

OPINION 6
POLITICS AND THE
MILITARY DON'T GEL

MONEY 9
NET TAX REVENUES RISE
5% IN FY21: FM

SPORT 12
INDIA TO FACE
BELGIUM IN SF TODAY

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Craving
TO EXPLORE:
KARTIK ARYAN
11 VIVACITY

Chak De India moment in Tokyo

Women's Hockey team scripts history with maiden entry in Olympic semis

PTI ■ TOKYO

They seemed courage and tenacity personified as India's women hockey players stunned three-time champions Australia to enter their maiden Olympic semifinals, while debutant discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur held her own against a world-class field to give the country a lot to be proud of on day 10 of the Games here on Monday.

Rani Rampal and her resolute team brought their 'A' game and lots of determination to the field and the Australians did not know what to do. It was a case of real imitating the reel as blockbuster "Chak De India", which told the tale of an underdog Indian women's hockey team guided by a discredited coach winning the World Cup, trended all across. The pinnacle is still some distance away for the real bunch but it has already surpassed all expectations and redeemed itself for the 12th place finish back in the 2016 Rio Games.

This was a day after the Indian men's team entered the Olympic semifinals following a 49-year gap, a phenomenally gritty run for both the teams. Drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur



Indian players celebrate their victory against Australia during women's field hockey quarterfinal match at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo on Monday

PTI

rose to the occasion when it mattered and converted India's lone penalty corner in the 22nd minute to surprise the Australians on the day, who cried in disbelief even as the Indians shed tears of joy and let out ear-splitting screams to celebrate.

"I don't know what to say because emotions are too high at the moment, and we all are very happy because it was not an easy game to win from Australia," an elated skipper Rani Rampal said after the upset win.

India will play Argentina in the semifinal on Wednesday.

"I think that belief like we can work really hard throughout the game. And this is only 60 minutes, just focus on the 60 minutes. Don't think further what will happen, just focus on 60 minutes, and give everything that you have got. And I think everyone did that, so yeah, I am super proud," Rani said, a reminder of the "70 minute speech" that had galvanised the reel team in Chak De India.

SC orders inclusion of Paralympian shooter Naresh

New Delhi: In a major victory before firing a shot in the upcoming Tokyo Paralympics, the Supreme Court on Monday ordered the PCI immediately include Arjuna awardee and five-time Paralympian shooter Naresh Kumar Sharma as an additional participant for the sporting mega-event in Japan.

TOKYO 2020 MEDAL TALLY				
Country	G	S	B	
China	29	17	16	
USA	22	25	17	
Japan	17	6	10	
Australia	14	4	15	
ROC	12	21	17	
Great Britain	11	12	12	
France	5	10	7	
India	0	1	1	

CAPSULE

PM LAUNCHES 'E-RUPI' NEW PAYMENT SYSTEM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday launched e-RUPI, a person and purpose specific digital payment solution that is aimed at improving transparency and targeted delivery of benefits. Over the years, several programmes have been launched to ensure that the benefits reach its intended beneficiaries in a targeted and leakproof manner, with limited touch points between the Government and the beneficiary.

INDIA, CHINA AGREE TO RESOLVE LAC ISSUES

New Delhi: The Indian and Chinese Armies have agreed to resolve the remaining issues in eastern Ladakh in an "expedient manner" and described their 12th round of military talks as "constructive", according to a joint statement on Monday.

DON'T DESERVE MEDIA TRIAL: SHILPA SHETTY

Mumbai: Actor Shilpa Shetty in a statement on Monday requested people to respect the family's privacy, especially that of her children, and let her take its course. "People have put their faith in me and I've never let anyone down. So, most importantly, I request you to respect my family's and my right to privacy in these times. We don't deserve a media trial Satyamev Jayate," she added.

Rahul invites Opp leaders to plan strategy on Pegasus row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing stalemate in Parliament, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi has invited leaders of Opposition parties to a breakfast meeting at the Constitution Club on Tuesday to chalk out a joint strategy on the Pegasus snooping issue. All Opposition MPs and floor leaders of various parties have been invited for the meeting, sources said.

AICC sources added an invite has also been sent to the Trinamool Congress, which has been skipping all meetings convened by Rahul so far. Rahul met with TMC chief Mamata Banerjee when she called on Congress chief Sonia Gandhi last week.

After a meeting with the floor leaders of Opposition parties last week, Rahul said the Opposition has only one question: whether the Government had bought Israeli spyware Pegasus to use it as a "weapon against its own people".

While the Opposition has been insisting on a full-fledged debate on the Pegasus issue, the Government's stand has been that it is ready to discuss anything but the tapping scandal.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi leaves Parliament in New Delhi on Monday

PTI

Nitish backs Opp demand for probe into snoopgate

PNS ■ PATNA

In a major embarrassment to ally BJP (JD(U) supreme and Bihar Chief Minister Kumar has backed the Opposition's demand for a probe in the Pegasus snooping scandal.

A probe should be done, indeed. We have been hearing about telephone tapping for so many days, the matter should

be discussed (in Parliament). People (Opposition) have been reiterating (for talks) for so many days, it should be done," Nitish said on Monday.

While Opposition parties have stalled Parliament for ten days over demand for a debate and probe, this is the first time that an ally of the BJP has backed their stand for a probe.

J&J takes back plea for vax nod in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bad news for those waiting Prior the US pharma giant Johnson & Johnson's single-shot Covid-19 vaccine 'Janssen' in India. The top drug regulator, Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), said on Monday that the pharma major had withdrawn its proposal seeking accelerated approval of its in the country. It didn't give additional details.

So far, four vaccines have been given Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) in India — Covishield, Covaxin, Sputnik V and Moderna. In mid-July, Dr VK Paul, Niti Aayog member (health), had said, "We are in talks with Johnson & Johnson regarding their single-dose vaccine." He had added, "As per the plan, this vaccine will also be produced in Hyderabad's Bio E."

The US-based Johnson & Johnson had sought approval in April to conduct a bridging clinical study of its Janssen Covid-19 vaccine candidate in India.

It was reported earlier that a few thousand doses of Johnson & Johnson's vaccine could arrive in India in July.



The US FDA authorised Johnson & Johnson's viral vector Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use in February 2021. However, weeks after its authorisation, the vaccine was linked to a rare but serious blood-clotting disorder.

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Covaxin effective against Delta Plus

Hyderabad: Bharat Biotech's Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin (BBV152) is effective against Delta Plus (AY.1) variant of the coronavirus, according to a study published in bioRxiv by the Indian Council of Medical and Research (ICMR).

Maha reports first Zika virus case, Centre rushes team

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Kerala, Maharashtra has reported its first case of Zika virus infection, prompting the Centre on Monday to rush a high-level team to the State to support the authorities to draw an action plan to control the further spread of the disease.

Zika virus is transmitted mostly by the bite of an infected Aedes species mosquito, mainly Aedes aegypti.

On July 31, Maharashtra reported the first case in a resident of Purandar district in rural Pune. The 50-year-old woman was admitted to Belsar primary health centre in Purandar and has now recovered and been discharged by chikungunya.

A statement issued by the Union Health Ministry said that the three-member Central team consists of a public health expert from the office of Regional Director, Pune; a gynaecologist from Lady

Hardinge Medical College, Delhi; and an entomologist from National Institute of Malaria Research (NIMR), ICMR, New Delhi.

"The team shall work closely with the State Health Department, take a stock of the situation on the ground and assess whether the Union Health Ministry's Action Plan for Zika Management is being implemented, and recommend necessary public health interventions for the management of Zika in the State," said the statement.

Kerala has so far reported 61 Zika cases. The infection is mostly found in the tropical and subtropical regions. The symptoms of Zika are similar to dengue, including fever, skin rashes and joint pain. In the vast majority of cases, there are no symptoms. Zika can cause paralysis (Guillain-Barré Syndrome) in some people. It has the potential to cause birth abnormalities in pregnant women.

Indian student in China found dead in room

PTI ■ BEIJING

A 20-year-old Indian student studying in a university in the Chinese city of Tianjin has been found dead in his room and the cause of his death is not yet known, officials here said on Monday.

Aman Nagesh, who hailed from Gaya in Bihar, was a student of Business Administration in the Tianjin Foreign Studies University. He was found dead on July 29.

The cause of his death is under investigation, officials said. He was one of the few Indian students who remained in China through the coronavirus pandemic.

The Indian Embassy here and his family have been informed.

Chargesheet against Sushil, 12 others filed for wrestler's murder

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Monday filed a thousand-page chargesheet against Olympic medalist wrestler Sushil Kumar and 12 others in connection with the alleged murder of a former junior national wrestling champion at Chhatrasal Stadium in the national Capital.

The chargesheet names 13 accused persons, with Sushil Kumar as the main accused. A total of 15 accused have been arrested in the case and five are on the run.

The chargesheet has been



filed before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Satvir Singh Lamba by the crime branch. The judge will announce the date for hearing of the case at the point of taking cognisance of the chargesheet on Tuesday.

Rains likely to be normal in Aug, Sept: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday said monsoon rain is likely to be "normal" in August and September, between 95 per cent and 105 per cent of the long-period average (LPA).

According to the IMD, during August and September, "below normal" to "normal" rainfall is likely over many areas of the northwest, east and northeast India while "normal" to "above normal" rainfall is most likely over peninsular India and adjacent central India.

The monsoon halted its progress across central India in the third week of June, resulting in a three-week delay in the rain during the key sowing season.

The IMD said after witnessing uncharacteristically



A migrant family sells balloons on a roadside as monsoon clouds gather over Srinagar on Sunday

AP

heavy rain and an irregular weather pattern in July, Delhi is likely to receive normal rainfall in August. Normally, the national Capital receives 210.6

mm and 247.7 mm rainfall in July and August, respectively. In another forecast for August, IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra said

monsoon is also likely to be normal in the month. West Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Rajasthan, some parts of interior Maharashtra, Jammu &

Kashmir, Ladakh, some parts of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh are likely to receive below-normal rainfall in August, Mohapatra said.

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, Konkan and Goa, central Maharashtra, south Gujarat, northeastern States, Bihar are likely to receive above-normal rainfall during the month, he added.

July recorded a 7 per cent deficiency in rain, with 26 per cent deficiency over east and northeast India; 27 per cent excess over south peninsula; 7 per cent deficiency over northwest India and 7 per cent deficiency over central India.

June ended with 10 per cent excess rain but a monsoon break of around 12 days from June 19 to July 1 led to a long dry spell in many parts of the country.

Nixing GST Audit will benefit traders: Sisodia



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Manish Sisodia met with the representatives of trade unions of different markets of the national Capital and said that lakhs of traders will get relief due to the elimination of the mandatory Good and Services Tax (GST) audit.

Sisodia said that the Delhi GST (Amendment) Bill has benefited lakhs of Delhi traders. He also gave detailed information to the traders about these 15 amendments, present in the GST (Amendment) Bill.

"Earlier, if the GST 3B was late, a rule of interest was attached to the entire output

tax. Now, after the change in Section 10, interest will have to be paid only on the net cash liability. Similarly, there was a provision to pay tax and fine in case of detention or confiscation of goods. Now, traders and transporters have been given relief by changing it," he said.

"The rules to prevent evasion of GST by creating bogus firms have also been tightened that will ensure that the masterminds of such thefts are caught and held accountable," he added.

Sisodia said, "The Delhi Government keeps on taking suggestions from the traders of Delhi from time to time and makes its policies based on those suggestions. The doors of the Delhi Government are

always open for our traders and they can provide their suggestions any time to the Delhi Government."

GST expert CA Rakesh Gupta, who was involved in the meeting, informed that last week, 15 amendments were approved in the Delhi Assembly under the Delhi GST (Amendment) Bill. Under the chairmanship of Brijesh Goyal, Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), traders from Kashmere Gate, Chandni Chowk, Lalpat Nagar, Sadar Bazar, Chawri Bazar, Karol Bagh, Kirti Boli, Connaught Place, South Ex, Nehru Place, Kamla Nagar, Laxmi Nagar, Shahdara, Rajouri Garden, Sarojini Nagar, etc. participated in the meeting.

New norms for functioning of spas, massage centres

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking strict measures to ensure the prevention of sexual abuse and trafficking of girls/women and to ensure the security of consumers as well as employees, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has approved new guidelines for the functioning of spas and massage centres in the national Capital.

According to the new guidelines any kind of cross-gender massage is strictly prohibited in the premises of any spa and massage centre.

The Government also laid out guidelines for the protection of children from sexual offences, preventing sexual harassment and trafficking among others.

After the issue was flagged up by the Chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), a task force was constituted to investigate into the report submitted by it and to take appropriate legal action and review the functioning of the establishments.

The order lays out some specific provisions that the centres will have to follow to ensure utmost safety inside their premises like the provisions of self-closing doors and prohibition on latches and bolts inside the doors of the massage centre chambers while keeping external doors open during working hours. The centres will also need to have separate toilets and bathrooms for men and women as well as



separate changing rooms.

The DCW had informed the Government about various irregularities and sexual abuse of girls/women employed at the spas and massage centres in the city. A task force was constituted in this regard by the Delhi Government to investigate into the report and suggestions of the DCW were incorporated further into the guidelines.

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NMC can't pay docs but has raised funds for councillors: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP-led North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) does not have the money to pay salaries to doctors, nurses and sanitation workers but has the "audacity" to increase the funds for councillors, Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) chief spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj said on Monday.

The Delhi Government does not owe even a single rupee to the NMC but the BJP-ruled corporation has to return about ₹6,500 crore to the Delhi Government, he said.

"The corporation has not paid the salaries of its employees for three to six months. Doctors and nurses in the hospital, sanitation workers, teachers in their schools have not been paid for months but the NMC is increasing funds for councillors," he said.

The AAP leader criticised the north corporation, saying that the NMC decided to give funds to the tune of ₹50 lakh to its councillors, that too, at a time when they already have a loan of ₹ crore to pay off. All the three municipal corporations of the national Capital - the NMC, the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) and East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) - are led by the BJP.

Meanwhile, north Mayor Raja Iqbal Singh on Monday met with Lieutenant-Governor



Anil Bajaj and said that Delhi Government did not implement fourth Delhi Finance Corporation (DFC) recommendations due to which the civic body faced a loss of ₹968.97 crore.

In the meanwhile, fifth DFC was also constituted and the deep financial crisis present in NMC was discussed and deliberated upon before the commission by the corporation. The commission was also satisfied that the major source of mismatch between revenue and expenditure in the NMC is the hospitals and as such a special grant-in-aid to be provided to the NMC, he said.

However, these recommendations were outright rejected by the Delhi Government, while implementing the fifth DFC and as a result NMC was pushed further deeper into an already severe financial crisis, he added.

Survey of illegal constructions begins in Aravali

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Following an order of the Supreme Court, the Forest Department has started the survey of illegal constructions in the Aravali range.

Forest officials claimed that after the completion of the survey, an action plan will be prepared by identifying illegal constructions. The survey work is expected to be completed in a week.

According to the officials, around five thousand illegal Farmhouses, Houses and other structures have been established in Sohna, Gurugram and adjoining districts.

The Pollution Control Board has filed a petition in the court against 600 of these, while one thousand have been served notices by the Gurugram district administration.

Recently, 430 illegal farmhouses were identified by the Pollution Board and their list was submitted to the Sohna Municipal Council.

The city council has also given notice to 350 of these, while ten thousand have been taken against about 40. Despite these actions, the district administration as well as Sohna Municipal Council



failed to stop illegal constructions and are not getting rid of illegal encroachments in the Aravali range.

"Efforts are being made to comply with the orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Supreme Court. The department is making a full proof plan to take actions against such illegal encroachment," a Forest official on requesting anonymity said.

As per a recent forest department survey, there are at least 500 such farmhouses built illegally on Aravali land in Gurugram, concentrated in areas like Gwal Pahari, Gairatpur Bas, Sohna, Raishina and Manesar.

"After the fresh direction of the Supreme Court, the survey of illegal structures is being conducted again in Aravali. Once the survey will be completed, action will be taken as per the available information. The work of giving notice is being done continuously," Rajeev Tejvan, Forest Divisional Official said.

9 year-old dies under suspicious circumstances

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A nine-year-old girl died under suspicious circumstances. Her parents alleged that she was cremated without their consent by a crematorium's priest in south-west Delhi's Old Nangal Village. Police said that a Forensic Sciences Laboratory (FSL) team and a crime team are investigating the case in order to collect the evidence.

Police said that the girl lived with her parents in the village in a rented house in front of a crematorium. According to Ingat Pratap Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South-west district, on Sunday around 5:30 PM, she went to get cold water from a water cooler at the crematorium after informing her mother.

"At 6 PM, the crematorium's priest, Radhey Shyam, and two-three other people, known to the girl's mother, called her there and showed her daughter's lifeless body lying in the crematorium. They claimed that she got electrocuted while getting water from the cooler.

There were burn marks between her left wrist and elbow and her lips were also blue," said the DCP.

"The priest and the others dissuaded her mother from



The girl was cremated but later the woman and her husband changed their minds and raised a hue and cry that the cremation of their child was done without their consent

making a police control room (PCR) call, saying that the police would make a case out of it and during post-mortem, the doctors would steal the girl's organs, so it was better to cremate her," said the DCP.

"The girl was cremated but later the woman and her husband changed their minds and raised a hue and cry that the cremation of their child was done without their consent. A crowd of 200 villagers gathered there and a PCR call was made

from the spot," said the DCP.

"The PCR call was received at Delhi Cantt police station around 10:30 PM following which police rushed to the spot. The police team brought the situation under control.

The woman gave her statement and a case was registered under relevant sections of the IPC. The priest was taken into custody and an FSL team and a crime team were called to collect evidence from the scene," said the DCP.

Delhi sees 104 dengue and 39 malaria cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 104 cases of dengue and 39 cases of Malaria have been reported in the national Capital so far this year, the data released by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) said on Monday.

According to the latest report released by all three Municipal Corporation, mosquito-breeding has been reported in at least 56310 households and 5627 prosecutions have been launched this year.

Concerned over the rising number of cases of vector borne diseases, the SDMC has intensified information, education and communication (IEC) activities as well as legal prosecution against defaulters.

A senior SDMC official said that a special campaign was conducted on July 31 for the detection of mosquito breeding and control measures taken against the same in the parks and plant nurseries in the jurisdiction of SDMC.

"A total of 764 parks and nurseries were checked. Out of these 557 parks and 135 nurseries were found positive for mosquito breeding due to intermittent rains and high humidity. The department issued 136 Legal notices and 48 challans against care takers/



supervisors as legal measures. Most common sites in the parks were containers, plastic waste, hydrants whereas, in the nurseries flower pots were found to be positive maximally," he said.

The malaria parasite is transmitted by female Anopheles mosquitoes, which bite mainly between dusk and dawn. According to World Health Organisation malaria is caused by the protozoan parasite Plasmodium. Human malaria is caused by four different species of Plasmodium: P. falciparum, P. malariae, P. ovale and P. vivax.

The dengue breeding checkers have checked 13542714 houses and also issued 50,486 legal notices to

various office and residential premises, the data said.

As per the civic report issued by the municipal corporations, 36 cases of dengue have been recorded till July 24 this year. However, no deaths have been reported due to dengue in the city till now, it said.

Fourteen cases of chikungunya have also been reported till July 24 this year, as per the civic report released on Monday. Dengue mosquito larvae breed in clear, standing water, while those of malaria thrive even in dirty water.

Cases of vector-borne diseases are usually reported between July and November but the period may stretch till mid-December.

Man held for manufacturing selling spurious pesticides

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the arrest of two men, the Delhi Police on Monday claimed to have busted a spurious pesticide manufacturing plant being operated in the national Capital's Mundka area.

The accused have been identified as Mohan Lal and Aman. Police said that the duo had rented two godowns at Hiran Kudna village two months ago for manufacturing the fake pesticides. They had made an initial investment of ₹ nine lakh.

According to Parvinder Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, a complaint was received from the representative of a pesticide manufacturing company alleging that someone was infringing the firm's trademark by producing spurious products in its name.

"A raid was conducted on July 30 and a large quantity of



spurious material bearing the names of several companies was found stacked at the manufacturing plant in Mundka. Mohan Lal, Aman, Vijay and Rajender were engaged in manufacturing and selling spurious pesticides and fungicides with the branding of different companies. They also used to sell seeds of different crops treated with these fake pesticides," said the DCP.

"Fake raw material found at the plant and machinery used for manufacturing these products were seized," said the DCP.

"During questioning, it

was revealed that Mohan Lal's son-in-law Naveen runs a pesticide shop in Indra Market, Tis Hazari road. Aman also ran a pesticide shop in the same market," said the DCP.

"Vijay, who hails from Punjab's Bhatinda, is also a supplier of spurious pesticides. His associate Rajender is a resident of Rajasthan's Chittorgarh. The two are major stakeholders in this business," said the DCP.

"Vijay came in contact with Mohan Lal in Indra Market here. Lal's candle business was not going well so he started doing business with Vijay. Aman was also roped in by him as his pesticide shop was not doing much business," said the DCP.

According to the deal between the accused, Vijay was responsible for supply, Rajender was tasked with packaging and arranging infrastructure while Mohan Lal and Aman looked after production.

Raj Rishi Pandey joins AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Mani Naidu, member of All India Congress Committee and Dr Raj Rishi Pandey joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday in the presence of party's national secretary Pankaj Gupta, Chief Spokesperson of the AAP and Greater Kailash MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj said "Today is a very happy day for the AAP government. Many famous personalities from the Congress and BJP party are joining the party today after being influenced by the policies of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal." Dr Pandey, a member of the All India Congress Committee, has been the observer of the 2019 Lok Sabha and Delhi Assembly elections.

Bhardwaj welcomed all the members and said "I welcome all the people who want to end corruption from MCDs and want to work under the leadership of Shri Arvind Kejriwal to the AAP family."

PICTALK



National Students Union of India (NSUI) activists as they protest against alleged phone tapping of journalists

Ranjan Dhilli

Navy fleet to set sail to ensure peace, order in high seas

India, China agree to continue dialogue to ensure LAC disengagement



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With China flexing its maritime muscle in the Indo-Pacific and South China Sea, a task force of the Indian Navy comprising warships will proceed for deployment in these zones. The duration of the overseas deployment will be for more than two months.

Besides, the Indian Navy will also take part in the Malabar series of exercises in the Western Pacific with the other Quad nations including the US, Japan and Australia. China is against the Quad and has repeatedly warned that this grouping will lead to militarisation of the region.

Giving details of the deployment, the Navy said here on Monday in pursuit of India's Act East policy and to enhance military cooperation

with friendly countries, a Task Force of Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet is scheduled to proceed on an Overseas Deployment to South East Asia, the South China Sea and Western Pacific from early August.

The deployment of the Indian Navy ships seeks to underscore the operational reach, peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly countries towards ensuring good order in the maritime domain and to strengthen existing bonds between India and the countries of the Indo-Pacific.

The Indian Naval task force comprises Guided Missile destroyer Ranvijay, Guided Missile Frigate Shivalik, Anti-Submarine Corvette Kadmat and Guided Missile Corvette Kora. The latter three ships are indigenously designed and are equipped with versatile array of weapons and sensors, and

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and China have agreed to sustain the dialogue process to ensure disengagement of troops from the friction points at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. The two sides also reiterated their resolve to maintain peace in the interim at the border.

These two main points emerged from the Corps Commander level talks between India and China on Saturday last and the two countries on Monday issued a joint statement.

The statement issued here said, "The 12th round of India-China Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at the Corps Commander border meeting point on the Indian side.



This round of meeting was held following the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of India and People's Republic of China on July 14 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and the 22nd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) held on June 25.

The two sides had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on resolution of remaining areas related to disengagement along the LAC in the Western Sector of India-China border areas. The two sides noted that this round of meeting was constructive, which

further enhanced mutual understanding.

They agreed to resolve these remaining issues in an expeditious manner in accordance with the existing agreements and protocols and maintain the momentum of dialogue and negotiations.

The two sides also agreed that in the interim they will continue their effective efforts ensuring stability along the LAC in the Western Sector and jointly maintain peace and tranquillity."

The 12 rounds of talks were held nearly four months after the last round in early April. Stalemate persists at three friction points including Hot Springs, Gogra and the Depsang valley for the last more than a year.

A breakthrough was not expected in the latest round as China wants the involvement of local military commanders of both the sides in the talks. However, the Indian security establishment is wary of the proposal.

Moreover, India has all along maintained that disengagement and withdrawal from all the stand-off sites is the prerequisite for restoring normalcy between the two countries. China is in favour of keeping this issue aside and get on relations. Also, India has insisted that status quo ante has to be restored at the LAC as was in April 2020.

The first stand-off began in three friction points including Hot Springs, Gogra and the Depsang valley for the last more than a year.

After several rounds of talks the military and diplomatic levels, advisers of both the countries withdrew from the southern and northern banks of the Pangong Tso in February this year.

Since then, no progress took place in terms of disengagement from the three friction points despite military and diplomatic level talks in the last few months.

Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi held bilateral talks on the issue on July 14 on the sidelines of the foreign ministers' conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). This interaction at the high political level saw both the sides reiterating their commitment to continue dialogue for early resolution of the disputes.

Indian missions' talks with States/UTs to secure border

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

To bolster better assessment of the security situation emerging from the neighbourhood, the Indian missions in the countries adjoining the frontiers will hold meetings on half yearly/quarterly basis with officials of the bordering States/Union Territories and border guarding forces to have a better sensitisation and assessment of security concerns.

The Union Home Ministry in coordination with the External Affairs Ministry, Intelligence Bureau and Directors General of border guarding forces will initiate action for holding such meetings with officials of the concerned States and Union Territories on six monthly or yearly basis, a senior security official said.

In addition to this, the border guarding forces like the Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) have been directed to organise problem-specific hackathons in collaboration with premier educational institutions and start-ups in the country to evolve cost-effective indigenous solutions for border arrangement. The



Assam Rifles, deployed on the border with Myanmar, will also be in such an exercise, officials said.

They said all issues concerning construction of roads along the Indo-China border under the India-China Border Roads-II scheme are being resolved in top priority.

In order to keep the border population synced with the security apparatus, the police forces of the bordering States have been advised to hold "vikas utsavs" in their respective areas along the border by involving the local community, public representatives, local administration and all stakeholder agencies.

The developments come in the backdrop of border row with China in eastern Ladakh and the continuing threats from the Pakistan army and its terror cohorts along the frontiers in Punjab and Jammu

and Kashmir.

Officials said these mechanisms will lead to a better assessment of the ground situation in the bordering areas and simultaneously tweaking the emerging threats by putting in place relevant counter-measures in relation to the challenges from inimical forces and agencies.

In a related development, Mizoram Governor K Hari Babu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday and said the Centre is trying to find a solution to the border issue.

In the memorandum, the BJP MPs highlighted various issues pertaining to the region, including the border row. A series of confidence-building measures have (been) taken over last few days by both Assam and Mizoram governments, yet actions of Congress

Peoples' Party, Republic of Philippines Navy, Republic of Singapore Navy (SINGREX), Indonesian Navy (Samudra Shakti) and Royal Australian Navy (AUS-INDIA).

Further, they will also participate in multilateral

exercise MALABAR-21 alongside Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Royal Australian Navy and the United States Navy in Western Pacific.

The Indian Navy undertakes regular deployments to

friendly foreign countries and Indian and the Pacific Ocean regions in furtherance of the Prime Minister's initiative of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region - SAGAR'.

Further, such engagements build 'bridges of friend-

ship' and strengthen international cooperation. These maritime initiatives enhance synergy and coordination between the Indian Navy and friendly countries, based on common maritime interests and commitment towards

Freedom of Navigation at sea. Besides regular port calls, the task group will operate in conjunction with friendly navies, to build military relations and develop interoperability in conduct of maritime operations.

BJP MPs from Northeast meet PM over Assam-Mizoram dispute

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MPs from North East on Monday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and submitted a memorandum, apprising him of the developments in the region against the backdrop of the ongoing border dispute between Assam and Mizoram. The BJP MPs headed a section of parliament led by the Congress for politicizing the issue.

Through 2018, they tried to make CAA and NRC political issues but the people of North East gave them a befitting reply. Now, they are stoking tempers between Assam and Mizoram," the BJP MPs said.

The memorandum also praised the Modi-led NDA Government's "development work in the Northeast", calling it "historic and unparalleled". In a related development, Mizoram Governor K Hari Babu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday and said the Centre is trying to find a solution to the border issue.

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them a befitting reply. Today they are trying to stoke tempers between Assam and Mizoram," said the BJP MPs in their memorandum to the Prime Minister.

Speaking to the media post the meeting, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju accused "elements from outside our country" of "fueelling violence by making inciting statements". Former Prime Ministers Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi were not sensitive to the aspirations of Mizo and Naga communities," they said.

"The MPs from Northeast further said, "The Naga accord, Bodo accord, Bru Reang moved towards peaceful resolutions. Northeast is home to infrastructures like Bogbel Bridge and Dhola Sadiya bridge. Insurgency and violence have been reduced. On the contrary, Congress has no regard for the culture of the Northeast".

Earlier, the PM met Mizoram Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati to discuss the border situation and ways to diffuse the tensions between two states, as per sources.

Meanwhile, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said he has directed state police to withdraw FIR against Hajra Sabha MP K Vanlalvena as a "goodwill gesture". However, he further said that cases against the other police officers will be pursued.

Crisis in Rajasthan Congress deepens once again

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The crisis within the Ashok Gehlot Government and the ruling Congress is getting murkier. With Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot seemingly not ready to give in to his political bet note and former deputy Sachin Pilot's demands, sources said party chief Sonia Gandhi rushed senior Congress leader and Haryana Congress chief Kumari Selja to hold another and perhaps the last round of meeting with Gehlot.

Selja reached Jaipur on Sunday night and returned to Delhi on Monday after a long meeting with Gehlot. Selja was sent after AICC General Secretaries K C Venugopal, Ajay Maken, Randeep Surjewala conducted a series of meeting with party members, legislators, rebels and the Chief Minister during the last one month.

AICC sources said that Selja returned with Gehlot's query for the central party leadership whether the party will keep repeating Punjab if there are differences within. "Should we repeat Punjab in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and then set a trend as this is the last resort to run a party and government," Gehlot is understood to have conveyed and asked, according to the sources.

The sudden trip has added to the speculation over the expected reshuffle, amid demands by Pilot that he and his loyalists should get a bigger share. Selja enjoys the confi-

dence of Congress president and she also considered close to Gehlot.

She was the chairperson of the screening committee formed to decide the Congress candidates in the last assembly elections in Rajasthan.

Selja's meeting with Gehlot comes just a day after Maken returned and briefed the high command about his three days of meeting with MLAs and CM last week. In a clear indication that some members of the Gehlot Cabinet may be dropped, Maken had told the media that a few ministers have expressed willingness to quit the state government to work for the organisation.

The Gehlot government, which came to power in December 2018, has completed its second term. The demand for a cabinet reshuffle and political appointments to other posts gained momentum in June after some MLAs also to Pilot expressed resentment, which some members made by the party high command to him last year had not been fulfilled but similar issues were met in Punjab within a few weeks of trouble.

As of now there are 21 cabinet members including the CM in Rajasthan and after a reshuffle nine will be added taking the tally to 30 members in the Gehlot government. A three-member AICC committee too had been formed to look into the grievances of the MLAs and both the time the central leadership took the step to pacify Pilot.

JD(U) delegation meets Shah, seeks caste-based census

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation of Janata Dal (United) MPs, led by the new party president Lalan Singh, met Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday with the demand for a caste-based census.

Speaking to reporters, Singh said the Bihar assembly had passed unanimous resolutions in 2019 and 2020 for having census on the caste lines, and added that it is now for the central government to take a final decision. He said, Shah assured them that the matter will be discussed.

The JD(U) had also passed a resolution in support of the caste-based counting of population, a move with potentially wide political ramifications, in its national executive meeting on Saturday where Singh was elected its president. Its rival BJP had been pressing for a caste-based census and even suggested that the State should do on its own, if the Centre isn't willing.

The Central government had recently agreed to make it clear that it will not include caste wise data on population

other than Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the national Census. The Ministry of Home Affairs said this decision has been taken as a "matter of policy".

To a question that the State should do on its own, if the Centre isn't willing, the Bihar BJP leaders have expressed reservation against such a move, Singh claimed that he was unaware of the Bihar BJP's decision.

On the other hand, the party had also backed the resolutions in the Assembly.

Covaxin effective against Delta Plus, says ICMR study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, India's first indigenous vaccine to fight Covid-19, is effective against the Delta Plus (AY.1) variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus, a new study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said. Despite a slight reduction in neutralisation of antibody titres, Covaxin is effective against Delta, AY.1 (Delta Plus) and B.1.617.3 variants, the study added.

Covaxin has been developed by the Hyderabad-based pharma major in collaboration with ICMR. As per the website, when the vaccination was launched on January 16, just a little over 5 crore doses of Covaxin have been administered in the overall 45 crore immunisation so far. Majority has been contributed by Serum Institute of India, a Pune based vaccine manufacturer which is making Covishield.

So far 70 cases of the Delta Plus variant have been found by INSACOG, a group of 28 laboratories involved in genome sequencing. Delta Plus is a mutated form of the Delta variant, first discovered in India. It is characterised by increased transmissibility.

"Our research showed that Covaxin could still neutralise Delta, AY.1 and B.1.617.3 vari-



ants," Dr Samiran Panda, head of epidemiology and communicable diseases, ICMR, according to reports.

The new ICMR-National Institute of Virology study — "Comparable neutralization of SARS-CoV-2 Delta AY.1 and Delta in individuals sera vaccinated with BBV152" — published as a pre-print on bioRxiv, said that Sera of vaccines among Covid naive, recovered cases with full vaccination and breakthrough cases demonstrated 1.3, 2.5 and 1.9-fold reduction against Delta variant in comparison to B.1 variant respectively.

In another development, Bharat Biotech said, certain Rotavac 5D, a variant of its Rotavac vaccine, has received "Prequalification" from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Parl passes Inland Vessels Bill, 2021



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament on Monday passed the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021, with the Rajya Sabha passing it by voice vote amidst protests and sloganeering by the Opposition. The Lok Sabha had already passed the Bill on July 29, 2021.

Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal moved the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021 for consideration and passing. The Bill aims to bring uniformity in the application of the law relating to inland waterways and navigation.

The Minister of Tribal Affairs also introduced the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in Rajya Sabha amid the din.

During the debate on the Inland Vessels Bill, certain Opposition members, who were in the well of the House, yet again tore papers and threw those in the air just like they did a couple of days ago.

Apex court nixes rape survivor's plea to marry accused

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the plea of a rape survivor from Kottiyoor, Kerala, who moved the Supreme Court seeking permission to marry her assailant, a defrocked Catholic priest who is undergoing 20-year imprisonment. The apex court also dismissed a separate plea of the defrocked Priest Rino Vadalakkumthi seeking bail on the ground that he wanted to marry the survivor, who was a minor at the time of rape had given birth to a child.

A bench of Justices Vineet Saran and Dinesh Maheshwari told the former priest, "The High Court has taken a decision consciously and we would not like to interfere with its findings."

The apex court told the victim that she may knock on the door of trial court with her plea to marry the former priest. During the hearing, advocate Amit George, appearing for the former priest, said the High

Court had passed sweeping directions in the case with regard to the marriage, which is a fundamental right. The bench asked George what is the age of the victim and the former priest to which he replied that his client is 49, while the rape survivor is around 25. The top court then told George, "You yourself have invited sweeping directions from the High Court and it would not like to interfere."

At the outset, senior advocate Kiran Suri, appearing for the woman, said that she has sought interim bail for the accused for two months, so that he can marry her and give her a life of dignity. The bench said that both the victim and the former priest can take recourse of whatever remedy is available under law.

Meanwhile, the State prosecution said that it is up to the two adults to decide on the marriage and bail can't be given. Marriage can be conducted at jail premises but no bail can be allowed, said the Kerala State's prosecutor.

Breather in Kerala, Covid storm abates

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala, which has been reeling under unabated increase in the number of Covid-19 cases and fatalities, got a small relief on Monday as the cases came down slightly to the comfort of Health Minister Veena George, who is leading the operation to fight the pandemic from the front line.

The Minister's plea to the State for the last one week to abide by the guidelines and not to crowd anywhere had its impact as the number of persons diagnosed with the pandemic came down to 13,984 on Monday from the daily average of more than 20,000 new cases.

The Test Positivity Rate too came down from the average figure of 13 to 10.93 per cent on Monday though the fatalities recorded during the last 24 hours showed 118 persons succumbing to the disease. The death toll till date reached 16,955 (excluding the 7,000+ under reported cases).

George said 1,27,903 samples were tested during the last 24 hours. Thrissur topped the table of districts with the highest number of positive cases (2350). Malappuram which was the district with the highest number of patients till Sunday (the district had 3,770 cases) diagnosed 1,925 new patients on Monday.

The Health Minister said

that as on Monday, the State had 1.65 lakh patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19. Idukki district diagnosed 196 new cases while Wayanadu (represented in the Lok Sabha by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi) had 263 patients.

Dr Rajiv B Pillai, senior Ayurvedic physician, was of the view that Idukki and Wayanadu were ideal districts to study about the immunity capability of the population. "Both these districts are known for people who work hard to earn their livelihood and have not changed their lifestyle to what we see in cities which are full of fast food joints and Arab foods," said Dr Rajiv while glancing through the day's figures.

IN SHORT

PMO ADVISER AMARJEET SINHA RESIGNS

New Delhi: Amarjeet Sinha, an Adviser in the PMO and handling projects related to the social sector, has resigned from his post. A Bihar-cadre IAS officer of 1983 batch, Sinha had superannuated as the Rural Development secretary in 2019 and was then appointed to the PMO. He is the third top officer to quit the PMO in recent months after former Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha, who worked there as Principal Advisor, resigned in March. In December 2019, PM's Principal Secretary Nirpendra Misra resigned.

EAM TO REPRESENT IRAQ AT IRAN PREZ OATH TAKING

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is likely to represent India at the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on August 5, people close to the minister said. Raisi, a hardliner and known to be close to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, won the presidential election in June by a landslide.

SC SUGGESTS MEDIATION TO AP, T FOR KRISHNA WATER

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday suggested "mediation" to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for settling their dispute over sharing of Krishna river water, saying it did not want to interfere "unnecessarily". A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana was hearing the plea of Andhra Pradesh which has alleged that Telangana has deprived it of its legitimate share of drinking and irrigation water.

NIA RE-REGISTERS ISRAEL EMBASSY BLAST CASE

New Delhi: The NIA on Monday took over and re-registered the case pertaining to the blast that took place outside the Israel Embassy in Delhi on January 29 this year.

DELAY IN LAYING OF 378 NOTIFICATIONS

New Delhi: The Committee on Subordinate Legislation, headed by Partap Singh Bajwa, in its report tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Monday said that there had been a delay in laying of 378 notifications and 141 notifications (26.5 per cent of total delayed Notifications) were delayed by more than 11 months while some others by more than four years.

Sena workers damage 'Adani Airport' signboard in Mumbai

TM RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A irate group of Shiv Sainiks vandalised a brand new 'Adani Airport' signboard erected by Adani Airport Holding Ltd. (AAHL) outside the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) here on Monday, in protest against the AAHL's move to rename the city airport christened after the Maratha warrior which they dubbed as "an insult" to the people of Maharashtra. Sull fresh from jubilation of taking over the management of CSMIA from the Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL), the Adani group tasted anger of the Shiv Sainiks over the renaming of CSMIA, as the Shiv Sainiks went on a rampage and tore down a brand new 'Adani Airport' signboard erected by the AAHL.

Raising slogans like 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is the name of the city', the Shiv Sainiks climbed up the landscaped garden outside the city airport where the controversial hoardings had been erected, uprooted AAHL sign boards in English and Marathi languages and planted saffron flags there.

Monday's protests by the Shiv Sainiks were in line with the serious reservations expressed by Sena MP and party spokesperson Sanjay Raut over the renaming of CSMIA as Adani Airport Holding Ltd. (AAHL). "It is Chhatrapati Shivaji



Police officials inspect the site after Shiv Sena workers damaged an Adani group signboard near the Shivaji Maharaj statue in Mumbai on Monday.

Maharaj International Airport. We had undertaken an agitation and had the city named as CSMIA. We do not accept if the airport is named after any industrialist. It will remain as CSMIA," Raut said.

"The AAHL employees have been given T-shirts with Adani Airport written on them. You have to use binoculars to see the name of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj written in such small letter. This is an insult to the great Maratha warrior. When the Adani group ignores our reservations around the renaming of the airport, you can expect the kind of angry reaction from the Shiv Sainiks as the one you witnessed in the afternoon," Shiv Sena MP Arvind Sawant said.

"The name of Chhatrapati Shivaji is not known just in Maharashtra but in the entire country. Earlier we had a big company GVK group that was managing the Airport. But, it did not name the airport after the group. Has Industrialist bought the entire Airport? Why is the industrialist trying to destabilise Mumbai and Maharashtra by resorting to this kind of acts? And for what?" Mumbai Mayor Kishori Bedekar asked.

Meanwhile, reacting to the Shiv Sena's protests, an AAHL spokesperson said: "In light of the incidents around Adani Airports branding at the Mumbai International Airport, we firmly assure that Adani Airport Holding Limited (AAHL) has merely replaced the previous branding

TMC condemns attack on Abhishek's convoy in Tripura

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has strongly condemned the Monday's attack on the convoy of its MP — and the party's second-in-command — Abhishek Banerjee.

Hours after his cavalcade was attacked by alleged BJP supporters the Bengal ruling outfit took to Twitter saying "Shocking display of absolute hoodlums in the Tripura (BJP) government! When it comes to BJP, ruthlessness and DISRESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY seems to be running the show. You can keep trying but you cannot escape from the hearts of the people of Tripura. Shameful attempt."

The car of Banerjee who was on a day-long visit of Tripura was attacked with a flag stick by some alleged BJP men while he was proceeding towards the Tripura (BJP) government! When it comes to BJP, ruthlessness and DISRESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY seems to be running the show. You can keep trying but you cannot escape from the hearts of the people of Tripura. Shameful attempt."

Alleging that the Tripura BJP and its Chief Minister Biplob Deb was "taking the state to new heights", Banerjee later tweeted "Democracy in Tripura under BJP. Well done Biplob for taking the state to new heights." He further said "They (BJP) said



Abhishek Banerjee (guest is God) ... but now they are attacking (the visitors). The people of Tripura will judge."

The TMC also accused the BJP of damaging and tearing off posters of Banerjee. The plan of creating trouble for Banerjee was hatched in advance, the party claimed even as its Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien called upon Home Minister Amit Shah to look into the matter and act against the miscreants.

He wrote "Raised the issue in Rajya Sabha of Lok Sabha MP Abhishek Banerjee being attacked today in Tripura. Amit Shah

please come to Parliament and answers the hard questions. Democracy?"

While officials on duty at the Agartala police headquarters claimed "no information on any attack" on the Trinamool Congress leader who is also the nephew of Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Bengal BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said "The BJP does not such an act... though it is peanuts in comparison to what they have been doing here in Bengal."

He said "I have heard there was a small commotion as people were spontaneously protesting against his party's attempt to vitiate Tripura's political atmosphere when Abhishek Banerjee's vehicle reached there... the entire cavalcade had crossed the BJP procession and only at the tail end of the BJP rally some youth hurled a stick at his car wheel and not desirable."

The Bengal BJP later wrote in its social media handle, "While this has been a routine affair in Bengal for any opposition leader, seems you have now dispatched violent TMC cadres to Tripura... Wait till the people of Bengal do this to TMC leaders in West Bengal too."

Akhilesh remark on ropeway baseless: Min

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Responding to tweets posted by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on the inauguration of a ropeway by Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Vindhyachal Dham in Mirzapur on Sunday, UP Minister and Government spokesman Siddhant Nath Singh flayed the SP chief for making irresponsible statements.

In his tweet, Akhilesh had attributed the credit for conceptualising and planning the ropeway in Vindhyachal Dham to the previous Government headed by him.

"Akhilesh Yadav has no future left in 2022 UP Assembly elections and is perpetually over his party's predictable defeat. Samajwadi Party's defeat in the 2022 elections is a foregone conclusion. In fact, this time Akhilesh and his party will be wiped out of Uttar Pradesh. People are waiting for the elections to kick them out. Akhilesh knows this too well and for this reason, he is making baseless and non-sensical statements on every issue," Singh said in Lucknow on Monday.

Hitting out at the SP chief, the Government spokesman further said that the Samajwadi Party was just making false claims and taking the credit for whatever work the Bharatiya Janata Party had done in the state.

"In regard to the development work of Vindhyachal Dham, the SP chief is making fabricated statements. Akhilesh is a frustrated person, perpetually engaged in misleading the people of the state through fallacious claims. The SP chief is merely reaping the fruits of what he has sown during his chief ministership," he said.

Kerala High Court's observation likely to make life easy for tipplers

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Tipplers in Kerala are in for a surprise. Taken aback by the criticism levelled by the Kerala High Court to the pathetic situations of liquor outlets in the State, the LDF Government is considering increasing the number of Beverages Corporation outlets dispensing spirit.

Liquor sales in the State have been taken over by the Government and all retail outlets are run by the public sector Kerala State Beverages Corporation. There are serpentine queues in front of the BevCo outlets which have made purchase of liquor a difficult process. The tipplers have to stand in sun and rains for hours to get their daily quota of spirits.

A Vijayaghavan, Kerala CPI(M) secretary who is also the convenor of the high power liaison committee of the Left Democratic Front told The Pioneer on Monday that tipplers were undergoing severe hardship to procure liquor. "We are seriously considering increasing the number of liquor outlets so that the difficulties

faced by them could be brought down. This is in the backdrop of the observation made by the Kerala High Court. Our objective is to make life easy for all," said Vijayaghavan.

When it was pointed out to the CPI(M) secretary that the special territory of Pudukkudam has super markets exclusively selling liquor, he said this was an issue which the party and the Government would study in detail. Customers in Pudukkudam could do their shopping in the exclusive liquor shops, selecting their favorite brands from the shelves and pay either by cash or card at the counter. There are no queues even during festival season while business is hectic.

Vijayaghavan was keen to know more details about the private liquor outlet in Tamil Nadu which were wound up by 2002 as the State administration took over the liquor sales. The famous super bazars like Spencer's had special counters dispensing all brands of liquor and they functioned smoothly till the Government cancelled such outlets.

Cong to observe Dalit Swabhiman Diwas in UP today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To woo the Dalit community ahead of the 2022 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, the Congress has decided to organise 'Dalit Swabhiman Diwas' on Tuesday.

Desperately trying to find its lost political foothold in the state, the Congress had earlier organised conferences of various castes which could play important role in the State politics, like Nishad-Kewat-Mallah conference, Maurya-Shakya-Saini-Kushwaha conference and Pal-Gaderia-Dhangar conference.

Formerly with Congress, Jitin Prasad too had started a Brahmin Sabha to woo the community, alleging harassment by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party across the State before recently switching allegiance to the saffron outfit. The Dalit cell of UP Congress will be celebrating 'Dalit Swabhiman Diwas' across the state on August 3 and will also take out a Dalit Swabhiman Yatra in all 75 districts of the state.

"After Independence in 1947, first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet had passed a resolution to make Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar the Law Minister on August 3 and as Swabhiman Diwas," said state chief of Dalit cell of UP Congress, Alok Prasad, in Lucknow on Monday.

ATS arrests hawala trader funding terror module

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of the Anti-Terrorism Squad claimed to have made a breakthrough in terror racket when they arrested a man from Gorakhpur district for his alleged involvement in sending money through the hawala route to Pakistan handlers, officials said on Monday.

The accused, Dinesh Kumar Singh alias Ajay Kumar Singh alias AK Singh (46) of Gorakhpur, was arrested on Sunday. He was evading arrest for the past three years and carried a reward of ₹50,000 on his arrest, the officials said.

In a statement issued here, the ATS said, "Information was received that on the instructions of Pakistani handlers, some people were using fake documents to open accounts in different banks, duping people to deposit money in those accounts, withdrawing the deposited money and sending it to the Pakistani handlers through the hawala route."

Pondy Min: Decision on reopening of schools only after Aug 15

Puducherry Minister A Namassivayam on Monday said the Puducherry Government would decide on re-opening of schools and colleges in the Union Territory after consulting the Lieutenant Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister N Rangasamy after August 15. The Home and Education Minister, in a press statement, said he held a meeting with educational officials to discuss about Covid-19 and its third wave.

He said the government has decided not to re-open the schools and colleges for now. PTI

Kerala HC: A stray dog is made ferocious by its circumstances

Kochi: A dog is made ferocious by the circumstances and it is a myth that a stray canine is dangerous by nature, the Kerala High Court said on Monday while dealing with the issue of poisoning of street dogs in Thiruvananthapuram.

A Bench of Justices A K Jayasankaran Nambiar and P Gopinath said killing or maiming the street dogs was not the better way to make people safer and the better option was to capture the canines and rehabilitate them at animal shelters. It also said, "This kind of dog catching using hammers cannot be done."

The court said a balance has to be maintained between the interests of the residents of the area who feel threatened by the street dogs and the welfare of the animals. It was also skeptical with regard to the municipality's claims that one of its junior health inspectors paid for the poisoning of the canines from his own pocket.

The court directed the municipality to identify its private animal shelters run by private organisations who would be able to capture the street dogs and shelter them in their premises. It issued the direction while observing that it understands that presently the municipality would not be able to spend funds for setting up such shelters.

The Kerala Government was asked to give details of the animal shelters — run by the state and private ones — in all the districts.

With these directions the court listed the matter for hearing on August 6.

The court had taken up the issue of the poisoning of the dogs after a video on the same was brought to its attention. While seeking the stand of the municipality over its role in the entire matter, the bench had also directed the civic body to ensure no such incident takes place within its territorial limits in future and to put in place suitable machinery to ensure the same.

On Monday, the municipality told the court that it had no role in the matter.

Last week, the junior health inspector — arrayed as an accused in the case with regard to killing of the canines — moved the High Court seeking anticipatory bail and claimed that he was being falsely implicated in the case to divert the probe from the Chairperson and of the municipality and the chairperson of its standing committee on health.



Tourists visit the historic Taj Mahal during a cloudy day in Agra on Monday.

Power play

Ignoring Indian protests, Pakistan is trying to legitimise its occupation of Gilgit-Baltistan

In what India claims is a violation of its natural right over Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan, the Imran Khan Government gives shape to a law to award the region the status of a 'provisional' province. Khan had made that promise last November. This is an attempt by Islamabad to legitimise its illegal occupation by applying the provisions of Pakistani law and the election commission to the region. India has lodged a strong protest over the decision, asserting once again that Gilgit-Baltistan, along with the entire Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, is an integral part of India by virtue of its legal accession. The region, or the provisional province which it may soon be, is of immense strategic importance to India, Pakistan and China. It is Pakistan's only territorial frontier with China. It meets China's Xinjiang autonomous region at that point. It is also a land route between the two provinces. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through it. Its neighbours also give Gilgit-Baltistan a vantage location: Afghanistan is to its west, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to its south, and Jammu and Kashmir to the east. Till a decade ago, it was a nameless region — merely called Northern Areas — and administered from Islamabad, unlike Pakistan-occupied Kashmir with its own Constitution and Assembly. That changed with the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order of 2009 that introduced the legislative Assembly in the region in place of the Northern Areas Legislative Council.



The reason why Pakistan never annexed the region is because it did not want to weaken its international case for a plebiscite in Kashmir by annexing Gilgit-Baltistan or, for that matter, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. It hopes that if ever a plebiscite is held, the votes in Gilgit-Baltistan would become vital to influencing the result. This explains why the region's provincial status is 'provisional'. India has begun to assert afresh its right over the region since Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to it in his Independence Day speech in 2016. Previously, Indian Parliament passed a resolution in 1994 re-affirming its right over the region. In 2017, the British Parliament also asserted that Gilgit-Baltistan, under Pakistan's control, belongs to India. Gilgit is crucial to China's expansion of its land trade routes across the Himalayas. Without the control of Gilgit, the Gwadar port that establishes a direct access to the Indian Ocean via the CPEC is of little value to China. The whole idea of China's \$46 billion CPEC is to have surface transport and pipeline connectivity between Gwadar and Xinjiang via Gilgit, extending China's sphere of influence to Gilgit-Baltistan and right up to Hormuz Strait. Even as Pakistan makes the region a province, it cannot deny that it ceded control over the region to China and the Chinese Army. The latest development poses a challenge to India's claim to the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and brings closer home the threat of China's presence in Gilgit. Pakistan has made its move and the ball is in India's court now.

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PIC TALK



People bathe at Prabhakarji Ka Khola waterfall after monsoon rains in Jaipur

PH

The Kerala crisis

After the distinction of being the first COVID-free State, Kerala is now caught deep in the quagmire

Kerala wakes up every morning to an eerie silence. The State was the first to declare itself free of COVID-19 on the 100th day of diagnosing the first pandemic case in the country. But the last week saw Kerala diagnosing 20,000 new cases per day with an average Test Positivity Rate of 13. The death toll is surging at an unprecedented rate. When Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan declared on May 8, 2020, that the State was COVID-free, Kerala rejoiced and sang paean to former (and then) Health Minister KK Shailaja. But it did not take long for the façade of the success of the 'Kerala model' to collapse. 'Kerala was known for its good healthcare system at low cost. The colonial masters and the Royal Family of Travancore, who were the rulers till 1947, have to be fated for this. The State's good climate and availability of pure water and air had laid a strong foundation for an excellent public health infrastructure,' says Dr SS Lal, an internationally renowned expert on contagious diseases. He has been alerting the authorities about the danger which they were going to face. But the doctor says that the policymakers had become prisoners of their own image.



The Government failed to co-opt the services of private hospitals, where 80 per cent of the State's doctors are employed. The Kerala Government Medical Officers Association's plea to appoint 1,000 doctors on a war footing fell on deaf ears. The unscientific lockdown rules and the failure to operationalise the existing infrastructure worsened the situation. The RTI probes have revealed that the authorities suppressed details about 7,000 COVID-19 related deaths. There were instances of COVID patients committing suicide in these hospitals because of the failure of the authorities to attend to them. An interesting point is the few number of cases being reported from Idukki and Wayanad, the districts atop the Western Ghats, apparently because of the hardworking lifestyle of the people there. Vijayan's decision to bring in personalities like filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan and a bishop as members of a committee to advise the Government on how to tackle the COVID menace evoked laughter. No wonder, the State is adding 50 per cent of the new patients to the daily national tally. It once again underlines the fact that we should have the right people for the right job even during the pandemic.

Politics and the military don't gel

It would be in the interest of the political establishment to desist from politicising the military, lest it creates an uncontrollable monster

The former President of the United States, Donald Trump, has always had the reputation of being a man of questionable moral and ethical integrity with close connections to the radical right. Yet, there were those who voted for him in 2016 because they genuinely believed that he was the lesser of the two evils, and strongly felt that only an 'outsider' like him was capable of draining the 'Washington Swamp', a phrase alluding to the seemingly all-pervasive corruption surrounding the Washington power elite. They would certainly have been disappointed by his insipid performance as President, especially the extent of his chicanery and selfishness. These have been laid bare in a recent book, by two Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post journalists, investigative staff writer Carol Leonnig and former White House Bureau Chief Philip Rucker, on Trump's final year in power, titled 'I Alone Can Fix It'. A fitting sequel, and as perceptive and illuminating, is 'A Very Stable Genius'.

One of the most fascinating aspects of their latest book pertains to the manner in which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, responded to President Trump's brazen attempts to overturn the election results by peddling his 'Big Lie' that the elections had been 'stolen' by the Democrats resorting to widespread fraud. Despite his legal challenges being summarily dismissed, he continues to peddle these allegations to this day. There can be little doubt that his incitement of his supporters culminated in a violent but abortive attempt on January 6 to disrupt proceedings at Capitol Hill to formalise the election results.

Prior to this, one may recall, General Milley had been excoriated by military veterans, politicians and the media for having unwittingly dragged the military into politics by being present, in uniform, at Trump's infamous 'Bible photo op' at the St John's Church, immediately after peaceful protesters had been forcefully evicted while demonstrating for racial equality. Indeed, that he then went on to tender a public apology for his error of judgement speaks volumes of his forthrightness, integrity and



strength of character.

He then initiated action to ensure that the military was not dragged into the political sphere, despite Trump having appointed his own lackeys to key positions within the Pentagon. If the authors are to be believed, he went so far as to compare Trump to Hitler and refer to the January 6 insurrection as the 'Reichstag Moment' for the US. On Trump's attempts to cling to power through force, he reportedly told his colleagues in the Joint Chiefs, 'They may try, but they're not going to f@#%## succeed... You can do this without the military. You can do this without the CIA and the FBI. We're the ones with the guns.'

His actions have lessons that our military leadership would do well to imbibe. It is inconceivable that our senior military hierarchy can, or ever will, adopt such a confrontational attitude towards the leadership of a democratically elected Government, whatever be the provocation, or however unconstitutional be their actions. The aloofness displayed by the military during the 1977 Emergency is a case in point. True, there have been the likes of General Thimayya, Field

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IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT OUR SENIOR MILITARY HIERARCHY CAN, OR EVER WILL, ADOPT SUCH A CONFRONTATIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LEADERSHIP OF A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT, WHATEVER BE THE PROVOCATION, OR HOWEVER UNCONSTITUTIONAL BE THEIR ACTIONS

Marshal Manekshaw and a few more of that vintage who have displayed spine and opposed Government directions, but these have been few and far between, and restricted only to professional matters within their purview. Moreover, till recently, the military's senior leadership has been quite circumspect in ensuring that its actions were completely unbiased, apolitical, secular and within constitutional parameters. In fact, it was their adherence to such behaviour that made the military the most popular and respected institution within the country.

Unfortunately, while the bulk of our military remains apolitical and secular, the actions and public statements of the Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, have created perceptions that the military's senior leadership has become excessively politicised. There is the fact that some very senior officers have taken the plunge into active politics immediately on shedding their uniform.

While some within the ruling elite may see this turn of events as advantageous to their ideological cause, and in fact encourage this shift within the military hierarchy

through the process of 'deep selection', as some allege, they may well be biting off more than they can chew. If there is anything to learn from history, it is that once the military gets sucked into politics, it will not be satisfied acting as a mere handmaiden of those in power. As General Milley so eloquently put it, they are the ones with the guns! We just need to look closely at our own neighbourhood for examples. It would be in the interest of the political establishment to desist from politicising the military. Creating an uncontrollable monster, that will go on to bite the hand that feeds it, is nothing but sheer stupidity. The Government and the legislature would do well to put rules in place that prevent members of the military and even the Civil Services from joining politics without an appropriate cooling-off period. That would go a long way in insulating them, especially the military, from politics.

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HAS DELHI LOST ITS WARMTH AND DUE?

Sir — Nowdays, we often hear about the northeastern people being harassed in the national Capital. These unfortunate incidents pain me somewhere because I have always regarded Delhi as my second home. I was there for the most part of my early childhood, from 1994 to 1999. Since my father used to travel frequently, my mother and I were in a quarter which we can term 'Mini India' as there were people from various States.

We used to exchange our local food with their delicacies. The auntsies would let me to go to the market along with their evening walks and sometimes to mandirs, gurudwaras and mosques. My mother, who would go to the bazaars alone, never faced any untoward incident; in fact she was helped by people with her bags. What has happened to the capital now? Has it been hijacked by hoodlangs? Delhi earned the title of 'Diwali ki Dilli' for a reason but such incidents are bringing shame to it and to the real 'Diwalas' of Delhi. I urge the Government to be more strict on this front so that our northeastern people keep feeling safe and loved, like my family did in the national Capital.

Noopur Baruah | Tezpur

BEWARE OF THE THIRD COVID-19 WAVE

Sir — India will witness another alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in the middle of August with the third wave peaking, and nearly 1,50,000 infections a day is the worst scenario. A study by a group of researchers led by Mathukumali Vidyasagar and Manindra Agrawal at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Hyderabad and Kanpur predicts that if the third wave occurs, it will hit us sometime around the middle or end of August and continue increasing till October.

This peak can be of two types. If the variant is more infectious, the peak can be more like the first wave. If it is not that infectious, the cases will not be that high. India reported 40,134 new cases of COVID-19 and 422 deaths in the last 24

Kerala must not be vilified



The State of Kerala continues to detect over 20,000 COVID-19 cases daily through more than 1.5 lakh tests. There seems to be no let-up in the furious spread of the Delta variant of the virus in the State. Yet, the campaign against the State Government's COVID management using the pretext of the latest surge in deaths, the national fatality rate would be 9.78 per cent of the total cases reported and Kerala's would come to 0.69 per cent. The shortage of oxygen or non-availability of a hospital bed or ventilator, or shortage of a life-saving drug has never been the cause for any death in the State until now. Pampa, the holy river, has been flowing serenely; it never had to bear the sorrow of carrying bloated abandoned dead bodies. The Kerala model of COVID-19 management has been successful in saving countless lives.

0.49 per cent, indicative of its success in saving lives. The State has succeeded in keeping the fatalities low through early detection, timely hospital admission and better medical care. Lives do matter more in God's Own Country.

A new study conducted by the researchers in India, Canada and the United States has put India's real death count between 31 and 34 lakh. The studies have also found that the actual death toll in Kerala is 1.4 times the official figure. Computed on the estimate of the uncounted deaths, the national fatality rate would be 9.78 per cent of the total cases reported and Kerala's would come to 0.69 per cent. The shortage of oxygen or non-availability of a hospital bed or ventilator, or shortage of a life-saving drug has never been the cause for any death in the State until now. Pampa, the holy river, has been flowing serenely; it never had to bear the sorrow of carrying bloated abandoned dead bodies. The Kerala model of COVID-19 management has been successful in saving countless lives.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

hours, as per the Government on Monday. The total number of cases currently stands at 3,16,95,958 and the death toll at 4,24,773. The number of active cases in the country is 4,13,718. Less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported in 36 days, which is the result of sustained and collaborative efforts by the Centre, the States and UTs.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CAST IN HAPPY BRONZE

Sir — After missing the glorious chance of bagging the gold, Pusarla Venkata Sindhu settled for the bronze medal with a clinical performance at Tokyo Olympics 2020. PV Sindhu fixed her hair, shuffled her feet twice, leaned forward and muttered 'come on' as she took up the challenge and settled for a bronze. She took a deep breath before letting the shuttle sail over the net. The point ended with a thunderous cross-court smash, and she let out a scream.

She had scaled the mountain of expectations, beating China's He Bingtiao 21-13, 21-15 to clinch the Olympic bronze medal. She is now the first Indian woman to clinch back-to-back medals at the Olympics. Sindhu had her Chinese opponent scrambling around the court and a couple of authoritative shots put the Indian 11-8 ahead and she never looked back.

In the end, Sindhu's power and guile proved just too much. Bingtiao began to engage Sindhu in longer rallies in the second game to control the tempo of the game, but the Indian was prepared. She finished points early and derived great success from her ferocious forehand cross-court smashes. Thus, Sindhu cast her name in bronze in a fierce battle for supremacy.

CK Subramanian | Navi Mumbai

SOUND BITE

I have directed the Assam Police to withdraw the FIR against K Vanlalvena, Hon'ble MP, Rajya Sabha, from Mizoram.

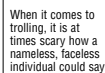


Assam Chief Minister — Himanta Biswa Sarma



What is their (Taliban militants') change? They have become more cruel, more oppressive, more non-Muslim.

Afghanistan President — Ashraf Ghani



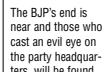
When it comes to trolling, it is at times scary how a nameless, faceless individual could say anything about anybody without getting caught!

Actor — Tiger Shroff



I showed the team a movie about staying in the moment and I think that made a big difference in this match against Australia.

Indian women's hockey coach — Spandhita Marjani



The BJP's end is near and those who cast an evil eye on the party headquarters, will be found floating in the Worli gutters.

Shiv Sena president — Uddhav Thackeray

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN EDUCATION IS NEXT CALAMITY IN MAKING

The current learning gap and reduced social skills can lead to a widening knowledge gap



SHUBHANG RATHI

There is a calamity in the making in the field of education, especially school education, in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected every stakeholder, be it the parents, teachers, students, and school administrators. Innovative ways and technical tools are being developed to make students come close to get the feel of classroom teaching. According to Azim Premji Foundation, more than 60 per cent of children cannot access online education and around 90 per cent of students with disabilities are unable to participate in online classes. Delhi-based NGO, Child Fund India, says as many as 64 per cent of children in rural India are facing the prospect of being dropped out of school. For students, the biggest challenge is the absence of physical interaction with peers and teachers. Primary school students cannot even comprehend what is happening to them. Not only are learning standards affected, physiological pressure on senior students is becoming immense. There



is little physical activity because local parks and school playgrounds are also shut. Students in X, XI and XII are irritated about the new methodology of exam evaluation. For parents, it is challenging to teach different concepts and methods to their children every day. Parents are juggling between house chores, office work, and handling the education needs of their children. One parent of my school said: "If this year it is online classes, I am shifting back to my village as I am here in the city only for my children's studies." Parents who have suffered financially due to COVID-19 are taking extreme steps to cut down on education expenses. Unfortunately, it is also their first response, resulting in a heavy blow to the child's future. For teachers, the biggest challenge is teaching by using technology and understanding students' body language. Old and experienced teachers face issues related to online teaching. Teachers are dissatisfied with learning outcomes after putting in extra effort.

I see a calamity coming: Many students have left any formal form of studying in 2020-21. Something needs to be done to rectify the situation. For instance, when we return to work after a gap of 10 days, we feel we have to start work from scratch even though we have been doing the same work for the past several years. Imagine how will a child in the 5-10 age group cope with a break of over 18 months and still attain previous academic levels? Even though we have the infrastructure to teach children, what we lack is continuity. It might become difficult for students to remember the past concepts and relate them to the new ones. It is a challenging task to bring the students back to their previous academic levels. There is already a fear of many small schools closing down because of the spiralling running costs. The administrators are bogged down by unpaid fees in spite of the Supreme Court's verdict. The current learning gap, reduced social skills, and poor handling by educators can lead to a widening knowledge gap of students when offline classes commence again. This can create an educated but unskilled and incapable workforce in the future. We are also looking at an education divide between the rich and the poor and urban and rural. We require the government's intervention to come up with a plan to allow students to visit their schools once or twice a week while continuing their online classes. A hybrid model to clear doubts and reduce the physiological pressure of the students will be most welcomed by schools.

(The writer is the owner of a private school in Morena, Madhya Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

Power reforms — a distant dream

Unshackling of discoms will take away the leverage parties enjoy to serve their populist goal of giving cheap/free power to people at election time



UTTAM GUPTA

Since last year, there have been several announcements regarding the reform of power distribution companies (discoms). They include the Electricity (Amendment) Act, 2020, Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution (RLRBS), and a special loan of ₹90,000 crore (subsequently raised to ₹130,000 crore) to discoms in 2020, and the new draft National Electricity Policy, 2021.

The key reform measures included (i) developing an efficient market for electricity distribution; (ii) de-license the distribution business, bring in competition, and give the consumer power to choose supplier (or "open access"); (iii) direct benefit transfer (DBT) of subsidy; (iv) putting a cap on the hike in power tariffs; (v) linking payments by discoms to letter of credit (LoC); (vi) denying grants or loan to loss-making discoms, etc.

An overwhelming share of power generated by PSUs such as the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), etc., independent power producers (IPPs), besides generating stations of State electricity boards (SEBs) is procured by discoms (these are mostly owned and controlled by State governments) under power purchase agreements (PPA). Most of these PPAs are long-term contracts up to 25 years. A mere five per cent of the electricity is traded.

The State governments order discoms to sell electricity to some preferred consumers, viz., poor households and farmers, either at a fraction of the cost of purchase, transmission, and distribution, or even free. On the units sold to these groups, they incur colossal under-recovery. This is aggravated by aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses — most of it is plain theft. In flared tariff allowed to IPPs/PSUs under a cost-plus formula (under the PPAs) adds to the revenue shortfall.

A deadly cocktail of these three factors contributes to persistent and increasing losses of discoms. In 2015-16 it was ₹52,000 crore, ₹17,000 crore in 2017-18 (this reduction has to do with a massive bail-out given in November 2015 under Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana), ₹30,000 crore in 2019-20, and ₹58,000 crore in 2020-21.

In this backdrop, let us analyze the reform measures: (i) A pre-requisite for the development of an efficient market for electricity distribution is that a major chunk of power should be available for sale in the open market. But, with 95 per cent of electricity tied to PPAs, that too long-term, this is unthinkable.

About (ii), considering that the entire distribution network — transmission lines, feeder lines, transformers (that cater to households), industries, etc. — is owned and controlled by discoms, any talk of letting in private entities is a misnomer.

As for 'open access', a provision was made even under the amended Electricity Act (2003). Under this policy, to be imple-



BY FIXING THE SURCHARGE AT A HIGH LEVEL AND NOT BOTHERING TO REDUCE IT (AS MANDATED UNDER THE ACT), THE STATE GOVERNMENTS ENSURED THAT POST-SWITCH, THE EFFECTIVE COST OF POWER TO THE CONSUMER — TARIFF CHARGED BY THE NEW SUPPLIER PLUS OAC — IS HIGHER THAN WHAT THEY PAY TO SEBs. THAT RENDERED THE SWITCH UNECONOMICAL

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



mented within five years of its enactment, i.e., by 2008, the choice was given to the bulk consumers (having consumption more than 1 megawatt) to choose their supplier. But another provision in the Act required such customers to pay an open access surcharge (OAC) to the concerned SEB they wanted to leave.

State governments used this lacuna to the hilt to shield the SEBs who are prone to charging exorbitant tariffs from industries. By fixing the surcharge at a high level and not bothering to reduce it (as mandated under the Act), they ensured that post-switch, the effective cost of power to the consumer — tariff charged by the new supplier plus OAC — is higher than what they pay to SEBs. That rendered the switch uneconomical.

They have not even spared the Railways which spends over ₹12,000 crore annually on the purchase of electricity. Under the Railways Act, it is allowed to distribute and supply power to its "deemed" licensee as it is buying electricity for its consumption and is exempt from payment of the surcharge. Yet, it has to pay OAC as States will not give 'NOC' — a requirement for availing exemption.

Coming to (iii), under DBT, the State Government gives subsidies directly to the target beneficiaries, even as discoms fix tariff in a manner as to fully recover their cost of purchase, wheeling, and distribution, thereby avoiding any under-recovery on such sale. They also need not charge more from industries and businesses which they have

to do under the present regime to cross-subsidize supplies to preferred users. With direct cash transfer, discoms can be freed from state control which will help them reduce cost by including by reining in theft. Under this regime, it will also be easier to implement "open access".

Despite these positive spin-offs, the Union Government has not shown the gumption to implement the DBT. In fact, following strong protests from farmers' leaders on its inclusion under the Electricity (Amendment) Act, 2020, it has even promised that the status quo will continue. If the existing system of supplies at heavily subsidized tariff or even without charge to farmers has to continue, then, logically, the same should apply on supplies to households as you cannot have two different methods of delivering subsidy to different sections of the society. So, there is no hope of the DBT ever seeing light of the day.

As for (iv), discoms can recover only up to 15 per cent of under-recovered power supply cost from other consumers. Simply put, if their under-recovery from supplies to farmers/households is say, X, then they will be allowed to recover only 0.15X by hiking tariff on supplies to industries and businesses. This will end up further bloating the losses of discoms (though industries will face a modest hike in tariff vis-a-vis the existing scenario of no cap). But this will not prompt them to set their house in order all the more when they know that eventually, the Government will bail them out.

As for (v), under the LC

arrangement, the banks guarantee that a buyer's payment to a seller will be received on time and for the correct amount. If the buyer is unable to pay, the bank will be required to cover the full or remaining amount, which, in turn, it will recover from the buyer using all available legal means. Here, the buyer being the discom — owned by the State — it will be a daunting challenge for the bank. As for (vi), denial of loan to loss-making discoms will not make them feel the heat as experience shows that help reaches them by hook or crook.

To conclude, measures such as those mentioned under (iv), (v), and (vi) are merely cosmetic while the political brass does not have the gumption to act on other measures — as discussed under (i), (ii), and (iii) — which are real reforms. This is because it will require the unshackling of discoms and that will take away the leverage that all parties currently enjoy to serve their populist goal of giving cheap/free electricity to the people who matter at election time. No wonder that we hear proclamations about reforms only to justify mammoth capital infusion whenever discoms need salvaging.

Under UDAY (2015), discoms were given a package worth ₹400,000 crore but are still saddled with under-recovery of ₹402 on every unit of electricity sold and a debt of about ₹450,000 crore as on March 31, 2021. Under RLRBS, the government will be spending another ₹300,000 crore but with no hope of trimming under-recovery. The vicious cycle will continue.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THESE PEOPLE (CONGRESS) WERE THE JAMES BOND OF SPYING (WHEN IN POWER). THEY SPIN A WEB OF SPYING WHEN IN GOVERNMENT. — UNION MINISTER MUKHTAR ABAS NAQVI



NO GOVERNMENT ALLOWS OTHERS TO SNOOP ON ITS PEOPLE. BUT THIS WAS ALLOWED TO AN ISRAELI COMPANY. IS SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY SAFE? — CONGRESS LEADER MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

Thirty years later, 'reform' yet to happen

Liberalisation was not voluntary but was egged on by global lenders who would not lend without a firm Indian commitment on 'reforms'

Thirty years and India is still waiting for the dream to become real. The liberalization of the economy in 1991 is erroneously taken as being limited to divesting government assets and holdings in industry.

Liberalisation was not a voluntary decision but was nudged by major lenders, the IMF and World Bank, who threatened to stop lending without a firm commitment to "reforms". The country went through a foreign exchange crisis in the late 1980s and 1990s and family jewels were pawned because forex reserves plunged to unexpected lows. In July 1991, the RBI pledged 46.91 tonnes of gold with the Bank of England and Bank of Japan to raise \$400 million to meet its international obligations. The



SHIVAJI SARKAR

reforms that meant losing government assets to the private sector started with a "bang" but did not bring the private sector to par with the government. The reforms initiated by the then finance minister, Manmohan Singh, were not a roaring success but a piece of confusing policy that has dumped subsequent governments into a policy quagmire.

While liberalizing the society from licence-permit raj was welcomed, the process of doing so gradually became complicated. Changes were made in industrial policy, monopolies law was annulled, import licensing was abolished, India joined WTO and TRIPS, quantitative restrictions on import of manufactured goods and farm products were removed, and current



account convertibility was introduced, business processes were eased, and the GST was introduced. But disinvestment of public assets caught all attention. Every government took pride in selling assets or being seen doing that. Still, the private sector is suspect in the eyes of the bureaucracy.

It is still a mystery why a partial opening up was considered revolutionary. India is still not free of its socialist

mindset and a preference for government control on the pretext of concern for people's welfare.

The "reforms" worked a bit. But the pandemic impoverished 80 crore people. Growing joblessness during the lockdown pushed the middle class to the edge of poverty. This is reflected in the slow growth of the GDP. In 2020-21, India's economic growth slowed and contracted by 7.3 per cent, the NCAER says.

Liberalisation in 1991 was followed by a series of 77 lakh crore scams — Harshad Mehta to Ketan Parekh, UTTI, LIC (about ₹2 lakh crore), and a series of banks, leading to a JPC probe. The top scams are coal allocation (₹1.86 trillion), 2G spectrum (₹1.76

lakh crore), Waqf Board land (₹1.5 lakh crore), Games of Commonwealth (₹70,000 crore), Teli stamp (₹20,000 crore), and Hawala scandal (₹100 crore).

Scams of such magnitude had never happened since Independence. Every investment deal was also questioned. While the large private houses acquired these assets with loans from public sector banks, it also opened up an era of high bank losses (NPAs). Particularly after the Lehman meltdown in 2007-08. The RBI Financial Stability Report (FSR) says despite banks writing off ₹23,786 crore loans in 2019-20, enabling the PSU banks to show lower NPAs, banks could go into severe stress as it fears the NPAs may

escalate to 16.2 per cent by September 2021 as borrowers are saddled with unpaid dues.

Repeated reorganization and mergers of banks have not boosted confidence. The latest move to sell four major banks and LIC is not being seen as a happy event. Many buyers could be from the list of 50 major defaulters.

Since 1991, government assets worth ₹3.63 lakh crore were divested. During 2014-19, ₹2.79 lakh crore worth assets were divested. The target set for 2020-21 is ₹2.1 lakh crore. The money received is adjusted in budgetary expenditure and is not known to have been used for building assets.

In 2016, demonetization shook the economy. The cash flow was severely hit, affecting

sales of goods and commodities. People's purchasing power collapsed, delaying the post-pandemic industrial, real estate, and market recovery. It might lead to years of moderate to slow post-pandemic growth and that means a severe resource crunch. Thirty years since the reforms, the power sector is in a mess again and agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy.

Have we made progress? Prime Minister Narendra Modi says his government is working for a targeted \$5-trillion economy. But former PM Manmohan Singh says that the future economic path is tougher than in 1991. Either way, the country must bite the reforms bullet and recast its policies keeping in mind growth in the next 30 years.

Af Prez seeks defence of cities as Taliban advance

Kabul: The Afghan President on Monday blamed the American troops' speedy pull-out for the worsening violence in his country and said that his administration would now focus on protecting provincial capitals and major urban areas in the face of the rapidly advancing Taliban.

Ashraf Ghani also urged lawmakers to back a national mobilisation drive against the

Taliban amid an intensifying war between the Taliban and Afghan government forces over the past few months as US and NATO troops complete their pullout from the war-torn country. An imported, hasty peace process a reference to the Taliban's push for negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban not only failed to bring peace but created doubt and ambiguity among Afghans, Ghani said in his address to Parliament.

The Afghan President arrived by helicopter for the extraordinary session of the house, called because of the dire situation on the ground. Ghani touched down at the Darul Aman Palace in Kabul

and inspected an honor guard before heading inside.

The Taliban are now trying to seize provincial capitals after already taking large swaths of land and scores of districts in more rural areas, as well as several key border crossings with neighboring countries.

The Taliban do not believe in lasting or just peace," Ghani said. He predicted a sea change on the battlefield in the next six months that would push the Taliban back, without elaborating. He claimed that Afghan forces are up to the task and have the capacity to defeat the insurgents. But in past weeks, Afghan forces have struggled against the Taliban onslaught, and have often been left with

out reinforcements and resupply. On Sunday, the Afghan armed forces spokesman, Gen. Ahmad Omar Shinwari, told reporters that three provinces in southern and western Afghanistan face critical security situations.

The Southern Kandahar as the birthplace of the Taliban as well as Helmand and Herat provinces have witnessed several attacks.

Helmand provincial council chief Attullah Afghan said the Taliban are also advancing in the provincial capital of Lashar Gah, and now have control of the city's seventh district. On Monday, elite Afghan commando units were dispatched to Lashar Gah to help

defend the city.

There has been relentless gunfire, air strikes and mortars in densely populated areas. Helmand has been bombed, and many people are suffering severe injuries, said Sarah Leahy, the Helmand coordinator for Doctors Without Borders.

The group, also known as Medecins Sans Frontieres or MSF, said in a statement Monday that in Lashar Gah was at a standstill as residents hunker down inside their homes, afraid to venture out.

Some of our colleagues are staying overnight in the hospital as it's safer, but also so they can keep on treating patients, the organization said. The situation has been dire for

months but now it is even worse.

Faizullah, who like many other Afghans goes by one name, told The Associated Press over the phone that he fled Lashar Gah with his family and was now following the Helmand River to safety.

Clashes between the Taliban and Afghan forces have intensified, he said, and Afghan security forces are out of supplies and food in the city.

Back in Kabul, Ghani claimed his government has the financial and political support of the United States and the international community to turn the tide even as he urged the insurgents to rein in peace talks. **AP**

Millions under Covid lockdown; China battles Delta Variant outbreak

Beijing: Millions of people were confined to their homes in China on Monday as the country tried to contain its largest coronavirus outbreak in months, including seven positive tests found in Wuhan, where the virus first emerged in late 2019.

China reported 55 new locally transmitted cases on Monday as an outbreak of the fast-spreading Delta variant reached over 20 cities in more than a dozen provinces.

The Wuhan cluster came after the official daily tally was released, but it was confirmed by state media which said the infections had been traced to a train station.

"The seven were identified as migrant workers," Xinhua reported, citing Covid-19 prevention and control officials.

Major cities including Beijing have now tested millions of residents while cordoning off residential compounds and placing close contacts under quarantine.

Authorities in the capital

met and agreed on the need to "raise vigilance, take strict precautions and defend (the city) to the death, sparing no expense," in comments put out by the Beijing Government.

Elsewhere, over 1.2 million residents were placed under strict lockdown for the next three days in the central city of Zhuzhou in Hunan province Monday, as authorities roll out a citywide testing and vaccination campaign, according to an official statement.

"The situation is still grim and complicated," the Zhuzhou government said. China had previously boasted of its success in bringing domestic cases down to virtually zero after the coronavirus first emerged in Wuhan, allowing the economy to rebound. But the latest outbreak, linked to a cluster in the city of Nanjing where nine cleaners at an international airport tested positive on July 20, is threatening that success with more than 360 domestic cases reported in the past two weeks. **AFP**

Citing Taliban violence, US expands Afghan refugee program

Washington: The Biden administration on Monday expanded its efforts to evacuate at-risk Afghan citizens from Afghanistan as Taliban violence increases ahead there of the US military pullout at the end of the month.

The State Department said it is widening the scope of Afghans eligible for refugee status in United States to include current and former employees of US-based news organizations, US-based aid and development agencies and other relief groups that receive US funding. Current and former employees of the US Government and the NATO military operation who don't meet the criteria for a dedicated program for such workers are also covered. **AP**

Malaysia lawmakers protest Parliament closure as play by PM

Kuala Lumpur: Police blocked Opposition lawmakers from marching on Monday to protest a two-week lockdown of Malaysia's Parliament, which they claim is an end-play for the king rebuked Muhyiddin's government on Thursday for misleading Parliament on the status of ordinances it issued during the seven-month coronavirus state of emergency. The opposition immediately filed a motion of no-confidence against Muhyiddin that was expected to have been raised Monday.

Lawmakers and activists questioned the timing of the announcement of Parliament's closure, which came after the king rebuked Muhyiddin's government on Thursday for misleading Parliament on the status of ordinances it issued during the seven-month coronavirus state of emergency. The opposition immediately filed a motion of no-confidence against Muhyiddin that was expected to have been raised Monday.

With a crucial parliamentary session due, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin instead postponed it and Parliament will be shut for two weeks. The health ministry said Parliament was deemed a high-risk venue because four of 11 COVID-19 cases detected among staff and other were

suspected to be the fast-spreading delta variant.

The new rules came into effect amid reports that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government may add a new category to Britain's traffic light system of travel restrictions, a move industry officials say would make many people decide to stay home. As of Monday, fully vaccinated travellers from destinations on Britain's "amber list" are allowed to enter the country without self-isolating for up to 10 days. **AP**

Florida breaks record for Covid hospitalisations

Orlando: A day after it recorded the most new daily cases since the start of the pandemic, Florida broke its own record for current hospitalisations set more than a year ago before vaccines were available.

The Sunshine State had 10,207 people hospitalised with confirmed Covid-19 cases, according to data reported to the US Department of Health & Human Services.

The previous record was from July 23, 2020, more than a half-year before vaccinations started becoming widespread, when Florida had 10,170 hospitalisations, according to the Florida Hospital Association.

Florida is now leading the

rounding municipalities in Queensland state were due to end a three-day lockdown on Tuesday. But the Queensland government on Monday announced the extension after 13 locally acquired infections of the highly contagious delta variant were detected in the latest 24-hour period. **AP**

Iran's ambassador to the United States on Monday reported more than 37,000 new coronavirus infections, the country's single-day record so far in the pandemic, state media reported.

State TV said health workers registered 37,189 new Covid-19 cases since Sunday, surpassing the previous daily record of 34,951 infections reported on Tuesday. Also,

Australia city extends lockdown as clusters grow

Brisbane: A lockdown of Australia's third-largest city Brisbane was extended until Sunday because of a growing Covid outbreak.

Brisbane and several sur-

rounding municipalities in Queensland state were due to end a three-day lockdown on Tuesday. But the Queensland government on Monday announced the extension after 13 locally acquired infections of the highly contagious delta variant were detected in the latest 24-hour period. **AP**

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Iran records highest number of daily Covid cases

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Date : 03-08-2021
Place : Delhi

Sd/-
Authorized Officer,
Axis Bank Ltd.

CovaxinWorks

Covaxin is effective against the Delta plus variant of COVID-19, claims Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in its study released on Monday. Covaxin is developed by the Bharat Biotech in collaboration with ICMR and National Institute of Pune. The study states: "The sera of individuals who were fully immunised (with two doses) didn't show significant fold-reduction in the NAb titer against Delta, Delta AY.1 and B.1.617.3."

DOCYARD

DR SHAILESH JAIN

Principal Consultant,
Neurosciences

NEW DELHI

It's complicated



COVID in the last 18 months has shown a devastating effect on human life. Apart from affecting the lung, it also affected different parts of the body. However, it mainly affects the lung and increases level of ferritin, D-Dimer, CRP and cytokines eg IL-6. High levels of all these chemicals may have catastrophic effect on vital organs.

Neurological involvement is a spectrum of loss of olfactory senses to necrotising encephalitis and involving almost every aspect of central (CNS) and peripheral nervous system (PNS). Prevalence is around 0.1-1 per cent of COVID infections. Most complications are seen by second to fourth week of COVID infection. CNS-related events were more common than PNS manifestations. Common CNS manifestations are headache, disturbance in consciousness, dizziness, acute cerebrovascular disease, ataxia, and seizures. PNS symptoms are impairment in taste, smell, and vision. Musculoskeletal symptoms were observed in form of myalgias and nonspecific pain.

Stroke comprises of 60-70 per cent, encephalopathy 30-40 per cent and neuropathy around 6 per cent and all other neurological complications in 0.1 per cent cases of neurological cases related to COVID.

Neurological involvement is mainly categorised into CNS and PNS involvement. CNS involvements are in form of stroke, encephalopathy, delirium, psychosis, necrotising encephalitis and fungal infections eg. Fungal abscess or rhinocerebral mucormycosis. PNS involvements are facial palsy, acute inflammatory demyelinating neuropathy (AIDP) and paraesthesia in all limbs and myalgia.

Strokes are ischemic type usually due to large vessel occlusion with high degree of morbidity or mortality and it is more prevalent with diabetic, hypertensive and coronary artery disease. It is also associated with large coronary occlusion or sudden cardiac death upto six-eight weeks after COVID. Most patients were found to have hypercoagulable state.

Encephalopathy or delirium or psychoses were seen by third to fourth week of COVID. It is a non-specific term used to describe the acute impairment of brain function which presents clinically as alteration in the level of consciousness and triggered by viral infections. It is completely reversible with appropriate medications. Neuropathy may be in form of facial palsy or severe weakness of all limbs in form of G B Syndrome. Both are completely reversible with medications. Headache, myalgia and paraesthesia and fatigue are minor symptoms and it disturbs sleep but didn't cause any disability. These recover with time and medications.

Some unusual complications are necrotising encephalitis and myelitis. They have high level of morbidity and mortality. Encephalitis is a serious condition with significant impact and burden. About 20-50 per cent of encephalitis cases are caused by viruses, and half of the cases have no known etiology. The disease causes a variety of neurological abnormalities, such as altered consciousness, hallucination, confusion, abnormal movement, and aphasia.

Smoking accelerates the process of atherosclerosis all over body and leads to endothelial dysfunction, thrombus formation and hypercoagulable state. It also aggravates dyslipidemia.

COVIDCARE

COCOA: Cocoa is considered to be one of the best medicinal foods. It is full of flavonoids. It helps control diabetes and cocoa based products are advised to be included in the daily diet to improve the insulin resistance and level of glucose in the body. Cocoa powder is good for the heart and prevents fatal blood clots. Hence, avoiding severe cardiac problems.

The flavonoid and anti-oxidants in cocoa beans lowers blood pressure and improves the elasticity of veins and blood vessels. Cocoa is great for the skin. It is also considered to cure cancer-used particularly in the cure of prostate and colon cancer. It has anti-depressant properties that can help prevent mental exertion and facilitate certain physiological processes and elevate the mood.



With rains come plethora of diseases including leptospirosis, DR TRUPTI GILADA tells SHALINI SAKSENA

Even though the monsoon brings with it the much-needed relief from the scorching heat, it does have a down side as well. Dengue and malaria are some of the diseases that are common during this season. Then there are diseases that come due to flooding and water-logging of low-lying areas. One such disease is leptospirosis.

WHAT IS IT

It is mainly a monsoon associated infection associated with exposure to water, soil or mud contaminated with the urine from infected animals. It is caused by a bacteria called Leptospira. It is carried by many animals. It lives in their kidneys and is found in the urine and faeces.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Anyone who wades through flooded water is at risk. When there is water-logging, the water gets contaminated by bacteria because of the mixing of the stool or urine. The bacteria then enters the body through skin cuts or abrasions when a person wades through this contaminated water, and occasionally through the lining of the mouth, nose and eyes. Farmers are also at high risk as they may get exposed to the urine and excreta of field rats while working.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms usually develop after five to 14 days following exposure. The most common initial symptoms of this disease include either fever or all of these symptoms: Fever, severe headache, sore muscles, chills, vomiting, and red eyes. Since these mimic other monsoon-related illnesses like malaria and dengue, clinical diagnosis can sometimes be difficult.

Few people with leptospirosis can develop severe disease and may need hospitalisation. This can include kidney failure, jaundice, liver failure, bleeding and respiratory complications. Lesser common complications include meningitis.



ANYONE WHO WADES THROUGH FLOODED WATER IS AT RISK. WHEN THERE IS WATER-LOGGING, THE WATER GETS CONTAMINATED BY BACTERIA BECAUSE OF THE MIXING OF THE STOOL OR URINE. THE BACTERIA THEN ENTERS THE BODY THROUGH SKIN CUTS OR ABRASIONS

glits where the lining of the brain and spinal cord gets involved and causes altered sensorium.

TREATMENT

This disease is commonly treated with antibiotics. Treatment is thought to be most effective when detected early. The testing can take some time and the disease may be severe in some patients. A doctor may therefore sometimes choose to start antibiotics prior to confirming the diagnosis with tests. However, some people recover spontaneously without antibiotics.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Most individuals recover from leptospirosis without further sequelae. But in some individuals who went undiagnosed and untreated in the early and or acute illness, there can be long-term effects. People can have a chronic fatigue-like illness that lasts for months. Others can have persistent headaches, depression or other neurological complaints. Occasionally the bacteria can persist in the eyes and cause chronic eye complaints.

PREVENTION

As far as possible, avoid wading through puddles and water-logged areas. Wear well covered footwear in monsoon. Cover any cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings. Wash hands and legs with soap, as leptospira bacteria are quickly killed by soap, disinfectants, and drying. Rodent control is of paramount importance and requires efforts both at individual and government level. Prompt cleaning up of garbage dumps and removing food sources that are close to housing is essential. Appropriate personal protective gear for those who work with animals or on the farms (like waterproof boots).

Those who may have been exposed to the bacteria because they waded through floods must contact their doctor immediately. The doctor may prescribe certain antibiotics (like Doxycycline) that can be taken to prevent the disease.

A DOSE FOR YOUR CLOTHES

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with SASHA BOSE, Director & CEO of Nanochemiqs Pvt Ltd, about the nano tech application that allows garments to not only be protective in nature but also makes it long lasting

■ What was the idea behind the inception of Faibr-x?

Faibr-x was conceptualised on the idea of safe space for every human and child. Clothes are the biggest carrier of virus and bacteria and we strongly believe that clothes can also be the biggest protector against both. Faibr-x was conceptualised to add an element of protection, certified protection in this case, to our daily wear clothes to protect us against virus, bacteria and insects including mosquitoes. And to be honest, this was called for by the situation caused by the COVID pandemic. Now we may have started to move out of our houses but it is still not safe, the pandemic isn't entirely over yet and we do need an extra line of defence against this virus.

■ How is it different from already treated antiviral clothes?

Faibr-x uses nanotechnology to impart protective nature to garments against virus and bacteria. The protective finish as added to garments is done on a nano level (1nanometre is 10⁻⁹ metre) wherein the protective finish is applied on the fibre of the cloth. This nano level application allows the garment to not only be completely protective in nature but also makes it long-lasting. A once treated garment would remain protective even after 10 washes. Here we are not just fighting a specific virus, we are taking down all kinds of viruses and disease causing bacteria. Along with the bacteria that cause odour. This is what sets the clothes treated with Faibr-x apart from already treated antiviral clothes.

■ What are the challenges that you face?

Biggest challenge is to make the end consumer understand and acknowledge our solution. We realise Faibr-x is a first of its kind solution and therefore many people may not be aware of our vision and the impact of our solution. With that said, we are making a constant stride forward, towards brand awareness and making people realise how significant can Faibr-x prove to be during this pandemic.

■ How safe are Faibr-x treatments for various individuals?

Faibr-x nanotechnology and its ingredients are certified by Oeko-Tex Class 1 and have been evaluated by CENCO, ISO, and NABL labs human and environmental safety. Non metal, non silver, non itching technology is safe for our customer base as individuals but even for newborn and young toddlers.

■ How can one get their clothes Faibr-x treated?

As mentioned above, we have tied up with grocery stores, medical stores, dry cleaners, and departmental stores that act as collection points for us. People can drop their clothes with these stores, from where they would be picked up and sent for Faibr-x treatment. And then returned.

■ What has been the people's response to such treated clothes?

People's response to the treated clothes has been positive so far. Our services have been perceived by our customer base as a unique concept of protection. People do feel donning Faibr-x treated clothes acts as a defence mechanism against virus and bacteria. Customers have been happy with the affordability and the convenience of our services, given we have collaborated with local grocery stores and dry cleaners, we are easily accessible.

Only 0.01 per cent Indians consent to donate

Organ donation in India is only just beginning to take off — reason for the delay being lack of awareness, spiritual belief of life after death, and generally negative attitudes towards organ donation, says RAGHAV KHANNA

Thousands of lives can be improved through organ and tissue transplants, enabling people to live better, and in many cases, survive. So, why are only 0.01 per cent of Indians consenting to donate their organs after their death?

Organ donation is the process of retrieving or procuring an organ legally with the intention of being able to medically help someone in need. Consent is given either by the donor while they're still alive, or after death by their Next of Kin. First the organ is recovered, or harvested, before being transplanted into the recipient in need. Organ donation in India is regulated by the 1994 Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act. The act aims to control the removal, storage, and transplantation of organs and prevents any commercial dealings, while the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation facilitates procurement, allotment, and distribution of organs within India. With a budget of ₹149.5 crore, the Government implemented the

National Organ Transplant Programme for promoting organ donation.

Despite the Government identifying the need for organ donation, there is a disparity between huge demand and low supply. Organ donation in India is only just beginning to take off — reason for the delay being lack of awareness, spiritual belief of life after death, and generally negative attitudes towards organ donation. Donation is encouraged as a charitable act that saves or enhances life; therefore, it requires no action on the part of the religious group.

India's Statistical Data as of 2015 shows that in response to the demand for 1.75 lakhs of kidney transplants, only 5000 transplants were completed. With 50,000 people dying of terminal liver disease, only 1000 got transplants. These statistics are even more distressing in organs like hearts and lungs. About 0.5 million people in India die every year from causes that could have been prevented by organ transplants that were not available to them.

Government should undertake the responsibility for establishing proper infrastructure to facilitate speedy transport and harvesting of organs

Organ donation rates in India sit at 0.01 per cent, a minuscule figure in comparison to countries like Croatia's which sits at 36.5 per cent and Spain's at 35.3 per cent.

One donation from a deceased whose brain gave way before their heart can save lives of up to eight people who are suffering from end stage organ failures. If India's donation rates were to be improved to one donation per million deaths, it would satisfy the country's organ requirement completely.

The process of pledging is simple. A donor card is provided to a person who is willing to donate the organs after death. Donor cards are not a legally binding document - it is only an expression of a person's willingness to be a donor. At the time of organ donation, the family of the patient will make the final decision on whether to donate organs or not. Any person willing to donate his/her organs can do so by filling out the donor consent form available on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India website.

Government of India should undertake the responsibility for establishing proper infrastructure all over India to facilitate speedy transport and harvesting of organs. The official paperwork should be more donor-friendly and convenient. The NGOs along with healthcare providers should run their awareness campaigns in a more intensive way, involving print/social and electronic media.

The writer is a final year student of Shri Ram College of Commerce, University of Delhi

INBRIEF

SIGN OF ENDOMETRIOSIS

Endometriosis is an often painful disorder in which tissue similar to the tissue that normally lines the inside of your uterus — the endometrium — grows outside your uterus. Endometriosis most commonly involves your ovaries, fallopian tubes and the tissue lining your pelvis. Rarely, endometrial tissue may spread beyond pelvic organs.

Dr Neeraj Gole, professor and HOD of Obstetrics and gynaecology department, Sharda Hospital, said at the time endometriosis causes pain, painful menstruation, cramping, painful sex, constipation, back pain, leg pain, pain while urinating, and rectal bleeding. It can affect women of any age. It's a long-term condition that can have a significant impact on any woman's life and also the main cause of ovarian cancer.

Foods rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, fresh fruits and vegetables, avoiding intake of alcohol and caffeine, avoid stress and fatty foods add regular exercise and yoga in your routine helps in to resolve the problem and if it is not treated on time it leads to infertility or heavy bleeding during the time of menstruation and having pregnancy at an older age. "Primary treatment of this disease and if it is not diagnosed at an early stage then surgical treatment is the option. Usually, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are used to relieve pain. If symptoms are mild and women do not plan to become pregnant, for most women with moderate to severe endometriosis, the most effective treatment is removing endometrial tissue and endometriosis," says Dr. Gole.



Bollywood
Dhobi Ghat was a prominent game-changer for me.
—Prateik Babbar



PRATIK SUD advises caution against exerting yourself too much after recovering from COVID-19



ONE STEP AT A TIME

Exercise is an important part of recovery after falling prey to COVID-19. As the number of COVID-positive cases is on the rise, remember that irrespective of how restless you may feel after being restricted to your home, if you were stricken by the disease, you should take it easy and remember that it is only natural to take some time to achieve the fitness level you possessed before you got infected.

Generally, doctors recommend a break of three-six months, even after the symptoms subside, depending on the severity of the infection in the patient. Provided below are some guidelines to ease your transition to the active lifestyle you once led.

- Always warm up before and cool down after exercising. Begin with breathing exercises and mild walking. You will be shocked to see how you gasp for breath even after walking for 100 metres.
- Wear comfortable clothes that



circulate air to help you breathe normally. Also, wear comfortable shoes for free movement.

- Eat healthy and nutritious food in sufficient quantities an hour before the exercise. Forget about dieting post-COVID-19 illness.
- Staying hydrated while recovering from the illness is imperative. Ensure that you drink ample water before and after exercising.
- Don't exhaust yourself by exercising in hot weather. Try working out early in the morning or in the evening. If by chance you can't work out in the morning, then meditate during the afternoon, but don't indulge in rough workout sessions.

At the same time, avoid exercising indoors with the air conditioner on. Extreme cold weather can leave you breathless which can lead to an uneven flow of blood in the vessels and stressed muscles.

Doctors claim that weakness can last up to six months after recovering, depending on a person's immune system and energy levels. If your friend can run 20-25 laps of the field post-recovery, doesn't mean that your body can also tolerate the same.

Immediately stop working out if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Nausea
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Breathlessness is common while exercising. However, stop if the breathlessness worsens and doesn't subside even after resting
- Excessive sweating

- Tightness in the chest area
- Increased pain especially in the arms and jaw

The moment you experience any uncommon symptoms, you should stop exercising and contact your doctor immediately. There is no harm in discussing the symptoms with your fitness expert as well. Remember, medical staff and doctors are there for our assistance.

The best way to start exercising is by warming up. Mild exercises can loosen the muscles and increase blood flow. You can also walk/run up and down the staircase for 10 minutes. It helps in improving breathlessness.

Stand facing the wall and raise both hands and place your palms on it. Now push yourself towards the wall, against the force and then return to your position. This exercise helps in building strength in arms and joints.

Start with mild exercises. Gradually, increase the frequency, intensity and duration of your workout at your ease. This is the best way of challenging yourself by increasing one level further. Breathlessness is normal while exercising, but too much of it can be harmful and should be addressed immediately. Increase the intensity of your workouts according to your tolerance. Fatigue and extreme pain can be signs of over-exertion. It is advised to work out with a fitness expert so that if you feel breathless or in extreme pain, s/he can provide you with emergency assistance.

(The author is co-founder of Synqfit, a one-stop solution for home workouts.)

Back in the game

Actor KARTIK AARYAN is all set to star in the forthcoming romantic thriller, *Freddy*. By TEAM VIVA

Who is Freddy, you might ask? This introduction needs a drum roll or rather some suspenseful staccato played at a steadily increasing pace.

Producer Ekta Kapoor, in collaboration with Jay Shekavramani, is all set to kickstart their next production, *Freddy*. The film, directed by Shashanka Ghosh, is a romantic thriller starring Kartik Aaryan in the titular role.

Incidentally, Shashanka's last outing *Veere Di Wedding* with Balaji Telefilms was a super-hit and now they're teaming up again. Full of unpredictable twists and sharp turns, characters in this movie are set to take us on a dark and chilling roller coaster ride, where the lines between love and obsession blur! *Freddy* is jointly produced by Balaji Telefilms and Northern Lights Films.

Ekta, who's known for genre-bending content is excited as the movie is all set to go on floors. "I'm thrilled to have Kartik on board. His choices of the subject have always been unique and this one is no different and collaborating with Jay makes it even more special," she says.

Jay adds, "It is the first time I am collaborating with Ekta and Kartik on a film and for it to be on a script like this, makes it all the more exciting! *Freddy* is a script we worked on incessantly and we can't wait for Shashanka to bring to life these crazy characters!"

Speaking about the movie, an ecstatic Kartik shares, "As an actor, I crave to explore different facets of entertainment and with *Freddy*, I'm venturing into an uncharted territory which is both exciting and intriguing in equal measures. I look forward to marking my presence in Freddy's world and bring alive this dark romantic thriller. This will be my first collaboration with a visionary like Ekta Kapoor and creative forces such as Jay and Shashanka. Couldn't have asked for a better team on this new journey!"

The director, Shashanka, further adds, "As a filmmaker, there is a lot to play with the genre, like a thriller. I am more than excited to work with an incredible team on a project as inspiring as *Freddy*. I am sure that the film is going to be one of the best thrilling cinematic experiences for the audience across the nation."

Gauhar started her journey as a model and was one of the participants in 2002 for the Femina Miss India beauty pageant. She went on gaining popularity with many non-fiction TV shows like *The Khan Sisters*, *Ticket to Bollywood*, *India's Raw Star*, *I Can Do That* and different seasons of *Bigg Boss*. She was the winner of *Bigg Boss 7*.

"The web-series space is interesting for me and I am getting good offers from OTT platforms. *Tandav* was an important show for me that was released on Amazon Prime Video. I have a couple of things lined up for OTT and again, all of them are very versatile and interesting. Now my parameter of choosing a project is to collaborate with directors and storytellers who will use me to the fullest. I want to be challenged with new and exciting roles," shares Gauhar who also appeared in the Hotstar special sitcom show *The Office*.

—JANS

The fight for inclusion

SONU SOOD joins Special Olympics Bharat as brand ambassador

Bollywood actor Sonu Sood has joined Special Olympics Bharat as its brand ambassador. At a virtual event attended by over 500 athletes, coaches, families, officials and volunteers, Sonu interacted with the special athletes responding to their queries while admiring and appreciating their sporting achievements.

The inaugural session introduced him to the #WalkForInclusion, an initiative of the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Region, demonstrated by the athletes, marking his entry into the Inclusion Revolution of the Special Olympics movement.

Speaking about his role as the ambassador, Sonu said, "Today is a very special day for me and I am delighted to join this journey of inclusion with Special Olympics Bharat. Through their sporting achievements, each athlete redefines the human spirit that stands tall in the face of every challenge. I wish luck to all of them to do their best and showcase their abilities with confidence which in itself would send a strong message to the world that they deserve to be mainstreamed. I feel privileged to join the Special Olympics Bharat family and vouch to make this platform even bigger and resonate with people all over the country."

Not to be confused with the Paralympics, the Special Olympics is for individuals with intellectual disabilities, whereas the Paralympics is

generally for athletes with any disability, including physical, and only at an elite level. Sonu will lead the team of Special Olympics Bharat Athletes who will travel to Kazan to participate in the Special Olympics World Winter Games in January 2022.

He went on to express his gratitude, "I feel honoured to have this opportunity to be with our team in Russia for the Special Olympics World Winter Games. We will together encourage our athletes to give their best and cheer them on with such enthusiasm that the roar of support will echo back home in India as well."

Speaking on the occasion, Mallika Nadga, chairperson of Special Olympics Bharat, remarked, "I wish to convey my gratitude to Sonu Sood for accepting our invitation to join the Special Olympics family. We are certain that he will play a major role in giving a new direction to the Special Olympics movement in India and help the cause of persons with intellectual disabilities all over the world. Sonu Sood has offered his support to Special Olympics Bharat on several occasions in the past, and we are thrilled that he is now going to lead the Special Olympics movement. We look forward to working together with Sonu Sood in our effort to provide an equal opportunity and the dignity of life for persons with intellectual disabilities."

—JANS

Gauhar Khan has managed to find her fan base in every section of the audience.

From featuring in TV reality shows like *Bigg Boss*, *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*, *Fear Factor: Khattron Ke Khiladi*, to sharing screen space with Bollywood stars like Ranbir Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan and Vidya Balan in films like *Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year*, *Begum Jaan* and recently in the web series *Tandav* and her latest film *14 Phere*, Gauhar has done it all.

Even though she is mostly grabbing headlines for her social and personal life on social media, in a recent interview, the actress shares that with time, her parameters on choosing projects, especially films, has changed because she is looking to explore her acting skills now.

"Honestly speaking, I do not look at anything with regret. I do not regret why I could not have the role of the female protagonist opposite Ranbir in a Bollywood film or why directors, producers are not considering me for lead roles. For films, the footage did not mat-

Currently, most of the prominent social media platforms have become vehicles that proliferate negativity, drive divisiveness, and enable cyberbullying. While they each have standards for behaviour outlined for all to see, they are at best inconsistently applied, and at worst completely ignored. The sites have become so toxic that not a day goes by where many regular users are exposed to some level of negativity. People regularly report the loss of interactions with friends, family and colleagues online.

The call for reform has been side-stepped by these companies. The likes of key social media platforms have held up the freedom of expression flag in their defense, though many believe this is just a way to justify a business model that is lucrative to them and their shareholders. There is little doubt that extreme societal damage has been done from these platforms' unwillingness to make meaningful changes to address these issues. To date, the conversation has largely been about the issues with these platforms. However, now is the time for solutions. It is time to bring about a more positive way to interact online where members can connect in a safe and secure environment openly and freely.

Various new-age networking

Basking in the glory

Model-turned-actress GAUHAH KHAN looks back on how she has thrived in the entertainment industry for 19 years



ter to me, the character did. If you look at my character in *Ishaqzaade* and *Begum Jaan*, those scenes and moments in the story were important. For me, it is always about creating something on-screen that resonates with the audience, and it did," expresses Gauhar.

"Initially, for me, I would try to use every opportunity to the best of my ability because I started from zero. It has been around 19 years for me in the entertainment business and I have seen so much change... Especially with OTT platforms, actors like myself are getting the opportunity to showcase their skills, earlier in

unknowingly supported by major social media platforms today.

These modern social networking platforms enable people to give and receive guidance and feedback from their members help each other in achieving their respective goals. These targets could be related to fitness, career, health, parenting, hobbies, personality development, or any other topic.

These platforms are a community where like-minded people and those who share common interests and goals come together to support each other and render a helping hand to each other. The members in such a scenario can interact and engage one-on-one amongst like-minded individuals or other communities across the globe instantly and seamlessly. They are devoid of ads, negativity, fake news, trolling, and cyberbullying and work beyond the popularity content approach of garnering maximum likes and shares.

New-age networking platforms leverage the power of content moderation, identity verification, and technology mix to come up with state-of-the-art community-enabled solutions that help resolve all the associated issues. People with real identities facilitate an increased level of trust, credibility, and safety amongst the members and prefer

platforms that provide a safe and protected environment where their privacy is secured.

Trust, respect and genuine connections form the core of these social networking platforms and they are leaving no stone unturned to ensure that their community is free from negativity and toxicity. All they want is to leave a positive impact on the members' lives.

These new-age networking platforms don't function as the usual social media platforms but rather lend a helping hand to solve the problems faced by people in the social space. They aim to come up with a new social contract so that people can interact quickly, easily, and instantly with each other. They are aware that negativity, divisiveness, polarisation and fake news rule the social media space today. However, they wish to take a bold stance and bet on the goodness of the people. They desire to uplift each other rather than tearing each other down. The broader vision of these new-age platforms is to normalise a different online experience and provide an alternative way to spend your time online which is positive, interactive, engaging, and fosters connections!

(The author is co-founder & CEO of ChekMarc, a social platform that enables impactful one-on-one connections.)

No to negativity

MARC KAPLAN shares how new-age social media platforms are providing users with a revamped experience



platforms are focussing on improving online forums while making concerted efforts to mitigate negativity and cyberbullying. Their sole

aim is to bring about a social revolution that counterbalances the online negativity and toxicity that is perpetuated, enabled and perhaps

TRENDBLAZER

fairtalk
TIGER SHROFF



"From the time my first film was released people said 'ye ladka hai ya ladki', people commented on my face and said I look like a girl. When it comes to trolling, it is at times scary how a nameless, faceless individual could say anything about anybody without getting caught! As long as love is coming in from my fans, I am okay."

daillytalk
ONIR



"I think modern-day slavery is one of the themes prevalent in our society that we do not address as much as we should. It is one of the worst forms of human depravity and since cinema is a powerful medium, we need to take the opportunity to dress the matter and provoke the thought in the minds of people."

WHAT A BIG JOB: KIT HARRINGTON

Game of Thrones star **KIT HARRINGTON** and his wife Rose Leslie welcomed their first child, a baby boy, five months ago. The actor admits he wasn't prepared for just how 'big' a job raising a family is.

"Everyone goes, 'look, it's big what you're about to go through.' You have no way of knowing that until it happens. What surprises you is that you go, 'Oh, this goes on forever.' Like, you don't get a break from it," Harrington told Access Hollywood.



'WE DON'T DESERVE A MEDIA TRIAL'

Actor **SHILPA SHETTY KUNDRA** took to social media on Monday to issue a statement, saying she and her family do not deserve a media trial.

"All I will say is, as it's an ongoing investigation, I have full faith in the Mumbai Police and the Indian judiciary. I request everyone to respect my family's and my right to privacy in these times. We don't deserve a media trial. Please let the law take its course. *Satyamev Jayate!*" she said via a post on Instagram.

**TOKYO
TIMELINE**
MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Hockey:** India beat Australia 1-0 in women's quarterfinal.
- **Athletics:** Dutee Chand 7th and last in women's 200m Heat 4; fails to qualify for semifinals.
- **Kamalpreet Kaur** sixth in women's discus final with a best throw of 63.70m.
- **Shooting:** Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar 21st and Sanjeev Rajput 32nd in men's 50m rifle 3 positions qualification; fail to qualify for final.
- **Equestrian:** Fouaad Mirza 25th in eventing jumping individual qualifier; 23rd in final.

IN ACTION TODAY

- **Athletics:** Annu Rani in women's javelin throw Qualification Group A. (5:50am)
- **Tajinderpal Singh Toor** in men's shot put Qualification Group A. (3:45am)
- **Hockey:** India vs Belgium in men's semifinal. (7:00am)
- **Wrestling:** Sonam Malik vs Bolortuya Khurelkhuu (Mongolia) in women's 62kg. (8:30am onwards)

Live on SONY TEN & SIX Network

PTI ■ TOKYO

A brave and determined Indian women's hockey team etched its name in the history books by entering the Olympic Games semifinals for the first time, stunning three-time champions and world No 2 Australia 1-0 in an intense last-eight tie here on Monday.

A day after the Indian men's team entered the Olympic semifinals following a 49-year gap, the world No 9 women's side also produced a phenomenally gritty performance to make it way into the last four.

Drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur rose to the occasion when it mattered and converted India's lone penalty corner in the 22nd minute to surprise the Australians.

"We are so happy, it is the result of hard work that we put in for several, several days. In 1980, we qualified for the Games but this time, we made the semifinals. It is a proud moment for us," Gurjit said after the match.

"This team is like a family, we have supported each other and found support from the country as well. We are very happy," she added.

But the Indians, determined to prove a point, produced a strong and brave performance to eke out the narrow win over the Hockeyroos.

How much it meant for the team and Indian hockey in general could be gauged from the

HISTORYMAKERS

In a first, Indian women's hockey team enter Olympic semifinals with a stunning 1-0 win over Hockeyroos



Indian players celebrate after Gurjit Kaur (jersey No 2) scores India's only goal against Australia during women's hockey quarterfinal match

©Tokyo2020

Tokyo: Handling the immense burden of expectations would perhaps be the key when the Indian men's hockey team takes on world champion Belgium, aiming to secure a place in the Olympic finals and with it, a medal for the first time in 41 years here on Tuesday.

With 11 Olympic medals, eight of them Gold, in its kitty, India has a rich history in the Games and the Manpreet Singh-led side seems on course to resurrect that glorious past.

The Indians achieved the semifinal slot by beating Great Britain 3-1 in the quarterfinals on Sunday, and are now in touching distance of a medal.

The Graham Reid-coached current side knows very well that another good outing against Belgium on Tuesday would etch its name in the history books in golden words no matter the colour of the medal.

The Indians are on a four-match winning streak after the 1-7 drubbing against Australia

Belgium stand b/w India & final



Besides being current world champions and world No 2 side, Belgium are also the reigning European champions. But words were easier said than done as in Belgium, India face a tough opponent, which has improved leaps and bounds in the last few years.

ranked third in the world.

The recent head-to-head record also favours India.

India and the Red Lions played each other three times in 2019 during their tour of the European nation and the Asian side came out victorious in all the matches. India

A movie on self-belief & staying in the moment did trick: Marijne

Tokyo: Watching a movie on self belief after three consecutive losses resubtle the Indian women's hockey team's shattered morale and helped it to 'aim for the clouds', the side's Dutch coach Sjoerd Marijne revealed on Monday after Rani Rampal and Co entered their maiden Olympic semifinals here.

The Indian team bounced back tremendously in the tournament after successive losses and Marijne said the movie helped psychologically ahead of the must-win pool game against Ireland but did not reveal its name.

"The difference is believing in ourselves and believing in their dreams and then it's about going back to reality focussing on your past. I think that is the main thing and that's what we did," Marijne said after upsetting Australia in the quarterfinals.

"If you lose you don't stop

believing and that's what I told the girls. The most important thing is to stay in the moment. I showed them a movie and that movie is about being in the moment and I think that was really helpful. Against Ireland we kept on referring to that movie," he said.

He said all he asked the team to do was to aim for the highest.

"In India you must think big and that's what I said to the girls. If you aim for the highest, for the clouds, you will fall on the highest mountain. If you aim for the mountain you will fall on the ground," he explained.

"We went for the clouds and I said whatever happens after it doesn't matter, but that's where we have to aim for."

India captain Rani Rampal too credited the movie for the turnaround of fortunes. **PTI**

emotions that were on display after the final hooter went off.

The players screamed, hugged each other, and got into a huddle with their Dutch coach Sjoerd Marijne with tears of joy rolling down their faces.

India's best performance in the Olympics came way back in

the 1980 Moscow Games where they finished fourth out of six teams. In that edition, women's hockey made its debut in the Olympics and the sport was played in a round-robin format.

The Rani Rampal-led side will play Argentina in the semifinal on Wednesday.

Kamalpreet finishes 6th in discus final

Tokyo: Discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur finished a creditable sixth in her first Olympics in a rain-interrupted final while sprinter Dutee Chand ended her campaign on a disappointing note by failing to qualify for the 200m semifinals here on Monday.

The 25-year-old Kaur, who has qualified for the final as second best on Saturday, was never in the running for a medal in the eight rounds of competition which was interrupted by rain for more than an hour.

Her best throw of 63.70m in the third round saw her finish at sixth and edged 2010 Commonwealth Games Gold medalist Krishna Poonia's performance in the 2012 London Olympics.

Throughout the competition, Kaur looked nervous and short of confidence as she lacked international exposure. She has taken part in World University Games in 2017, her lone international competition.

It was a tough competition for all the participants as rain started pouring down towards the end of the second round and a few throwers attempted to slip in spite of slippery circle.

Rain stopped after an hour but the humidity seemed to have affected the throwers' performance and they have to be cautious as the approach area to the circle was wet.

With her right

shoulder heavily strapped, Kaur began with a 61.62m effort before fouling her next attempt. That put her under pressure and on the verge of being eliminated as she was ninth just before her third throw.

But she gave her best and came up with a 63.70m, that saved her and put her in the sixth position as the bottom four out of the 12 finalists were eliminated after three rounds.

Not much changed in the position of the throwers in the final three rounds. Kaur fouled the fourth throw and then had a 61.37m in her penultimate attempt before sending the discus out of sector in the final one.

American Valarie Allman took the Gold with a first round throw of 68.98m while Kristin Padgett (66.86m) of Germany and reigning world champion Yaimie Perez (65.72m) of Cuba won the Silver and Bronze respectively.

In the morning session, sprinter Dutee ran her season's best in 200m but that was not enough for a semi-finals berth as she made a disappointing start from the Olympics after finishing last in her heat race. The 25-year-old clocked 23.85 seconds to finish seventh.

In the morning session, sprinters' performance and they have to be cautious as the approach area to the circle was wet.

Sonam to begin India's wrestling campaign



Tokyo: Young Indian wrestler Sonam Malik was on Monday placed in the challenging bottom half of the women's 62kg draw, where she will open her Olympics campaign against Asian Silver medalist Bolortuya Khurelkhuu from Mongolia.

The 19-year-old will be the sole Indian wrestler in action on Tuesday. Relatively new to the big stage, every single bout will be a test of character for Sonam, who qualified for the Tokyo Games by making the final at the Asian Qualifier in April in Almaty.

Khurelkhuu is more experienced than Sonam and has stood on the podium on both the occasions she took the mat this season but the Indian is not intimidated.

Sonam came into Olympics after recovering from a right knee injury that did not let her fly to Russia for training in build-up to the Games.

"I am fine. There is no pain in my knee. It's neither tough nor easy draw for me," Sonam, who earned a name for herself by defeating Rio Bronze medalist Sakshi Malik four times, said after the draw ceremony.

If Sonam manages to cross the first hurdle, she will most likely find 2018 world champion Taybe Mustafa Yusein from Bulgaria in the quarterfinals.

The draw is such that the repechage route may open up for Sonam if she does not go deep on her own. **PTI**

Mirza 23rd in individual eventing



Tokyo: Equestrian Fouaad Mirza on Monday finished a creditable 23rd in eventing after he became the first Indian to reach the final of the event here on Monday.

Mirza and his equine Seigneur Medicoit sneaked into the top-25 in the morning to make the jumping finals and become the first Indian to do so.

In the final, Mirza incurred

qualifying eventing rounds with a spectacular dressage round by taking the ninth place on Saturday.

On Sunday, Mirza picked up 11.20 penalty points in the challenging Sea Forest Cross Country Course to be placed 22nd.

Mirza and Seigneur finished the cross country run in just over eight minutes after starting a bit late owing to a technical issue.

In the final qualifying event, Mirza knocked two fences in the jumping round to incur eight penalty points en route to finishing 25th with an overall 47.2 penalty points.

The final was once again a jumping round where the top-25 competed.

Germany's Julia Krajewski won the Gold in the event, making her the first female Olympic champion in eventing's history. **PTI**

Shooters finish without medal

Tokyo: Indian shooters Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeev Rajput failed to qualify for the finals of the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the Tokyo Olympics here on Monday.

Tomar finished 21st in the qualification while Rajput was placed in 32nd position at the Asaka Shooting Range as the Indian shooting team returned without a medal for the second straight time at the Olympics.

Only the top 8 athletes qualified for the final. Tomar shot a total of 1167 with 63 inner 10s in the qualification over the stages of kneeling, prone and standing, while Rajput responded in his third Olympics, aggregated 1157 with 55 inner 10s.

The cut was made at 1176. With this, Indian shooters failed to win a medal for a second successive Olympics. **PTI**

I was blank, my coach was in tears: Sindhu after win

Tokyo: Reigning world champion P V Sindhu on Monday said she was completely blank after winning a second successive Olympic medal and it took her a while to realise the enormity of her historic achievement in the ongoing Games.

The 26-year-old Indian on Sunday etched her name among the all-time greats after winning badminton's women's singles Bronze medal to add to the Silver she won at Rio de Janeiro five years back.

"I was blank, my coach was literally in tears, it was a big moment. I hugged him and said 'Thank you. I didn't know what to do for 5-6 seconds. I shouted, so all emotions came together at that moment,'" she said during a virtual press conference.

In the third-place play-off, Sindhu beat China's He Bing Jiao. The win came after a painful loss in the semifinals to world No 1 Tai Tzu Ying.

Sindhu said coach Park Tae-sang's encouragement helped her to recover from the semifinal loss and claim the Bronze for the country.

"After semi, I was really sad. I was in tears but my coach said it is not over yet. There were mixed emotions, if I should be sad or happy but Park told one thing. He said 'There is a lot of difference between a fourth position and a Bronze' and that really hit me," she said.

"I went with the mindset that I have to give my 100 percent and get that medal."



PV Sindhu hugs her coach Park Tae-sang after winning women's singles badminton Bronze medal match

PTI

decided to move out of the Pullula Gopichand Academy and train at the Gachibowli indoor stadium which had bigger halls similar to the

Park felt pressure after being assigned to train Sindhu

Tokyo: His phone hasn't stopped buzzing ever since P V Sindhu claimed the Bronze medal at Tokyo Olympics but India's foreign badminton coach Park Tae-sang says he did feel 'little pressure' after being suddenly asked to train the star shuttler for the Games.

The 42-year-old from South Korea was initially

venue in Tokyo. Sindhu said it was one of the best decisions, especially since drift played a role during the Games at the Mushashino Forest Plaza.

"Yeah, from the beginning there was no controversy. I mean, we had this opportunity to play in conditions similar to Olympics, so from February we have been playing there, it has really helped us because drift played a big role and I learnt a lot in Gachibowli, I learnt to control the shuttle better."

"It had international standard courts with air conditioners, which was important. So I feel it was the best decision..."

hired to train the men's singles players but started working with Sindhu after the abrupt departure of Kim Ji Hyun, following the World Championship in 2019.

"I'm really happy because this is the first time my player has got a medal in my coaching career," Park, who competed at the 2004 Athens Olympics before taking up

coaching the national Korean team, said during a virtual press conference.

"When I first started teaching Sindhu, she was already a big Olympic star. I felt little pressure but I tried. My Korean players also didn't get an Olympic medal, so I thought I can try to get her a Gold. We failed but Bronze is also a very big medal. **PTI**

GOPISIR CONGRATULATED, SAINA 'NO'
P V Sindhu said she received congratulatory message from chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand but she has not got any such gesture yet from senior shuttler Saina Nehwal.

Asked if she received any communication from Gopichand and Saina after her win, Sindhu said: "Of course, Gopi sir wished me congrats. That's all. I haven't seen the social media. I am slowly replying to everybody."

When further probed, Sindhu said: "Gopi sir messaged me, Saina no. We don't talk much, so..."

Concussed Mayank out of 1st Eng Test

Nottingham: India's opening batsman Mayank Agarwal was on Monday ruled out of the first Test against England after being concussed by a short ball from teammate Mohammed Siraj during a training session here.

While facing Siraj, Agarwal saw the ball thudding into his helmet when he took his eyes off a short delivery.

The first Test starts here on Wednesday.

"Opening batsman Mayank Agarwal was hit on the helmet while batting during India's net session at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Monday," BCCI secretary Jay Shah was quoted as saying in a media release.

"The BCCI Medical Team assessed him, and a concussion test was conducted. He has shown signs of concussion and is ruled out of the opening Test against England. The 30-year-old is stable and will remain under close medical observation," Shah further stated.

When vice-captain Ajinkya



Mayank Agarwal leaves the field after he gets injured during nets

©BCCI

Rahane was asked about the fitness of all players, he did say that Agarwal sustained a head injury. "Mayank Agarwal got hit on the head. The medical team is looking after him. All others are fit," Rahane told mediapersons. After being hit by Siraj's delivery, Agarwal was seen in some discomfort as he removed the helmet and sat on the ground with physio Nitin Patel attending to him. He was then pressing the back of his head while leaving the nets, escorted by Patel. **PTI**