny, only a handful of people had shown up Saturday evening. **AP**

## China faces flight of manpower, capital from Hong Kong

**Hong Kong:** A survey has China worried about growing disillusionment among the residents of Hong Kong and the possibility of the island nation staring at a population exodus eventually exceeding a million at the end of the next five years.

Political issues and the gradual erosion of personal freedoms and human rights are as much the primary reasons for the exodus as lack of living space and reducing trust in the local Government. At least a fifth of the island's population is thinking of or currently in the process of emigrating.

The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong conducted a telephone survey to get their views on emigration from the island following the imposition of the draconian national security law. Nearly 44 per cent of the respondents said they would emigrate the moment they get the chance to. Thirty-five per cent of them have already begun preparations to that end. Most of them would prefer going to three places - the United Kingdom, Australia and Taiwan. **IANS**

## Largest wildfire in US nearly half contained

**IANS ■ LOS ANGELES**

**D**ixie Fire, the largest wildfire in the US this year and the second biggest in California's history, has so far scorched more than 756,000 acres with 48 per cent containment, according to authorities.

The fire, which started on July 14 about 10 miles northeast of Paradise, covered 756,768 acres on Saturday morning in five counties, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

Humidity recovery was poor through the mid to higher elevations, allowing the blaze to contin-

ue to burn actively throughout the night, Xinhua news agency quoted CAL FIRE as saying on Saturday.

Certain evacuation orders have been reduced to warnings and certain warnings have been lifted, allowing some residents to return to their homes and businesses, it added.

Active for 44 days, the Dixie Fire had destroyed 1,275 structures and was still threatening 11,833 structures across Butte, Plumas, Tehama, Lassen and Shasta counties.

There are three firefighter injuries so far with no civilian fatalities or injuries having been reported.

## France's Macron visits Iraq's Mosul destroyed by ISIS war

**Mosul:** French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday visited Iraq's northern city of Mosul, which suffered widespread destruction during the war to defeat the Islamic State group in 2017.

Macron began his visit to Mosul by touring the Our Lady of the Hour Church, a Catholic church that was badly damaged during the rule of IS that lasted from 2014 until the extremists' defeat three years later. Iraqi children dressed in white and waving Iraqi and French flags sang upon Macron's arrival.

It was the same church where Pope Francis led a special prayer during a visit to Iraq in March. During the trip, the Pontiff urged Iraq's Christians to forgive the injustices against them by Muslim extremists and to rebuild as he visited the wrecked shells of churches.

Macron moved around the

church — whose walls are still riddled with bullets — amid tight security as a priest accompanying him gave him details about the church built in the 19th century. The French president then went up to the roof overlooking parts of Mosul accompanied by Iraqi officials.

"We hope that France will open a consulate in Mosul," Iraqi priest Raed Adel told Macron inside the church. He also called on the president to help in the reconstruction of Mosul's airport.

Macron left the church in the early afternoon and headed to Mosul's landmark al-Nuri mosque, which was blown up in the battle with IS militants in 2017 and is being rebuilt.

The mosque, also known as The Great Mosque of al-Nuri, and its iconic leaning minaret were built in the 12th century. **AP**

## Global Covid caseload tops 215.9 mn

**Washington:** The global coronavirus caseload has topped 215.9 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.49 million and vaccinations soared to over 5.16 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Sunday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and vaccination tally stood at 215,904,106, 4,493,161 and 5,167,667,136, respectively. **IANS**

**CHITTARANJAN  
LOCOMOTIVE WORKS**

**CORRIGENDUM  
NO. 1 (ONE)**

**No.: CLW/Dankuni/415(Elect)**  
**(Interconnect) Date: 27.08.2021.**  
**Sub: Provision of electrical  
connectivity in between 33KV  
Substation-2 and 33KV  
Substation of Bogie Shop  
(erstwhile DLCF) alongwith  
laying of spare cable to PCMM  
office. Ref: Tender notice no.  
CLW-DANKUNI-415-SUB-  
INTER and date of opening  
13.09.2021.** The following  
corrigendum against referred  
tender notice no. is hereby carried  
out in place of existing entries as  
per approval of competent  
authority: **Sl. No.: [1]. Item  
Description:** Special Conditions  
of Contract. As mentioned in the  
Tender Document: NIL / Blank.  
**To be read as: Prior approval  
of make of each material, to be  
supplied under this contract,  
must be obtained from the  
administration of ELAAU/  
Dankuni. Note:** Other terms and  
conditions will remain same as in  
the tender document of the  
referred tender notice no.

**AWM-II, ELAAU/CLW,  
DANKUNI**

**PR1-205**

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# Govt extends deadline for various tax compliances

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department on Sunday extended the deadline for various compliances, including filing of statement for equalisation levy and remittances.

The deadline for filing the Equalisation Levy statement in Form-1 for the Financial Year 2020-21 has been extended till December 31, against the original due date of June 30.

The quarterly statement in Form 15CC to be furnished by authorised dealers in respect of remittances made for June and September quarter, can now be filed by November 30 and December 31 respectively. The original due date for filing this statement was July 15 and October 15 respectively.

In a statement, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said on consideration of difficulties reported by the taxpayers and other stakeholders in electronic filing of certain forms it has been decided to further extend the due dates for e-filing of these forms.

In a separate statement, the CBDT announced extending the deadline for making payments under the direct tax dispute resolution scheme



Vivad Se Vishwas (VsV) by a month till September 30. However, taxpayers have the option to make payments till October 31, with an additional amount of interest.

Also, the due dates for electronic filing of forms related to intimation by pension funds and sovereign wealth funds too have been extended.

Intimation to be made by Pension Fund and sovereign wealth fund in respect of investment made in India for the June and September quarter, which is required to be furnished by July 31 and October 31, would now have to be furnished by November 30 and December 31 respectively.

The CBDT also extended the due date for uploading of declarations received in Form 15G/15H for the June and

September quarter till November 30 and December 31 respectively. The original due dates were July 15 and October 15 respectively.

The deadlines are being extended as glitches marred the functioning of new income tax portal 'www.Incometax.Gov.In', launched on June 7.

The Finance Ministry had last week 'summoned' Infosys CEO Salil Parekh to explain why issues continued to plague the portal developed by the software major.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the meeting with Parekh on August 23, expressed 'deep disappointment' over persisting glitches for more than two months after portal launch and gave him time till September 15 to resolve all issues.

## Subscribers joining NPS after 65 years of age can take up to 50% equity exposure

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Making the National Pension System (NPS) more attractive for subscribers joining it after 65 years of age, the PFRDA has permitted them to allocate up to 50 per cent of the funds in equity, besides easing the exit norms.

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has revised the guidelines on entry and exit following an increase in the maximum age for joining the NPS from 65 year to 70 years of age. The entry age for NPS has been revised to 18-70 years from 18-65 years.

Any Indian citizen and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) in the age group of 65-70 years can also join NPS and continue up to the age of 75 years, according to a PFRDA circular on the revised guidelines.

It added that those subscribers who have closed their NPS accounts have also been permitted to open a new account as per increased age eligibility norms.

The maximum equity exposure, however, will be only 15 per cent if subscribers joining NPS beyond the age of 65 years decide to invest under the

default 'Auto Choice'.

"The subscriber, joining NPS beyond the age of 65 years, can exercise the choice of PF (pension fund) and asset allocation with the maximum equity exposure of 15 per cent and 50 per cent under Auto and Active Choice, respectively," it said.

An NPS subscriber has the freedom to allocate his/her contributions to different asset classes through 'Active Choice' or 'Auto Choice'. Under 'Active Choice', a subscriber has more say on allocation of funds across asset classes, while in 'Auto Choice' the funds gets invested in pre-determined proportion as per the age of the subscribers.

The contributions of subscribers are invested by the PFs (chosen by subscribers) in compliance with the investment guidelines for each asset class -- equity, corporate bonds, government securities and alternate assets.

Subscribers joining the social security scheme beyond the age of 65 years can allocate only 5 per cent of the funds to alternate assets under 'Active Choice'. This asset class is not available under the 'Auto Choice' option.

The PF can be changed once per year, whereas the

asset allocation can be changed twice.

On the exit conditions for subscribers joining NPS beyond the age of 65 years, the circular said 'normal exit shall be after 3 years'.

"The subscriber will be required to utilise at least 40 per cent of the corpus for purchase of annuity and the remaining amount can be withdrawn as lump sum," it said.

However, if the corpus is equal to or less than Rs 5 lakh, the subscriber may opt to withdraw the entire accumulated pension wealth in lump sum, it said.

The PFRDA further said exit before the completion of three years will be treated as 'premature exit'. Under premature exit, the "subscriber is required to utilise at least 80 per cent of the corpus for purchase of annuity and the remaining can be withdrawn in lump sum".

In the case of premature exit, if the corpus is less than Rs 2.5 lakh, the subscriber may opt to withdraw the entire accumulated amount in one go.

The PFRDA further said that in case of death of the subscriber, the entire corpus will be paid to the nominee as lump sum.

## Ease of doing business still cumbersome on the ground: CII CEOs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Cumbersome ease of doing business at the grass-root level and high cost of doing business is affecting the animal spirits of the private sector, according to a survey by industry chamber CII released on Sunday.

However, it said that significant recovery in corporate performance is expected in 2021-22 as the Government's pro-growth initiatives and announcements have helped nurture the animal spirits of the sector, according to a CII survey.

"Responding to the question on what is affecting the animal spirits of the private sector, majority of the CEOs (51 per cent) indicated that ease of doing business was still cumbersome at the grass roots, followed by cost of doing business (other than capital cost) being high, as indicated by 32 per cent of the CEOs," CII said in a statement.

About one-third of the CEOs indicated that the current capacity is still in excess of demand, it added.

The survey also said about 46 per cent of the 117 CEOs, who participated in the survey,

expected more than 10 per cent revenue growth of their respective company in the first half of the current fiscal as compared to the first half of pre-pandemic year 2019-20.

"The CEOs' poll clearly indicates significant recovery in corporate performance with both topline (revenue) and bottomline (profit) growth expectations to be better than the pre-pandemic levels.

"The government's pro-growth initiatives and announcements have helped nurture the animal spirits of the corporate sector which has seen the worst economic shock of our lifetime," it added.

On exports, it said the majority of the CEOs polled indicated that countries including the US and Canada will post significant growth in the first half of the current fiscal year, followed by Europe, Middle East and Africa and Asia-Pacific.

"About 70 per cent of the CEOs polled expected inflation to be up to six per cent during the year 2021-22, which is within RBI's inflation range and should help RBI retain low interest rates to promote growth," it said.

## Pensioners' body urges Govt to exempt pension from income tax; seeks PM's intervention

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pensioners' body Bharatiya Pensioners Manch has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to exempt pension from income tax to provide relief to the senior citizens in the country.

In a letter shot off to the Prime Minister on August 25 this year, the body argued that if the pensions of the Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies are not taxable, then why does the government levy income tax on the pension of retired employees.

"Every retired person is paid pension as a superannuation fund for his/her livelihood on account of serving the nation for so many years.

"Now, the question is raised why the income tax is levied on pension (of retired employees). This is not an income for any service or work. If MPs and MLAs pension is not taxable, why our pension is taxed?" the body stated in the letter.

The body in its first all-India conference held at Shirdi (Maharashtra) on July 23, 2018 has resolved that pension should be exempted from income tax. Since then, this issue is continuously being

raised by this organisation with the finance minister, but there is no response from the ministry, it stated.

In the letter to the PM, the body added, "Bharatiya Pensioners Manch urges upon you to kindly intervene into the matter and direct the Ministry of Finance to consider this long pending genuine demand of pensioners. An early and immediate action with a line of reply to this organisation will be highly appreciated."

The body also stated that it wrote to the Minister of Finance on the issue on August 23, 2018, on December 14, 2018 and on February 25, 2021.

Referring to their earlier letters written to the Minister of Finance, the body said, "We are sorry to say that nothing has been done so far in this regard."

The body also referred to an apex court order where the Supreme Court had held that pension is valuable right vested in a government servant and that the right to receive pension is a property under Article 31 of the Constitution. If it is denied to an employee, a writ of mandamus could be issued to the state to properly consider the claim of the pensioner for payment of pension according to law, it added referring to the SC ruling.

## Airtel board approves raising of ₹ 21k cr via rights issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel's board on Sunday approved raising up to ₹21,000 crore by way of rights issue, at a price of ₹535 per share, according to a regulatory filing.

The mega fundraising is bound to give more firepower to Airtel, as the company takes on rivals in the fiercely-competitive Indian telecom market.

India, which is the world's second-largest telecom market and the biggest data consumer, is now gearing up for 5G that will significantly scale up connectivity pipes, enabling ultra-high-speeds and new-age applications for users, and new revenue streams for players.

Airtel's board, which met to consider the company's capital raising plans, cleared rights issue price of Rs 535 per fully paid-up equity share, including premium of Rs 530 per equity share.

In a BSE filing, Airtel said that the "...Board approved the issuance of equity shares of face value of Rs 5 each of the company on rights basis to eligible equity shareholders of the com-

pany as on the record date (to be notified later), of an issue size of up to Rs 21,000 crore".

The rights entitlement ratio entails one equity share for every 14 equity shares held by eligible shareholders as on the record date.

The terms of payment of issue price, envisage 25 per cent on application and balance in two more additional calls as may be decided by the board or its committee based on the company's requirements within an overall time-horizon of 36 months, Airtel said.

"The promoter and promoter group of the company would collectively subscribe to the full extent of their aggregate rights entitlement," it said.

The company added that "they will also subscribe to any unsubscribed shares in the issue".

Promoter holding in the company stands at about 55.8 per cent, while public holds 44.09 per cent.

The board of Airtel has constituted a 'Special Committee of Directors' to decide the other terms and conditions of the issue including issue period and the record date.

## Will invest ₹8k cr in capex on India operations during FY22: Tata Steel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic steel giant Tata Steel will invest ₹8,000 crore in capital expenditure on its India operations during the current financial year, the company's CEO and Managing Director T V Narendran said.

The amount will be spent mainly towards completion of the expansion of the Kalinganagar plant, and expansion of mining operations and recycling business, he told *PTI* replying to a question related to Tata Steel's plans for India business in the financial year 2022.

This is in addition to the ₹3,000 crore the company will spend on its European operations to make the business strong, sustainable and enhance product mix.

"Our capex will be broadly ₹8,000 crore for India. We stand by that guidance.

"A lot of it will be going towards Kalinganagar expansion. We will also be spending on our raw material because we continue to expand our iron ore mining capabilities to support the Kalainganagar expansion. So, in raw material and Kalinganagar...We will cover this ₹8,000 crore," Narendran said.

Tata Steel is in the process to expand the capacity of its plant in Kalinganagar, Odisha, by five million tonne per annum (MTPA) to eight MTPA.

Recently, the CEO informed that Tata Steel has outlined a capital expenditure of Rs 3,000 crore for its operations in Europe.

## India's macroeconomy more healthy, ready for faster growth, says economist Ashima Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Notwithstanding the pandemic severe shock, India's macroeconomy is more healthy and ready for faster growth, eminent economist Ashima Goyal said on Sunday, observing that recovery from both the first and second waves was faster than expected points towards inherent strengths of the economy.

Goyal in an interview to *PTI* said there are already signs of a rise in private investment in sectors where capacity constraints have appeared.

"Despite the Covid-19 severe shock, India's macroeconomy is more healthy and ready for faster growth than it has been for a long time. That recovery from both the first and second waves was faster than expected points towards inherent strengths of the economy," she said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lowered the country's growth projection for the current financial year to 9.5 per cent from 10.5 per cent estimated earlier, while the World Bank has projected India's economy to grow at 8.3 per cent in 2021.

Goyal, who is also a member of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank, said that although many Indian start-ups are doing well but "we should not, however, expect the private infrastructure investment boom of the 2000s."

"Portfolio inflows into India are not only due to the quantitative easing of rich countries' central banks, they are also attracted by India's growth prospects. All emerging markets do not get such inflows," the eminent economist opined.

She pointed out that the government is leading infrastructure investment and more durable foreign direct investment has a larger share in recent capital inflows.

"India, moreover, has enough reserves to ride out any volatility while ensuring interest rates are aligned to the domestic policy cycle," she said.

On the stock market boom at a time when economic growth has slowed down, Goyal said stock markets are forward looking, so normally they do move ahead of the real economy. "Low interest rates also increase the present discounted value of future earnings and reduce the attractiveness of fixed deposits. A wider Indian public has started participating in stock markets giving them a more diversified portfolio of assets," she said.

Observing that having different investor-types makes markets more stable and reduces volatility, Goyal said "gradual rise in policy interest rates need not lead to a major correction if the rise accompanies a growth recovery, which is positive for markets and long term growth prospects remain good."

## Mcap of eight of top-10 most valued firms jumps over ₹1.90 lakh crore; TCS, RIL lead gainers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the top-10 most valued companies together added ₹1,90,032.06 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries Limited being the prominent gainers.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex gained 795.40 points or 1.43 per cent. Equity gauges -- BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty -- hit new closing highs on Friday.

On the top ten chart, among the gainers were Reliance Industries (RIL), Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India (SBI) and Wipro. On the other hand, Infosys and HDFC were the two laggards.

The market valuation of TCS zoomed by ₹60,183.57 crore to reach ₹13,76,102.60 crore, becoming the biggest gainer among the top-10 firms.

RIL added ₹51,064.22 crore taking its valuation to ₹14,11,635.50 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation jumped ₹19,651.18 crore to ₹8,57,407.68 crore and Bajaj Finance gained ₹18,518.27 crore to settle at ₹4,20,300.85 crore.

The market capitalisation of HUL climbed ₹14,215.01 crore to ₹6,29,231.64 crore and that of ICICI Bank went higher by ₹13,361.63 crore to ₹4,84,858.91 crore.

Wipro's valuation rallied ₹8,218.89 crore to ₹3,47,851 crore and SBI jumped ₹4,819.29 crore to reach ₹3,68,006.36 crore.

In contrast, the valuation of Infosys tumbled by Rs 10,053.22 crore to Rs 7,24,701.90 crore and that of HDFC dipped Rs 738.75 crore to Rs 4,90,991.24 crore.

## Air India asks US court to dismiss Cairn petition, says it is premature

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India has asked a New York court to dismiss a petition filed by Britain's Cairn Energy for seizure of its assets to enforce \$1.2 billion arbitral awards against the Indian Government, saying the litigation was premature as an appeal against the arbitration award was still pending.

The petition by the airline, which is separate to Indian Government's plea in a Washington court seeking dismissal of Cairn's lawsuit to seek confirmation of the arbitral award, said the New York district court lacks jurisdiction to adjudicate a "mere hypothetical question" or one that depends upon contingent future events that may or may not occur.

Cairn first moved a court in the US District Court for the District of Columbia seeking confirmation of the arbitration award and then filed a petition in the New York court to seek declaration of Air India as "alter ego" of the Indian government and so it should be made liable to pay the \$ 1.26 billion arbitral award.

An international arbitration tribunal in December last year set aside the levy of capital gains tax, using a 2012 retrospective legisla-

tion, on a 2006 reorganization of India business that Cairn carried before listing it on local stock exchanges. It ordered India to return the value of shares seized and sold, dividend confiscated and tax refund withheld to enforce levy.

With India refusing to pay, Cairn moved courts in the US.

"Cairn's petition to confirm the Award is pending in the District Court for the District of Columbia," Air India said in the August 23 petition seen by PTI.

It went on to state that the Indian government has filed before a court in The Hague -- the seat of the international arbitration tribunal -- a Motion to Stay and a Motion to Dismiss the arbitral award.

"In effect, the Complaint (by Cairn Energy) is a premature enforcement action dressed up as a declaratory judgment action, invoking this Court's federal jurisdiction to get a head start on executing the Award before the D.D.C. Has had the opportunity to address the Republic of India's immunity defenses and its claims that the Award is not subject to enforcement under the New York Convention," Air India said. "Such an attempt is improper, and the Complaint should be dismissed."

## Nokia says telcos building pan-India 5G capacity to drive its biz growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operators are developing pan-India 5G capacity which will continue to drive business for Nokia in the country, the head of the Finnish firm's India unit has said.

Nokia Senior Vice President & Head of India Market Sanjay Malik told *PTI* that telecom companies are focusing on building capacity for 5G so that they are ready for launch once they get spectrum in the proposed auction, while their strategy on roll out of services circle or city-wise is still in works.

"We still see positive momentum in the market from both the capacity and the coverage build which is going to happen, the 5G readiness in terms of transport, the broadband. All these segments would still continue over the rest of the year and we see good potential and good momentum in all the areas," Malik said.

Nokia's sales in India grew 75 per cent on year-on-year basis to 230 million euros in the second quarter ended June 30, 2021 from 179 million euros.

Malik said the spectrum auction conducted by the government in March was the key driver from India perspective which fuelled company's business in the country.

"Basically it is the 4G capacity and coverage which started and because of the spectrum auction that got a boost but operators have started building their transport and their backhaul for 5G readiness. Because of Covid, working from home environment, the fixed broadband also has been seeing a good growth in the market," Malik said.

## Industrial warehousing space leasing in Jan-June up 31% in top five cities: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leasing of industrial and warehousing spaces in five major cities rose 31 per cent during the first six months of this year mainly driven by growth in e-commerce activities, according to property consultant Colliers.

The leasing of industrial and warehousing spaces increased to 10.1 million sq ft during January-June this year from 7.7 million sq ft in the corresponding period of the previous year despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The five cities tracked by Colliers India are -- Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Mumbai and Pune.

New supply jumped over two-folds to 15.1 million sq ft from 7.3 million sq ft during the period under review.

Third party logistics (3PL) companies and e-commerce firms accounted for almost 31 per cent and 22 per cent of the total demand, respectively.

"Demand for industrial and warehousing space will not only come from e-commerce, 3PLs, but also from medical suppliers, exporters and cold storage operators," said Ramesh Nair, Chief Executive Officer India & Managing Director, Market Development, Asia, Colliers.

With same-day delivery becoming the norm, Nair said there will be significant activity in smaller facilities closer to cities, needed for last-mile delivery.

"The market will also see sizeable repurposing of defunct spaces into Grade A industrial spaces," he said.

Nair expects demand from 3PL and e-commerce firms to remain resilient in the coming quarters.

"The behavioral shift of consumers from offline to online shopping is contributing to increased demand across the spectrum of industrial and logistics property," said Shyam Arumugam, Managing Director, Industrial & Logistics Services (India), Colliers.

According to the data, leasing of industrial and warehousing spaces increased in Bengaluru to 2 million sq ft during January-June 2021 from 0.8 million sq ft in the year-ago period.

In Delhi-NCR, the leasing rose marginally to 3 million sq ft from 2.9 million sq ft.

Chennai saw rise in demand to 1.7 million sq ft from 1.3 million sq ft.

The absorption or leasing of spaces in Pune increased to 2.7 million sq ft from 1.4 million sq ft.

## Proposed FTA with UAE to boost jewellery, chemicals, engineering exports: Exporters

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the UAE can result in enhanced exports of several sectors, including gem and jewellery, engineering, leather goods and chemicals to the Emirates as the pact would enhance competitiveness of domestic traders, according to exporters.

India has started negotiations for the agreement with the UAE, which is the third largest trading partner of New Delhi.

Under a free trade agreement, two trading partners reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they liberalise norms to enhance trade in services and boost investments. Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) Chairman Colin Shah said that the proposed FTA with the UAE can result in enhanced exports of gem and jewellery products to the Emirates which is really required presently as the exports from the sector to the UAE have declined significantly to USD 2.77 billion in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.





**Bollywood**  
‘When you’re an artiste, you have to pay attention to your gut instincts.’  
—Shweta Tripathi

FASHION SCAP E

# CELEBRATING INDIA

The last two days of the India Couture Week (ICW) showcased opulence along with a mixture of traditions and modern bling

**DAY 6**  
**Rohit Gandhi & Rahul Khanna**

Rohit and Rahul are, first and foremost, storytellers. Their dresses looked like they were immersed in gleaming crystals and the tuxedos, sharp and detailed with modern embroideries made with heritage techniques.

Their inspiration, this season, was from the luminescent, whimsically irregular, and rigorously aspirational masterworks from their past. The key to their collection was the cutwork. Layer after layer of tiny delicate sheer fabric pieces were hand embroidered on the outfit to form a lattice that veiled yet revealed the female form underneath. Then there were actual overlays of capes and layers of sheer tulle covered with the most delicate



organza frays. Everything shook or shimmered.

For men, the controlled use of tassels and fringes added movement and layers. The sparing use of gem coloured crystals and metallic thread embroidery added luxury to modern tailored silhouettes.

The collection was a profusion of opulence with embellished fabrics like velvet, duchesse satin, and chiffon in a harmonious palette of wine, grey, sapphire, and with mostly tonal arabesques or floral embroideries.



**Tarun Tahiliani**

As with any of Tarun Tahiliani's other collections, for ICW 2021, his *Artisinal Couture* collection focussed on exquisite hand-craftsmanship and a continuation of Tarun's 25 years of work with the country's artisans. The look was contemporary, where traditional Indian techniques, embroideries and textiles were used in modern ways. Through his creations, Tarun has always aimed to provide relevant design work to the craftsmen that he works with, with the hope that this keeps their stories, livelihood and Indian culture alive.

The latest couture collection is a celebration of colour leading from the Rangrez capsule, where thousands of meters of woven brocade strips were cut out and applied on different forms. The bridal collection was presented in a sublime palette of colours ranging from the traditional bridal reds to contemporary pastels and beiges that have been the mainstay of many of the brand's recent collections. The label's Pichwai collection this season took inspiration from the ancient Indian lyrical paintings from Rajasthan that depict big monochromatic scenes of the *Raasleela*. Finally, the collection's Chikankari capsule is reminiscent of the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah in Agra, whose latticed carvings and inlay work formed the basis of the collection's Chikankari motifs

**DAY 7**  
**Kunal Rawal**

Inspired by the notion of youth transitioning to adulthood, the pristine idea of ease and comfort, Kunal Rawal's collection, *Vision Quest*, presented a fresh take on contemporary silhouettes, intricate embroideries, and a dynamic play on metallic tones. Amalgamating traditions with newness, the collection explored a wide array of functional and deconstructed styles, reflecting the youth and their need for movement and constant growth.



Created with multiple thread works, surface textures, and techniques of French knotting with a play on construction elements, the captivating styles showcased in *Vision Quest* were extremely versatile and experimental. The colour palette encompasses subtle hues of lilac, dusty salmon, mustard, lemons, sage, rust, ivory, gold's, aubergine, wines, navy, olives, and steel grey along with some new and exciting shades of denim blue, pastels like iced sky and charcoal.

**Anju Modi**

Anju Modi's collection, entitled *The Eternal Story*, paid tribute to the power of generational legacy.

Relying on traditional designs and techniques along with a hint of the modern touch, it would be impossible to describe *The Eternal Story* in mere words.

Committed to reviving India's centuries-old design repertoire with the brand's signature organic and sustainable approach, each creation from the collection was



a story of authentic handcrafted luxury juxtaposed with present-day relevance.

In the designer's words, "*The Eternal Story* is instinctive, and almost as old as time itself."

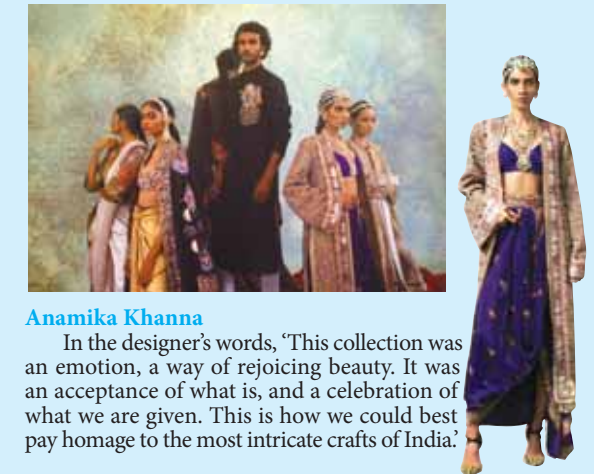
**Rahul Mishra**

As per Rahul Mishra himself, "The collection, *Kam-khaab* is a sequence of dreams woven together like a garland of artistic musing, of emotions and of instances that that we've subconsciously lived through, multiple times in our minds. Like an emotion of personalised artistry, it is the hand painting of frescos on the walls of a family home."

*Kam-khaab* comprised of garments the designer developed during the two lockdowns, and each ensemble told a different part of the same story.



Articulated with age-old techniques of hand embroidery, the couture was weightless, despite the intricacy of details. Realised in fabrics such as silk organza, georgette, crêpe and tissue along with Banarasi cutwork and Chanderi silk textiles, each piece showcased values of love, craft, beauty, longevity and human touch. While enabling our community of craftsmen and weavers from across the country, *Kam-khaab* represents luxury that is produced to address the demand, and not pursue consumption. modern tailored silhouettes.



**Anamika Khanna**

In the designer's words, "This collection was an emotion, a way of rejoicing beauty. It was an acceptance of what is, and a celebration of what we are given. This is how we could best pay homage to the most intricate crafts of India."

## Adapting to the changing times

ABHISHEK CHADHA talks about framing a balance in interior designing elements in the post-pandemic world

The pandemic has led to an upheaval in the lives of many individuals and has taken a toll on countless business endeavours. Small family-run businesses and firms are encountering harvest hits with a drastic decrease in profits due to the global recession. To strike a balance between surviving a pandemic and being successful, companies make different accounts for demonstrable skills. The flare-up of the virus and the accompanying lockdowns halted and postponed immeasurable work and came as a test for many enterprises. During these trying times, it is the need of the hour for leaders to step up and redefine the basic meaning of being a "professional" in a struggling industry. The lockdown has elicited numerous negative emotions in the hearts of the citizens due to the unravelling of a new reality that has entered the shared narrative for one and all. Since people are bound to stay at home, every individual is trying to evaluate their new normal today. The pandemic has reinforced the need for open or outdoor-like spaces and substantial technological interventions. However, people

today are also enthused with the outdoor amenities they have been missing the most during this lockdown period. The future has become a fertile ground for high-end luxury residential designers. It's time to refurbish basements and rooftops to induce breathtaking views from the comfort of your premises. Therefore, architects are experimenting with various permutations and combinations to form a balance in design where they are working towards incorporating these amenities and therapeutic living together.

**Better safe than sorry**

The thing we need to prioritise while planning homes is the responsiveness and adaptability of the living spaces. Gaining significance, outdoor spaces have become extremely essential for much-needed recreational time. These spaces include patios, galleries, and porches. Outdoor spaces are a boon in urban areas. Such spaces give a family, or individuals, quality time for themselves, allowing a more peaceful home environment. Spaces that are outside and have



seating areas give much-needed reprieve to residents. The seating areas are present in the form of lounges and swings.

Social-distancing is crucial if one wishes to socialise during or post-pandemic. Therefore, all the spaces designed in the post-Covid world must acquire an abundance of space for people to mingle while being at a safe distance from each other. Since the pandemic has forced people to stay indoors, the kitchen has become a focal facet of the house. To cater to high-demand functionality, pantry sizes are increasing which are also equipped with extra storage space.

**Working from home — the new normal**

As the proportion of work from home (WFH) cases increase, whimsical and creative spaces meant for fun and relaxation are being incorporated to coexist with other informal areas of the house. New interior design models are being made flexible to cater to a better WFH culture. Provision of ample storage spaces and shelves are being included for unrestricted movement. Composing neutral, minimalist aesthetics with ample sunlight, uncluttered desks, refreshing colours and comfortable furniture

to offer an ideal home-office environment is now slowly becoming a norm. Creating a working nook with open shelves makes for an organised filing system, giving a well-assembled structure to the workspace. Home office setups are being designed to cater to a comfortable working environment while complementing the client's preferences.

**Need of the hour — better post-covid designs**

In order to ensure minimum contact, there has been an increased focus on home automation systems lately. Including no-



touch doors, smart lights, the intelligent home structure has improved home efficiency while providing maximum comfort and productivity. The pandemic has proven that spaces need to be thought of beyond the usual vision. New employment of blending modern technology with traditional practices has come to light. Copper is being revisited on surfaces as it is proven to kill bacteria. Using features such as dust treatment systems and antibacterial finishes have come to be in demand today.

Staying at home has made everyone revisit their real needs

and creating multifaceted, secure spaces has become a new design necessity, not just a trend, for a safer environment for all generations. This pandemic has made people take a step back and fix their immediate environment while modifying it for comfort and peace. At the end of the day, we all want to return to a feeling of relaxation, mentally, emotionally, and physically and our homes provide just that, in addition to being a portrayal of one's lifestyle.

(The author is the founder and CEO of The KariGhars, an interior designing firm based in Bangalore.)

## TRENDBLAZER



### DID NOT SEE THIS COMING: SHABANA

Bollywood veteran **SHABANA AZMI** will be seen sharing screen-space with the British actor, Emma Thompson, in the forthcoming romantic comedy, *What Love Got To Do With It*?

She revealed that while Thompson is everything she had thought of her and more, there was one surprising drawback.

"Allow me to let you in on a little secret. Despite her multiple Oscar winning performances, Thompson is dreadful at playing dumb charades," Shabana said with a laugh.

**fairtalk**  
RAKUL PREET SINGH



'Times have changed. Films are changing and evolving and I hope that filmmakers see that and adapt accordingly, with respect to the opportunities and scripts they create. Gone are the days when people used to think that if you work with senior actors, you can't work with junior actors, and vice versa. Now it's all about how well you can carry a role.'

**dailytalk**  
KUNAL KAPOOR



'When I found acting, I understood that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. There are times, though, when you find yourself in situations where the material coming your way is not what you want to do. I remember being on the set, asking myself why am I doing this. I have promised myself to never end up in such a situation again.'

### 'FEELING EXTREMELY HAPPY AND CONTENT'

Actor **KIT HARRINGTON**, who spent time in rehab after the popular fantasy show *Game Of Thrones* concluded, welcomed a son with wife Rose Leslie in February and he says he has never been happier, even though he is exhausted as he has taken over parenting responsibilities while Leslie is filming a new project in New York.

"I have a child and my relationship is brilliant. I'm a very, very happy, content, sober man," shares Harrington.





# EXTEND A HAND

SAFEER IRDAM focusses the spotlight on MOHAMMAD QASIM to highlight the difficulties faced by the less-priviledged disabled population

As per the Indian Census 2011, 2.68 crores people out of the total 121 crores population have been enumerated as 'disabled'. While 0.81 crores are from urban areas, 1.86 crores i.e. 69 per cent of the disabled population reside in rural areas of the country. Some of these areas are so remote that the challenges faced by the disabled rural population never reach the policymakers. The life of Mohammad Qasim — a 16-year-old, physically disabled boy is one such story that requires immediate attention.

Diagnosed with clubfoot — a birth defect in which the limb is twisted or out of shape or position — this teenaged boy is the sole breadwinner of his family. A resident of the border district of Poonch's Ban Baala village, Qasim lost his father when he was just seven. "After my father's death, our lives became miserable. My mother never recovered from the shock and developed serious health issues. She is bed-ridden to date," said this young boy while sharing his plight.

As part of social welfare schemes for persons with physical disabilities, Qasim receives ₹ 1,000 every month, but the money is insufficient to take care of his family's basic needs, which includes his mother, a 12-year-old sister and a 14-year-old brother. Jobless, with no other source of income, this eldest son of a destitute family started begging on the streets to make ends meet. He and his family survived somehow for nine years but with Covid-19 coming into the picture, their lives became even more miserable. "The market was shut during the nationwide lockdown. The streets were deserted, and people were



TAILOR ABDUL KARIM

scared to step out of their houses. Since then, we have been dependent on the ration being provided by the government and non-government organisations," shared a disappointed Qasim.

According to People with Disabilities in India: From commitments to outcome, a report by the World Bank, disabled people have significantly lower employment rates than the average, and this gap has been increasing over the past 15 years. With no avenues to earn a living, most of them are pushed into poverty. This affects one's ability to afford treatment and other necessities.

"My family always wanted to get



MOHAMMAD QASIM

my foot treated but the lack of resources never allowed it. Despite the deformity, I did not quit. After several failed attempts to find a job, I started begging," rued Qasim who believes that support from government or non-government organisations can help him overcome his physical disability. "If I could receive free treatment and financial assistance from the concerned organisations, I will be able to live a life of dignity and help my family," said Qasim.

Undoubtedly, several schemes have been introduced by both the Union Territory administration and the Union Government to support people with disabilities but for peo-

ple like Qasim, who come from underdeveloped regions like Poonch, it is difficult to have access to such schemes.

When Shakeel Ahmed, the district social welfare officer of Poonch, was contacted, he informed that pension is being provided to persons with disabilities under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and Integrated Social Security Scheme (ISSS) in the region. "We will provide crutches to Qasim. He should visit our office and put an application to receive the benefit. We will see how we can support him further," he assured.

Qasim, however, is not alone. 12-year-old Ismat Bi, 30-year-old Naseem Akhter and 42-year-old Shareefa Bi are others from Qasim's village who have been deprived of basic rights only because of their physical disabilities.

According to Mohammad Bashir, a 50-year-old resident from the same village says, "Each member of our society is important for the development of the nation. It is extremely important for disabled people to have access to life skills and tools that support them in their journey to become independent."

There are also examples from these mountainous villages that prove how a little support can change the lives of people with disabilities. 30-year-old Abdul Karim, from Poonch's Bhati Dhar village, was born paralysed due to premature birth, but despite several hurdles, he trained himself to be a professional tailor in his region. "We have to accept our bodies and find ways to deal with different situations as we are different from others. We need help from the

authorities," shared Karim who believes that NGOs and administration can play a great role in supporting disabled individuals in making their lives easier.

With access to new medical and health care technologies, special schools, vocational training, and NGOs, the livelihood of people with disabilities can be improved easily. Abdul suggested that increased and easy availability as well as accessibility to customised life skills can prepare disabled people to make their way through the constraints especially in rural areas.

Until the 2011 census, only seven kinds of disabilities were included in the survey. In 2016, after the introduction of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the list of disabilities was expanded to 21. Subsequently, the 2019 National Statistics Office report identified disabled people as those with temporary loss of an ability as well as neurological and blood disorders, in addition to the earlier definition, which included mental retardation and permanent inability to speak, move, hear and see. It also included acid attack survivors.

The government is investing great efforts to address the needs of both physically and mentally disabled people. However, the inclusion of persons with disabilities residing in rural areas is a huge challenge. They lack awareness, information and means to receive benefits from these efforts. In areas like Poonch, which is guarded by the mighty Pir Panjal Range, several Qasims waiting to be heard. It is about time their challenges are discussed at national level. —Charkha Features

## Wait for a new world order

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI claims that destruction only paves way for construction



Human beings generally forget that they are imperfect and so are their forecasts or prophecies about the future. These do not, and cannot, take into account all the forces and factors at play. So, a few years back, not only ordinary people but many wise people also indulged in wishful thinking that there would now be no nuclear war. As a pigeon closes its eyes to the reality of a cat advancing towards it, human beings also think that there would be no catastrophes. Like an ostrich, they bury their head and eyes in the dunes. It is this habit of human societies that brought about the extinction of many civilisations, as they thought that they were not confronted with any dangers. They had become so proud of their progress and power as well as become so intoxicated that they lost their saner judgement. In fact, this attitude of sleeping over the dormant dangers has always preceded the cataclysmic events that brought devastation to vast civilisations or communities. History is witness to many such catastrophes where knowledgeable people had been warning but were not taken seriously. It is a sign of the Iron Age (*kaliyuga*) that the intellect is under the shadow of *tamoguna*. And, even if they were heeded by some, what can the governments do about the remaining population. Moreover, in such a short period, who has the will, the stature and the power to do it? The same can also be said about nuclear war. What was formerly called the 'Cold War' has, no doubt ended. But the cinders have not yet been extinguished; they are covered by only a thin layer of ash. They can flare up again when the winds of change blow. Indeed, the indications are already there for anyone who cares to see.

It is also not properly realised that the masses in nuclear power nations are greatly affected by the economic plight which their leaders have created. They also feel that the leaders of other countries have not helped them enough but are interested in manipulating their economy. The economic condition in some of these countries is so bad that they have been led to crippling inflation, increasing crime rates and mass unemployment. As a result of this, many think that people in these countries would soon feel frustrated and the consequences would be very dangerous. Thus, considered overall, the danger of a nuclear world war has increased rather than decreased or vanished. It has only disappeared for a while. Alfred Nobel, in whose memory the famous Nobel



Prizes are awarded every year, had stated, "Let the sword of Damocles hang over every head and you will witness a miracle. All war will stop instantly." But, unfortunately, his optimistic thinking was proved wrong because nothing can work as a deterrent forever.

Today, humanity stands at a historic juncture, facing multiple interconnected threats within a compressed timescale. Besides the potential use of nuclear weapons, there is environmental degradation, resource scarcity, climate change, overpopulation, global disease pandemics, financial crises and natural disasters. The sort of international cooperation needed to reduce the number of nuclear weapons is similar to that needed to address these other transnational threats. The question today is whether a strategy based on nuclear deterrence continues to be the most effective way for governments to deal with international tensions and protect themselves, or whether alternative strategies with greater benefits and lower risks are available. The answer depends, in part, on how our understanding of nuclear deterrence has evolved and whether it will remain as stable and salient as the majority of the strategic community believed it to be during the Cold War.

According to spirituality, construction and destruction are two sides of the same coin. When we construct something, we do so from material which has become available after a thing was destroyed, disintegrated or decomposed. Likewise, destruction is the essential forerunner of reconstruction. Hence, we should understand that a new world order will set in, only when the older giveth place. Just as a new life in the form of a lovely child comes into existence after the death of a decayed, diseased and degenerate body, a new world order of complete purity, peace and prosperity, without any kind of nuclear threat or any other kind of insecurity would come into existence only after the destruction of the old and ailing world. So, instead of fearing destruction, let us enlighten ourselves from within to welcome a new world order i.e the Golden Age which would be ruled by feelings of universal brotherhood and love.

In the modern world, stress is often synonymous with your professional life. Usually, this part is relegated to working in the office, dealing with bosses and colleagues as well as being productive. At the end of the day, home is where you disengage and relieve from the daily grind. However, home, too, has its own set of stress like meeting expectations of spouse, parents and children. On top of all this, there are unavoidable invisible energies caused by modern technology at both home and office which amplifies the stress. This creates a runaway effect where stress spirals out of control and you end up being burnt out as a result. This is why it's important to manage both your space and time.

Most of us are used to the electronic conveniences of modern life. But few of us are aware of the possible health risks presented by the gadgets that make our world work. We are surrounded by electromagnetic radiation whether at home or office. Electromagnetic frequencies are generated by all electronic and electrical devices. Mobile phones, wi-fi routers, microwave ovens, laptops, television, cordless phones are some of the devices which are now prevalent in every Indian household and which generate EMF radiations as long as they are operational. In offices, servers, UPS, wi-fi access points, and mobile towers are great sources of high EMF radiation to which we are continually exposed.

All subtle energies, be it the energies of vastu or energies of electromagnetic radiation have a deeper and prolonged effect on our mind and body. On one hand, while

## Guard your energy

MANOJ SRIVASTAVA elaborates on how vastu can help in reducing stress and health issues caused by modern technology



gross energy like sound, light and wind have acute and temporary effects, subtler energies have chronic and long-term effects. While vastu energies can be good and bad, in different directions and at parts, depending on the design of the building, the EMF energies are uniformly bad in all places.

When exposed to these EMF radiations, different people have different symptoms depending upon their vitality and constitution. The most prominent symptoms are disturbed sleep, anxiety, palpitations, headaches, lethargy, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), and nausea. Most people may define the collection of these diseases as high stress. However, World Health



Organisation (WHO) has coined a new term for people who are more susceptible to the effects of EMF radiation — electromagnetic hypersensitivity. Prolonged exposure can result in lower immunity, reproductive and fertility issues, auto-immune diseases and some malignant diseases. Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mumbai submitted a report to the Government of India in 2010 highlighting the effect of mobile tower radiation and the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has also defined protocols and design guidelines to reduce the impact of EMF on residents and workers and both these documents are easily available on the internet.

These radiations are caused by modern technology and stopping the use of these gadgets is not practical. These days, our efficiency depends on the use of these gadgets. Even if you stop using them, you will still be continually exposed to mobile tower radiations, radio-frequency waves from microwave and radio towers, and in some cases the neighbour's wi-fi routers.

Since avoiding these radiations is not possible, the author suggests prudence in the use of these equipment. For example, you keep your mobile handset more than seven feet from where you sleep, and do not install the wi-fi router or television set in your bed-

rooms. In case the television set is already installed in the bedroom, and for some reason, you cannot shift it elsewhere, you should switch off the TV from the mains and not from the remote before you sleep. Do not be near the microwave oven when it is operational. Keep at least 10 feet or more distance from the same. Do not operate the laptop by placing it on your lap. Try to switch off the mobile phone and wireless router during the night by routing your calls on the good old landline phone at your bedside.

If you are hypersensitive to electromagnetic radiation, there are shielding paints available in international markets which can be applied on the outer walls of the building to prevent mobile tower radiations from entering the building but the disadvantage is that the mobile signals weaken inside the building causing network connectivity issues. In the modern way of working this may be unacceptable.

Modern vastu experts have another way to neutralise the effect of these radiations. Specific materials, angles and geometric shapes can be installed at strategic locations in the building to harmonise the effect of these radiations on residents.

Irrespective of your sensitivity to electromagnetic radiations, we are all continuously exposed to them especially in urban cities and they are affecting our psyche and body energy to one level or another. Some precautions and vastu rectifications will definitely reduce its negative effect.

(The writer is a vastu Acharya with more than 20 years of corporate leadership experience.)

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Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power.

—Seneca

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### CARNIVOROUS ANIMALS INVITE DISEASES

Carnivorous animals have a defective immune system, which makes them likely to be asymptomatic carriers of disease-causing pathogens, finds a study.

Thus, farming large numbers of carnivores, like mink, dogs, and cats — who are the biggest carriers of zoonotic pathogens — could allow the formation of undetected 'disease reservoirs', in which a pathogen could spread to many animals and mutate to become a risk to human health, said researchers from the University of Cambridge.

The researchers say that the carnivorous diet, which is high in protein, is thought to have antimicrobial properties that could compensate for the loss of these immune pathways in carnivores — any gut infection is expelled by the production of diarrhoea. But the immune deficiency means that other pathogens can reside undetected elsewhere in these animals.



### NCAP SHOWS SIGN OF HOPE

Half-way through its target period, the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) is inching towards its goals with certain steps taken by several states, while some others were still lagging behind with non-tracking of its air pollution related data. Even as air pollution remains mostly urban centric, studies have well established the regional scale pollution is more concentrated in the Indo-Gangetic plains because of the peculiar meteorology and also in more industrialised states.

In studies, done initially for six major metros, the major causes of pollution were identified as vehicle, dust and construction, biomass, industry and others. It is encouraged to move from city-centric to air shed-centric air quality management. This approach requires an inter-state coordination mechanism, which can be facilitated by setting up regional air shed management authorities that enjoy cross-state jurisdiction.



### CHILDREN GAINED WEIGHT DURING THE PANDEMIC

A new study has revealed that children gained excess weight during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially those between five and 11 years.

"When we compared the weight gain among children from 2019 to 2020, we found that there was more weight gained during the pandemic for youths of all ages," said researcher Corinna Koebnick from the Kaiser Permanente in the US.

To determine if children picked up extra weight during the pandemic, researchers analysed the electronic health records of 1,91,509 children, who were aged between five and 17 from March 2019, to January 2021. Most of the increase was among five-11 and 12-15 years olds.

"We need to immediately begin to invest in monitoring the worsening obesity epidemic and develop diet and activity interventions to help children achieve and maintain a healthy weight," Koebnick added.



### CUTTING SUGAR CAN HELP PREVENT DEATHS

Cutting 20 per cent of sugar from packaged foods and 40 per cent from beverages can prevent death as well as the onset of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes in millions of people worldwide, according to a study.

The study, led by a team of researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital, Tufts University and others, showed that reducing the amount of sugars in packaged foods and beverages can reduce the risk of 2.48 million cardiovascular disease events (such as strokes, heart attacks, cardiac arrests), 4,90,000 cardiovascular deaths, and 7,50,000 diabetes cases in the US. The reports was published in the journal *Circulation*.

Consuming sugary foods and beverages is strongly linked to obesity and diseases such as type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of mortality in the US.



### BERRIES, APPLES, WINE LOWER BP LEVELS

Unable to manage your blood pressure (BP) levels? Eating flavonoid-rich foods like berries, apples, pears and drinking red wine can lower systolic blood pressure levels, as well as improve greater diversity in gut microbiome, according to new research.

The study, published in the journal *Hypertension*, showed that up to 15.2 per cent of the association between flavonoid-rich foods and systolic blood pressure could be explained by the diversity found in participants' gut microbiome.

Flavonoids are broken down by the body's gut microbiome — the bacteria found in the digestive tract. The study evaluated 904 adults' food intake, gut microbiome and BP levels together with other clinical and molecular phenotyping at regular follow-up examinations.





# BHAVINABEN WINS HISTORIC SILVER



PTI ■ TOKYO

Bhavinaben Patel on Sunday became only the second Indian woman to win a medal at the Paralympics after she signed off with a historic Silver following a 0-3 loss to world number one Chinese paddler Ying Zhou in the women's singles table tennis class 4 final here.

The 34-year-old Patel's impressive run at the Games ended with a fighting 7-11, 5-11, 6-11 loss to Zhou, a two-time Gold medalist, in the women's singles summit clash which lasted 19 minutes.

With this medal, Indian team opened its account at the

Games.

Deepa Malik, who is the current president of Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), was the first Indian woman to win a medal in the Paralympic Games when she had claimed a Silver in shotput at Rio five years back.

"I'm extremely delighted to win a medal but also a bit disappointed as well. I got a bit nervous," Patel, who also became the first Indian to win a Paralympic medal in table tennis, was quoted as saying by International Paralympic Committee.

Patel, a wheelchair player, had also suffered a loss to Zhou, one of the most decorat-



ed para-paddlers of China, in her first group stage match earlier in the week.

"I can only assure you that next time I meet her you will see a different me. She clearly got the better of me and had all the shots in her book to out-smart my effort. However, this medal will go a long way and I can assure you that," she said.

Patel had missed out of the Rio Olympics five years back due to some issues with her documents but now that she has claimed a medal, she feels it was a blessing in disguise.

"Had that not happened, probably I would not have been here with a medal. I want to tell all the ladies out there

trying to break away the stereotypes to believe in themselves and just go for it," she said.

Up against an opponent, who has five Paralympic medals to her name including Gold medals in singles at Beijing and London, Patel seemed to struggle in the final as she couldn't execute her strategy and was left to do the catch up job.

Zhou, a six-time World Championship medalist, didn't allow Patel, currently ranked 12th in her division, to find her angled returns and get into a rally.

Patel hoped her success will help change the perception of people towards disability and create more opportunities.

# Guj Govt to give ₹3 crore to Patel

**Ahmedabad:** The Gujarat Government on Sunday announced a ₹3 crore reward for paddler Bhavina Patel for her historic Silver medal win at the Tokyo Paralympic Games.

Patel hails from Sundhiya village in Gujarat's Mehsana district.

"Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has congratulated Bhavina Patel, daughter of Mehsana district of Gujarat, for making the country proud by her outstanding achievements in table tennis at the Paralympic Games," the Chief Minister's Office said in a note.

It said the CM has announced an award of ₹3 crore as an incentive to Patel under the state Government's 'Divyang Khel Pratibha Protsahan Puraskar Yojana' for making Gujarat and India proud at the global level with her sports skills.

Also Table Tennis Federation of India announced a ₹31 cash reward for Bhavinaben.

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister and TTFI President Dushyant Chautala announced the cash reward via a social media post. **PTI**

# Bhavina wants to meet Tendulkar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Winning a medal at the Tokyo Paralympic Games was a dream come true for Bhavinaben Patel and now the paddler wants to realise another dream — meeting her childhood idol Sachin

Tendulkar and show her Silver medal to the iconic cricketer.

"Bhavina wants to meet Tendulkar and show the medal to him. He is her idol. We are trying to contact him and fix a meeting once we return to India," husband Nikul Patel said.

# Controlled aggression worked for England in Leeds: Silverwood

PTI ■ LONDON

England head coach Chris Silverwood on Sunday said "controlled aggression" contributed immensely to their series-levelling win against India in the third Test, days after the players had let their emotions get the better of them at the Lord's.

"Joe and I reflected on the Lord's Test and thought about what we could learn and how we could get better. And I think there was a controlled aggression around what they did (at Headingley)," Silverwood said during a virtual media interaction.

"The way they hit the lengths hard, the way they put the India tail under pressure and forced them to make decisions all the time. I think you can be aggressive in a very controlled way and I think they got that right."

Asked if India's fieriness drops if they are put under pressure like they were at Leeds, the head coach said: "The key is to get on top of them because we know they are a very good team. Once they get on top it's



difficult to stop them."

"We put them on the backfoot and we kept the pressure on, so you know, it shows what we can do. The guys executed the gameplan very well. It shows once you put people on the backfoot, the pressure gets and we can get into them."

Wood, Woakes return; Buttler to miss 4th Test

**London:** Pacer Mark Wood and all-rounder Chris Woakes were on Sunday added to the England squad for the fourth Test against India after regaining full fitness while Jos Buttler will miss the game as his wife is expecting their second child.

Wood had hurt his right shoulder while fielding during the second Test at Lord's while Woakes has recovered from the heel injury that kept him out since July.

While Jonny Bairstow will keep in Buttler's absence, Sam Billings, who has played 25 ODIs and 32 T20s, has been brought in as the reserve wicketkeeper. **PTI**

The coach also said there is a possibility that in-form pacers James Anderson and Ollie Robinson could be rested for the fourth Test, starting September 2, as part of workload management with both having played three on the trot.

# Ashwin set for return as Ishant could get dropped

**New Delhi:** India's senior-most pacer Ishant Sharma may not find place in the playing XI in the remaining two Tests against England after an indifferent show in the third match, which the visitors lost by an innings and 76 runs.

Ishant's figures of 22-0-92-0 were worst among the Indian pacers as England scored 432 runs but more importantly, the veteran looked jaded.

Meanwhile, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja's knee scan report hasn't revealed any significant damage but off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin looks favourite to start in the fourth Test at the Oval from Sept 2.

It is still not clear whether India will plan to go in with two specialist spinners but Ashwin, who had a great county game for Surrey at the same venue won't be benched at least in this game.

In case of Ishant going out, the choice would again be between Umesh Yadav and Shardul Thakur.

Shardul with his better batting abilities has his nose ahead but Umesh is certainly a



better red ball bowler than the *Mumbaikar*.

But with Kohli clearly pointing out that workload will be monitored, it remains to be seen whether the seasoned Mohammed Shami with 11 wickets from 96.5 overs is rested to keep him fresh for the final Test or Jasprit Bumrah.

Bumrah has bowled the maximum overs among Indian pacers (108 overs) taking 14 wickets. The pacer is expected to play most games for Mumbai Indians in the IPL and is very important member of the T20 World Cup team. **PTI**



# Max declared winner of rain-ruined Belgian GP

**Spa-Francorchamps:** Red Bull's Max Verstappen emerged as the winner of the rain-ruined Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday with only a handful of laps completed behind a safety car at a drenched and dangerous Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

Pole-sitter Verstappen was awarded half points, which moved him to within three points of Lewis Hamilton in the drivers' championship.

Williams' George Russell took second with Hamilton's Mercedes in third in the short-est race in Formula One history — all 14 kilometres of it.

Organisers finally gave the go-ahead for a rolling start behind a safety car at 18h30 local time, three and a half hours after the scheduled 15h00 start. But after two laps with the spray flying the race was stopped with conditions deemed too dicey at the track. **AFP**

# 8 Gold medals for India at Asian junior boxing



**New Delhi:** It was Gold rush for India at the Asian Junior Boxing Championships in Dubai with eight pugilists from the country finishing on top in the finals held on Sunday.

Rohit Chamoli (48kg), Bharat Joon (+81kg), Vishu Rathee (girls 48kg), Tanu (girls 52kg), Nikita Chand (girls 60 kg), Mahi Raghav (girls 63 kg), Pranjal Yadav (girls 75 kg), Kirti (girls 81+ kg) notched up contrasting victories in their summit clashes to bag the top prize.

While Chamoli defeated Mongolia's Otgonbayar Tuvshinzaya in an intense final, Joon got the better of Kazakhstan's Yerdos Sharipbek 5-0 to finish on top.

Chamoli rallied after losing the opening round to prevail 3-2 in the hard-fought contest.

Joon, on the other hand, easily out-maneuvered his rival, who fizzled out after a decent start. In another final, Gaurav Saini (70kg) signed off with a Silver medal after losing 0-5 Bolttaev Shavkatjon of Uzbekistan.

In the girls' competition, Rathee picked up the Gold medal defeating Uzbekistan's Bakhtiyorova Robiyakhon.

After her, Tanu edged past Tomiris Myrzakul of Kazakhstan in a split 3-2 verdict. However, Muskan (46kg) had to be content with a Silver medal after being bested by another Uzbek Ganieva Gulsevar in a closely-fought bout. **PNS**

# Djoker chases calendar-year Slam

AFP ■ NEW YORK

Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will try to complete the first calendar-year men's singles Grand Slam in 52 years and become the all-time men's leader in Slam titles by capturing the US Open.

Not since Rod Laver in 1969 has the feat been achieved and the chance at tennis history has fueled Djokovic's fire to finish the 2021 sweep.

"I know how big of an opportunity is in front of me," the Serbian star said. "I'm very motivated to play my best tennis. I'm hugely inspired and motivated by that, no doubt."

Five past champions won't be in the field when the show-down begins on Monday on the hardcourts at Flushing Meadows, with Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Stan Wawrinka, Juan Martin del Potro and 2020 winner Dominic Thiem absent due to injuries.



That leaves the main obstacles in Djokovic's path to a 21st career Slam crown as a set of rising 20-something talents trying to build their trophy hauls — second-ranked Daniil Medvedev, third-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas and fourth-ranked Olympic champion

Alexander Zverev.

The 34-year-old has not dropped a Grand Slam match this year, beating Medvedev in the Australian Open final, Tsitsipas in the French Open final and Italy's Matteo Berrettini in the Wimbledon final.



Los Angeles: Ilya Ivashka became the first Belarusian since 2003 to win an ATP title, steamrolling Sweden's Mikael Ymer 6-0, 6-2 on Saturday in the final of the Winston-Salem Open.

The 27-year-old Ivashka dropped just two points on his serve in the lopsided match, needing just 55 minutes to win the shortest final

of the season and claim his first ATP title.

"It was a dream week. An amazing tournament," said Ivashka. "I was waiting for this for so long."

The last Belarusian to win an ATP title was Max Mirnyi in 2003 in Rotterdam.

"It's really fortunate for me and incredibly that it's all coming together in the same year," Djokovic said. "That's something that I didn't expect but I always dream of achieving the biggest things in sport."

The men's Slam has been

# Nishad high-jumps for Silver, Vinod's discus Bronze on hold

PTI ■ TOKYO

High jumper Nishad Kumar clinched a Silver with an Asian record before discus thrower Vinod Kumar fetched a Bronze which was put on hold after a protest over his disability classification as India began collecting what is expected to be an unprecedented haul of athletics medals in the Paralympics here on Sunday.

Vinod's classification in F52, which is for athletes with impaired muscle power, restricted range of movement, limb deficiency or leg length difference, was done on August 22 by the organisers.

It was not clear on what grounds the classification has been challenged.

"Results of this event are currently under review due to classification observation in competition. The Victory Ceremony has been postponed to the evening session of 30th August," read a statement from the Games organisers.

India's Chef de Mission Gursharan Singh told *PTI*



that Vinod's medal stands for now.

"There was a protest from one country or may be more than one, we don't know as it can't be revealed, that there could be issues on the classification done on Vinod before the start of Paralympics," he said.

"Vinod's result, that is his Bronze, still stands and a decision is unlikely to come today as it is very late now. It's expected tomorrow," he added.

The 21-year-old Nishad, who is a farmer's son in Himachal Pradesh's Amb town, cleared 2.06m to win

the Silver in T47 class before 41-year-old BSF man Vinod, whose father fought in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, produced a best throw of 19.91m to clinch a Bronze.

The 24-member Indian athletics team is hoping for a rich haul of medals — at least 10 — and the double success on Sunday gave the country enough reasons to smile on the National Sports Day.

Nishad, whose right hand got cut by a grass-cutting machine at his family's farm when he was an eight-year-old boy, cleared the same height of 2.06m with American Dallas Wise who was also

awarded a Silver.

Another American, Roderick Townsend, won the Gold with a world record jump of 2.15m.

The second Indian in the fray, Ram Pal, finished fifth with a best jump of 1.94m.

T47 class is meant for athletes with a unilateral upper limb impairment resulting in some loss of function at the shoulder, elbow and wrist.

"Absolutely delighted that Nishad Kumar wins the Silver medal in Men's High Jump T47. He is a remarkable athlete with outstanding skills and tenacity. Congratulations to him," tweeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In Vinod's event, also set an Asian record while winning the Bronze medal. Piotr Kosewicz (20.02m) of Poland and Velimir Sandor (19.98m) of Croatia won the Gold and Silver respectively.

He injured his legs while training after joining the BSF, falling off a cliff in Leh that left him bed-ridden for close to a decade during which he lost both his parents.

# Afghan athletes make emotional arrival after secret evacuation

**Tokyo:** Afghanistan's two athletes made an "extremely emotional" arrival at the Tokyo Paralympic Village, Games chiefs said on Sunday, after a top-secret flight from Paris following their evacuation from Kabul. Zakia Khudadadi and Hossain Rasouli arrived in Japan ready to compete at the Games, after leaving Taliban-controlled Afghanistan last weekend in a "major global operation".

"Both athletes are here in Tokyo to fulfil their dreams, sending out a very strong message of hope to many others around the world," said IPC spokesman Craig Spence.

Khudadadi and Rasouli



In this image made from a video, Afghan athletes Zakia Khudadadi, left, and Hossain Rasouli arrive at Haneda airport in Tokyo on Saturday **AP**

were welcomed to the athletes' village on Saturday night by IPC chief Andrew Parsons and IPC Athletes' Council chairperson Chelsey Gotell, as well as the Afghan team's chef de mission Arian Sadiqi.

The pair spent a week in Paris at a French sports ministry training centre following their evacuation from Kabul.

Sprinter Rasouli was scheduled to compete in the men's T47 100m but arrived too late for Saturday's heats. Instead, he will enter the T47 long jump final on Tuesday, while Khudadadi will compete in the women's taekwondo K44 -49kg category on Thursday. **AFP**



# Osaka aims for treble

**AFP ■ NEW YORK**

Defending champion Naomi Osaka seeks her third US Open title in four tries at the year's final Grand Slam with top-ranked Wimbledon winner Ashleigh Barty leading a host of rivals.

What's uncertain is whether New York will see Osaka rediscover the dominant form that saw her win the past two Grand Slam events she played to the finish.

The 23-year-old Japanese star lit the flame in the Olympic cauldron at the Tokyo Games, but has played only two matches since Japan ahead of the Open.



She pulled out of the French Open after being fined for not talking to reporters after her first match and then skipped Wimbledon but spoke with the media after matches in her US Open tuneup at Cincinnati.

Osaka, ranked third, will open this year in New York against Czech Marie Bouzkova. Osaka could meet Coco Gauff in the fourth round, Ukraine's fifth-seeded Elina Svitolina in the quarter-finals and Belarus second seed

Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals.

Barty, in her 83rd consecutive week atop the world rankings, has rolled to wins at Wimbledon and Cincinnati, putting her on best form entering the Flushing Meadows fortnight.

An impressive collection of 20-something rivals among the world's top 10 will take aim at the trophy.

The group includes Czech Barbora Krejickova, the French Open champion; second-ranked Wimbledon semi-finalist Sabalenka; Wimbledon runner-up Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic; Sofia Kenin, the 2020 Australian Open winner; Canada's Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 US Open winner who skipped last year's event; 2020 French Open champion Iga Swiatek of Poland and Tokyo Olympic Bronze medalist Svitolina.