

OPINION 6
INDIA TELLS PAK TO
VACATE ALL ITS AREAS

WORLD 8
ATTACK TARGETING ACTING
AF DEFENSE MIN KILLS 8

SPORT 12
ENG ALL OUT FOR 183
ON DAY 1 OF 1ST TEST

RAIPUR, THURSDAY AUGUST 5 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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CAPSULE

DESI AIRCRAFT CARRIER BEGINS SEA TRIAL

New Delhi: The much-awaited sea trials of India's first indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant, the largest and most complex warship built in the country, began on Wednesday, a development described as "historic" by the Indian Navy. With the launch of the sea trials of the aircraft carrier, India has joined a select group of countries having niche capability to indigenously design, build and integrate a state-of-the-art aircraft carrier, the Navy said.

SCREEN TIME DAMAGING EYES OF KIDS

New Delhi: As schools are closed and children being restricted to four walls of their homes due to Covid-19, spending more time on watching screen, they are becoming victim to Myopia, in which the shape of the eye changes, causing light rays to bend (refract) incorrectly, focusing images in front of, instead of on the surface of, the retina, researchers have said.

TWITTER GETS NCPDR NOTICE FOR RAHUL POST

New Delhi: National Commission for Protection of Children's Rights has issued a notice to Twitter India, directing it to delete a photo posted by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi that reveals the identity of the Dalit girl whose rape, murder and forced cremation in Delhi has sparked furious protests. The NCPDR has contended that the tweet violates the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Juvenile Justice Act.

Dahiya assures 4th Oly medal for India

Neeraj qualifies for javelin final; Lovlina clinches bronze; Indian women hockey to fight for bronze

PTI ■ TOKYO

Ravi Dahiya's charge into the final assured India of a fourth Olympic medal as wrestlers sent the country's hopes soaring, while javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra turned on the style to script history in qualification itself on a day when most things went spectacularly well for the contingent, except for the heartbreak in hockey and boxing.

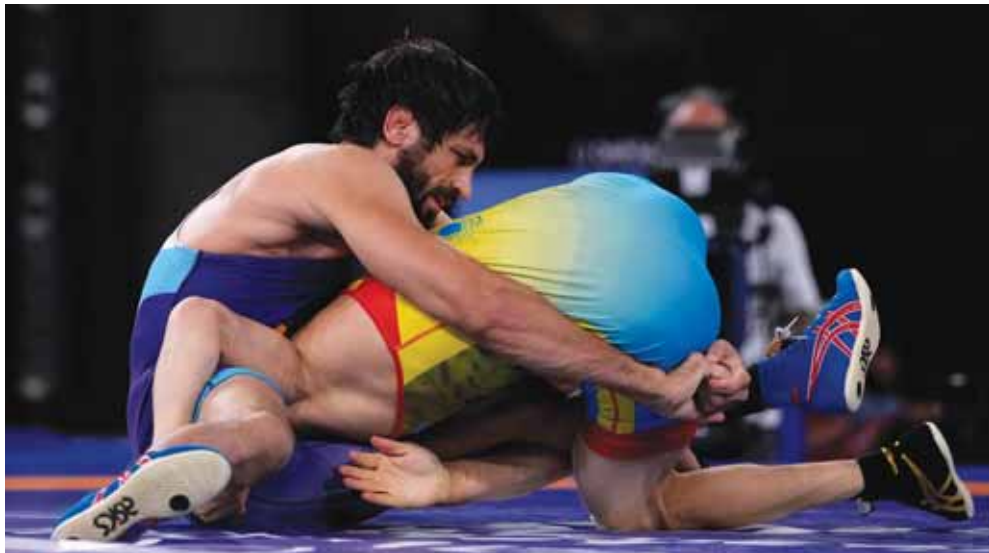
While Dahiya will fight for Gold on Thursday, Chopra will stake his claim for India's maiden track-and-field Olympic medal on Saturday.

The Rani Rampal-led women hockey team lost 1-2 to Argentina in the semifinals but stayed in the hunt for a medal. The courageous bunch, which has exceeded all expectations by coming this far, will play Great Britain on Friday for a Bronze medal.

The Indians fought valiantly and gave Argentina a run for their money by taking the lead in the second minute through a penalty corner conversion by Gurjit Kaur.

But the Las Leonas bounced back strongly with skipper Maria Barriounevo's (18th, 36th minutes) twin strikes from penalty corners to secure the hard-fought win.

On Thursday, the men's hockey team will eye a Bronze



Ravi Dahiya competes against Kazakhstan's Nurislam Sanayev during the 57kg Freestyle semi-final wrestling match at the 2020 Olympics in Chiba on Wednesday AP

medal, its first podium finish in 41 years, when it takes on Germany in the third-place playoff.

In the boxing ring Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) signed off with a bronze medal after her showdown against reigning world champion Busenaz Surmeneli of Turkey ended in a crushing 0-5 loss.

Borgohain became the third Indian boxer to fetch a Games medal after Vijender Singh (2008) and M C Mary Kom (2012).

The Panipat lad Neeraj Chopra etched his name in history books in the qualification round itself when he became the first javelin thrower to qualify for the Olympic finals

and also the first to top the charts with an impressive 86.65m effort.

But it was another 23-year-old, Dahiya, who emerged as the undisputed star of the day.

The son of a farmer from Haryana's Nahri village, who is competing in his maiden Olympic Games in the 57kg category, first outclassed

Colombia's Tigreros Urbano (13-2) in his opener and then outwitted Bulgaria's Georgi Valentinov Vangelov (14-4).

In his semi-final clash against Kazakhstan's Nurislam Sanayev, he conceded the lead but bounced back like a seasoned professional to march into the finals, becoming only the second wrestler after dou-



Neeraj Chopra competes in the qualification round of the men's javelin throw at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo on Wednesday AP

ble Olympic-medallist Sushil Kumar to achieve the feat.

He will be up against reigning world champion Zaur Uguev of Russia to whom he lost in the 2019 World Championship semi-finals.

"I had no business conceding that much lead against Sanayev. I am not happy with it," the usually reticent Dahiya told *PTI* after his impressive performance.

"I still have some unfinished business to do. I came with a target here and that is not complete yet (winning Gold)."

Others in medal contention are Deepak Punia (86kg) and Anshu Malik

(women's 57kg). While Punia lost in the semi-finals to get a direct entry into the Bronze-medal playoffs, Malik has made the repechage round after European champion Irina Kurachikina, who beat her in the opening round, made the finals.

On the golf course, Aditi Ashok got off to a brilliant start, carding a four-under 67 in the opening round for a share of the second spot at the Kasumigaseki Country Club.

India's other entrant in the field, Diksha Dagar (76), however, had a rough start in her maiden Olympics as she had five bogeys and no birdies to lie at the tied 56th spot.

Opp blames Govt for Parl logjam

Govt maligning us for disruption, we stand united on Pegasus debate demand: Opp

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders of as 14 Opposition parties on Wednesday said the responsibility for the Parliament logjam lies squarely with the Centre and urged it to respect Parliamentary democracy by accepting their demand for a discussion on the Pegasus controversy and farmers' issues.

Issuing a joint statement, 18 leaders from 14 parties said it is unfortunate that the Centre has "unleashed a misleading campaign to malign the combined Opposition" and blaming it for the continued disruption of Parliament proceedings.

The joint statement comes a day after the Opposition leaders met over breakfast hosted by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and drove on bicycles to Parliament in protest.

"The responsibility for the



deadlock lies squarely at the doorsteps of the Government, which remains arrogant and obdurate and refuses to accept the Opposition's demand for an informed debate in both the Houses," read the statement.

"The Opp parties stand firm and united on their demand for a discussion on Pegasus issue in both the Houses, replied to by the Home Minister, as this has national security dimensions," it said.

Earlier, a group of seven Opposition parties led by former NDA ally Shiromani Akali Dal submitted a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind urging him to direct the Govt to allow a full-fledged discussion in both the Houses on a range of issues they have been protesting ever since the Monsoon session started.

6 TMC MPs suspended for day for showing placards, defying Chair

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday suspended six TMC MPs for the day for carrying placards while protesting along with other Opposition MPs over the Pegasus spying issue.

Soon after the Rajya Sabha assembled for the day, slogan-shouting TMC and other Opposition MPs trooped into the Well of the House, some holding placards, to demand a discussion on the issue of Israeli-made Pegasus spyware allegedly being used to snoop on Opposition leaders, Government critics and journalists.

The Chairman first asked members to go back to their seats and then threatened to invoke rule 255 against



those holding placards. As the members refused to budge, he ordered that those "not obeying the Chair and raising placards shall leave the House under rule 255."

He, however, did not name anyone and said Rajya Sabha Secretariat will give the list. Later a Parliamentary Bulletin identified the six MPs suspended for the day as Dola Sen, Md. Nadimul Haque, Abir Ranjan Biswas, Shanta Chhetri, Arpita Ghosh and Mausam Noor.

Ex-justice, registrars of SC, Rohatgi's staffer snooped

Lawyers of high profile cases too among new list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day before the Supreme Court is set to hear the Pegasus phone tapping case, a new list of phone numbers were out on Wednesday, including the old phone numbers in the name of former Supreme Court Judge Arun Mishra, Registrars of Supreme Court, and lawyers of the many high-profile accused.

As per the report published by *The Wire* portal, Justice Arun Mishra, who is currently National Human Rights Commission Chairperson, confirmed that the number was with him during 2013-2014 and he is not using the number now.

"The presence on the list of a number associated with a sitting judge was mentioned on



the day *The Wire* began running its stories. Having now spoken to him on the record, we can confirm that a Rajasthan mobile number formerly registered in the name of Justice Arun Mishra, who retired from the Supreme Court in September 2020, was added to the database in 2019. A confidential source with access to BSNL records said that the number in question was registered in the name of Justice Mishra from September 18, 2010, to September 19, 2018," the report said.

The Wire further reported that Justice Mishra said, "The

number +9194XXXXXXX is not with me since 2013-2014. I don't use this number."

Phone numbers of NK Gandhi and TI Rajput, who worked in the crucial "writ" section of the SC's registry were also in the list of targets by the Pegasus Spyware. The numbers of two junior court employees, Tapan Kumar Chakraborty and Manav Sharma, who were dismissed from service by then CJI Ranjan Gogoi "for tampering with an order" in a contempt of court case against Anil Ambani of the Reliance ADAG group, were also on the list.

Former Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi's junior lawyer M Thangathurai's phone number was also on the list of targets for tapping. Thangathurai and Rohatgi both expressed surprise when informed by *The Wire* about the number's inclusion.

Phone numbers of lawyers of Christian Michel, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi also figured in the Pegasus tapping list.

AI suffered ₹70K cr loss after merger with IA: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Air India has been suffering heavy losses since its merger with Indian Airlines in 2007 and it has accumulated losses of about ₹70,820 crore till March 31, 2020.

In a written reply to MP Mahesh Poddar in the Rajya Sabha on the current financial condition of public sector airline company and the Government's initiative for its disinvestment, Minister of State for Civil Aviation VK Singh said financial bids for Air India are likely to be received from qualified interested bidders by September 15 this year.

The Minister said the major reasons for the losses include high interest the burden on debt due to bulk purchase of aircraft in the past. "The Government has decided to go for strategic disinvestment due to its fragile finances and its continued and accumulated losses," he added.

Shot or -ve RT-PCR report must for visiting Himachal

PNS ■ SHIMLA

With Himachal Pradesh witnessing a spike in Covid-19 cases again, the State Government on Wednesday made it mandatory for the tourists to carry Covid-19 vaccine certificate (single or both doses) or a negative RT-PCR test report issued not earlier than 72 hours.

The State on Wednesday reported 243 fresh positive cases while active cases jumped to 1,508. Four deaths, one each from Mandi, Una, Shimla and Kangra were reported.

The highest number of 72 cases was reported in Mandi followed by 45 cases in Chamba district. An order issued by Himachal Chief Secretary on Wednesday said blatant violations of Covid norms have been observed in several parts of the State, especially in public transport and



public places. Massive crowds are also thronging the market-places, violating norms of social distancing. Therefore, it is important that the field implementation authorities concerned shall ensure Covid appropriate behaviour in all crowded places such as shops, malls, markets, market complexes, weekly markets, restaurants and bars, mandis, bus stations, railway stations, public parks, gardens, marriage halls,

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	3,18,10,427 (+42,442)
DEATHS:	4,26,319 (+530)
RECOVERED:	3,09,66,576 (+41,222)
ACTIVE:	4,04,942
MAHA:	63,27,194 (+6,126)
KERALA:	34,71,563 (+22,414)
K'TAKA:	29,11,727 (+1,769)
TN:	25,67,401 (+1,949)
DELHI:	14,36,518 (+67)

sports complexes as well as at all areas identified as hotspots for transmission of Covid, it said.

You can offer prayer at Ayodhya's Ram temple by Dec 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya is progressing according to the plan, and devotees are expected to be allowed to pay obeisance to the deity by 2023 end, sources in the Ram Temple Trust said on Wednesday.

The entire temple complex will, however, be ready by 2025, they added. Sharing details of the grand project, a culmination of the BJP's decades-long promise of building a temple at the place where Lord Ram is believed to have been born in Ayodhya, they said the main temple will have three floors and five "mandaps".

The length of the temple is 360 feet, width 235 feet and height of each floor will be 20 feet, they said.



"The construction work of the temple is progressing according to the plan and it is estimated that by end of 2023, devotees will be able to get the opportunity of Lord Ram's darshan," a source said.

The development assumes political significance as the next Lok Sabha elections are due in the first half of 2024. If the work goes in accordance with the plan, then the ruling BJP will receive a shot in the arm before hitting the campaign trail.

BRO builds world highest road to support frontline LAC troops

It is at an altitude of over 19,000 ft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big boost to provide logistical support to the frontline troops at the India-China border on Ladakh, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed a road at an altitude of more than 19,000 feet at Umlingla Pass, the highest road in the world, higher than the previous record of a road in Bolivia at 18,953 feet. The Umlingla Pass is now connected with a blacktop road.

The road has been constructed at an altitude higher than the Mount Everest Base Camps as the South Base Camp in Nepal whose altitude is 17,598 ft, while North Base Camp in Tibet is at 16,900 ft.



The road has been constructed much above the altitude of Siachen Glacier which is at 17,700 ft. The Khardung La Pass in Leh is at an altitude of 17,582 ft.

Besides providing access to the local population and giving a boost to tourism, the road will provide much needed

logistical back up to the troops guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. Stand-offs are on at three friction points at the LAC there for the last one and half years. The road will ensure that the troops get unhindered supply of weapons, ammunition, besides food and other items.

Giving details of the 54-km long road, officials said here on Wednesday the BRO has constructed and black-topped the highest motorable road in the world at 19,300 ft at Umlingla Pass in Eastern Ladakh.

The road now connects the important towns in Chumar sector of Eastern Ladakh. It will prove to be a boon to the local population as it offers an alternate direct route connecting Chisumle and Demchok from Leh. It will enhance the socio-economic condition and promote tourism in Ladakh.

CM orders probe into alleged rape and murder of Dalit girl



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met with the family of the nine-year-old victim and consoled them. PTI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, on Wednesday met the family of the nine-year-old Dalit girl and ordered a magisterial inquiry into her death following an alleged sexual assault.

Kejriwal also assured the family of all possible support from the Delhi Government and announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh for the family of the girl.

In a tweet, Kejriwal said that the Government will appoint top lawyers to ensure the accused persons are punished. "Our girl cannot come back. The injustice done to the family is unfortunate and cannot be compensated, but the Government will give ₹10 lakh to them and order a magisterial inquiry into the matter," he told reporters after meeting the family. "There is a need to strengthen law and order in Delhi. I appeal to the Central Government to take firm steps in this direction," he said.

The parents of the girl accompanied by hundreds of locals were staging a protest near the site of the incident in Old Nangal area in southwest Delhi, demanding capital punishment for the accused. The girl used to live with her parents in a rented house in front of a crematorium. On Sunday at around 5.30 PM, she went to get cold water from a cooler at the crematorium after informing her mother.

Around 6 PM, the crematorium's priest, Radhey Shyam, and two-three other people, known to the girl's mother,

Minor's case transferred to Crime Branch

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday transferred the case of the alleged rape and murder of a nine-year-old girl in southwest Delhi's Old Nangal area to Crime Branch.

"The case has been transferred to the Crime Branch for further expeditious and scientific investigation in order to enable a speedy trial in the interest of justice," said Chinmoy Biswal, the spokesperson of Delhi Police. The girl died under suspicious circumstances, even as her parents alleged that she was raped and forcefully cremated by a crematorium's priest in the Nangal village.

Police had said that based on the statement of the victim's mother, rape charges have been added in the FIR. Four people, including the priest, have been arrested. Only the burnt legs of the girl were recovered from the crematorium ground.

called her there and showed her daughter's body claiming that she got electrocuted while getting water from the cooler.

Am with girl's parents in fight for justice: Rahul

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday met the family of the nine-year-old Dalit girl who died following an alleged sexual assault in Delhi. After meeting the victim's family, Gandhi said that the family is demanding nothing but justice.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala, along with several party workers also accompanied Gandhi to meet the victim's family.

While talking to reporters at the Delhi Cantonment area, Gandhi said that he was with the family and would not back down even an inch till they get justice.

"I have told the family that Rahul Gandhi is standing with them till they get justice and will not back down even an inch," he said.

"The parents' tears are saying only one thing, that their daughter, the daughter of this country, deserves justice.

There were burn marks between her left wrist and elbow, and her lips were also blue, according to police. It was



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi speaks to media after meeting the family members of the minor girl who was allegedly raped and then murdered in Delhi cantt area, in New Delhi on Wednesday. Ranjan Dimri

And I am with them on this path to justice," Gandhi wrote in Hindi on Twitter. He also shared a picture of his meeting with the girl's parents on Twitter.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has also launched an inquiry into the incident that took place in Old Nangal area in southwest Delhi and summoned the Delhi Police after the girl's parents alleged that

she was raped and her body was forcibly cremated by a crematorium priest who had falsely claimed that she was electrocuted.

On Tuesday, opposition parties targeted Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the incident, questioning the law and order situation in the national Capital, even as the Delhi Police said strict legal action has been taken against the accused.

alleged the priest and the others dissuaded her mother from making a PCR call, saying that the police would make a case

out of it and during the post-mortem, doctors would steal the girl's organs, so it was better to cremate her.

I-Day: Army wants kin, protesters to clear Cantt



Delhi Police personnel detain a protester for shouting slogans against BJP Delhi president Adesh Gupta during a protest as he arrived to meet the family of the minor girl who was allegedly raped and murdered, in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army establishment at Delhi Cantonment area on Wednesday served a notice to the protesters at Old Nangal village and asked them to vacate the area in view of security concerns and the forthcoming Independence Day celebrations.

"The Army establishment of Delhi Cantonment has served a notice to the protesters on Old Nangal road to remove the tents and obstacles so that the Army services can resume normally in view of upcoming Independence Day," said Ingit Pratap Singh, the Deputy Commissioner

of Police (DCP), Southwest district.

The copy of the letter marked to Delhi Police asked them to remove the protesters from the close vicinity of military units/establishments to avoid any security hazard.

"It is intimated that a protest has taken place near FOL Depot which is in close vicinity of the Central Vehicle Depot, Delhi Cantonment since Monday.

It is intimated that a number of logistic units (major & minor) alongwith serving soldiers are residing in & area around the protest. These logistic units are facing a lot of administration problems due to the protest," the letter stated.

L-G reviews city's Covid preparedness

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi, Anil Bajjal reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the city and future preparedness on Wednesday and asked officials of the health department to effectively mitigate and manage any future surge in Covid-19 cases.

The meeting chaired by Bajjal was attended by the Chief Secretary, Divisional Commissioner, Secretary (Health), MD of DMRC and other officials concerned.

The health department officials were instructed to ensure commissioning of all Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) oxygen plants, Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) storage tanks and cryogenic bottling plants latest by August 31, 2021.

"They were also advised to make provisions for an adequate buffer of medicines related to Covid-19 and black fungus," he said.

He also expressed concern regarding reported violation of



Covid-appropriate behaviour in Metro trains and other means of public transport. Accordingly, the Divisional Commissioner, Delhi Police and MD of the DMRC were advised to ensure that Covid protocols are strictly enforced.

The health department was also advised to widely disseminate the graded action plan and to undertake targeted testing in venues/sites that were being opened up to ascertain the impact, for further informed decision-making.

He also stressed on the need for coordinated action by all stakeholders for effective management of Covid-19 in the national Capital.

Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University sets up help desk

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University set up admission help desks to reach out to the low income settlements and marginalised communities across Delhi.

In an attempt to take the university to the students, an admission mobilisation drive was organised at two youth dominated slum clusters Navjeevan Camp and Transit Camp in Kalkaji where the local MLA and Chairperson of Education Committee of Delhi Assembly Atishi Marlena also joined the outreach event.

The event was intended to share information and details about the various courses being offered at the newly set up skill varsity.

"DSEU team visited door-to-door in the slum clusters and spoke to students who have passed out of 10th and 12th, explaining to them the admission criteria, eligibility, entrance test to various diploma and degree courses along with opportunities for scholarships under various

schemes," the Government said in a statement.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, in a previous interaction with the University said, "Traditionally, students reach out to universities for information and admissions, however, this new skill based university must endeavor to reach out students, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged."

Atishi Marlena, MLA Kalkaji and Chairperson of Education Committee of Delhi Assembly, who attended one of the mobilisation events, spoke to the students and parents about skill education and entrepreneurial opportunities at the DSEU.

In conversation with the parents, Atishi said "This is a great opportunity for students seeking job oriented higher education for the students passing out of Class 10th and 12th. The courses here are developed in partnership with industry and have internships embedded within each course, thus the student from the beginning will have strong industry connect".

Grey Line Metro opening postponed

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The opening of the Najafgarh-Dhansa Bus Stand extension of Grey Line of the Delhi Metro has been postponed for about two weeks due to issues with an approach road to the station.

The extension line was scheduled to be inaugurated on August 6 along with a segment of the Pink Line at Trilokpuri by Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Sources in the Delhi transport department said the condition of the approach road to the Dhansa Bus Stand Metro Station was "not even accessible to the public" let alone being motorable. On May 20, a large portion of the road along with the footpath near the site of construction of the station had caved in due to heavy rains, prompting the city Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot to order a probe into the incident. Gahlot, next day, inspected

the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) site at the Dhansa Stand Metro Station and Khairat Crossing where the cave-in had occurred. Sources, quoting Gahlot said, a cave-in had also occurred in May 2020, and the DMRC had been submitting different timelines for completion of work and to restore the road for normal traffic, but the "assured timelines were never met".

Meanwhile, the DMRC when contacted said, the opening of the Najafgarh-Dhansa Bus Stand Metro section of the Grey Line is "being postponed for about two weeks" time since the completion of a vital road providing access to the station from a part of the nearby localities is pending".

A portion of a vital road link connecting Khairat Mor with Gopal Nagar had to be blocked for heavy vehicles due to the construction work on the reversal facility beyond the Dhansa Bus Stand Station.

I-Day: Delhi Police holds inter-State coordination meeting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In view of the upcoming Independence Day, the Delhi Police held an inter-state coordination meeting with its counterparts in the neighbouring states at Police Headquarters in the national Capital.

Delhi Police Commissioner, Rakesh Asthana chaired the meeting which was attended by top brass from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Rajasthan, Chandigarh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Additional Director General of Police (DGP), Meerut (UP), Additional DG, Rohtak (Haryana), CP, Noida, CP, Gurugram, IGP, Rewari and DIG, Uttarakhand were among officers who joined the meeting physically at Vimarsh conference hall.

"The objective of the meeting was to share terror-related intelligence and inputs and take necessary measures in the run up to the Independence

Day celebrations and also to deliberate upon plans for bigger coordinated action among states in areas of policing which have implications for national capital," said Chinmoy Biswal, the spokesperson of Delhi Police.

Addressing the officers, Asthana said that good cooperation between police forces of the country is the key to address all issues. He appreciated the cooperation extended by the neighbouring States Police and other states to Delhi Police in crime control and action on criminals.

Setting an action plan for immediate goal and long term goal, the Delhi CP also laid emphasis on intensive drives for preventive measures like tenants' verification, hotels, guest houses checking and anti-terror alertness etc. in order to identify and counter any nefarious designs, and strong border checking actions to curb the movement of weapons, criminals and drugs into the national Capital.

EDMC inks MoU for e-waste management

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an agency for effective management and disposal of e-waste.

Mayor of East Delhi Shyam Sundar Agarwal, Standing Committee Chairman Beer Singh Panwar, Commissioner of EDMC, Vikas Anand along with senior officers of the civic body and representatives of the agency were present.

On this occasion, the Mayor said that a list of 21 types of e-waste has been prepared for which the authorised agency can be called for disposal. The Mayor informed that a toll free number 1800-102-9882 has been issued for the disposal of e-waste.

He also said that the employees of the agency will reach the given address and evaluate the e-waste. "The amount of e-waste would be fixed as agreed between the seller and the agency and it would be paid in the bank account itself. The Mayor said that all the information related to the disposal of e-waste is available on the website of the civic body," he said. Chairman, Standing Committee said that the civic body is facing severe funds crunch but in this project the civic body will not have to make any expenditure.

MCG's land freed from clutches of a private developer



STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

Following directions of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG), against illegal constructions and encroachments a team of Assistant Engineer (Enforcement) Naeem Hussain of Zone-4 has freed 1,500 square yards of valuable land of the MCG from the possession of a private developer on Sohna Road.

On Wednesday, the MCG team reached Sector-48 on Sohna Road along with the police force where a sewerage treatment plant was illegally built by Vipul Developers on about 200 square yards and 1300 square yards of land was being used for parking of vehicles. "The measurement of this land was done by Patwari Harkesh. Following a measurement the enforcement team with the help of JCB demolished the sewerage treatment plant and razed the land which was being used for parking and freed the area from illegal occupation," a spokesperson of the MCG said.

RIMS to get two ECMO machines soon

PNS ■ RANCHI

Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Ranchi will soon become the first Government-run hospital in Jharkhand to offer Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) facility to critically-ill patients with severely damaged lungs, health officials said on Wednesday.

Health Minister Banna Gupta recently directed the RIMS administration to procure at least two ECMO machines, used for artificial breathing, in order to provide the facility of this life support system to patients suffering from Covid-induced lung fibrosis, which may lead to the failure of lungs if not treated on time.

"No Government hospital in our state has ECMO support for patients at present. I have given my nod for procurement of two ECMO machines that will help in treatment of patients at RIMS," said Gupta.

Through ECMO, blood is pumped outside of a patient's body to a heart-lung machine that removes carbon dioxide and sends oxygen-filled blood back to tissues in the body. When a patient with damaged lungs is on ECMO support, the gas exchange happens outside the body through the machine instead of the lungs. Once the blood is oxygenated and carbon

dioxide is removed, it is given back to the heart, from where it circulates to other parts of the body.

In Ranchi, only Bhagwan Mahavir Medica Superspecialty Hospital has three ECMO machines. Many other private hospitals in the state have also started procuring the machine after several deaths due to lung damage reported in the state and other parts of India.

ECMO was used by several private and some government hospitals across the country to save lives of Covid patients during the first and the second waves of Covid-19, say doctors. Education Minister Jagannath Mahto, who is back in Jharkhand after his lung transplant at MGM Chennai, was also kept on ECMO support for several days in the Tamil Nadu capital.

Many patients suffering from lung fibrosis recover after being kept on ECMO for a couple of weeks, say doctors. Keeping patients on this life-support system also buys time for finding a lung donor if the patient does not respond to ECMO and needs a transplant.

With RIMS getting the facility of ECMO, many patients suffering from severe Covid-induced respiratory ailments will not have to move to bigger cities for treatment, at least during the initial phase, doctors from the State-run hospital said.

Even during the second wave of the pandemic, several patients had to move to Hyderabad, Chennai or Mumbai because very few hospitals in the state had this facility, doctors involved in the fight against Covid-19 said.

Political parties demand caste based census

PNS ■ RANCHI

Political parties in Jharkhand have joined the chorus for caste based census in Jharkhand as well as an increase of reservation for Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in jobs and educational courses.

The Bihar unit of the JD (U) that has exerted pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for caste based census tried to polarize public and political opinion for this demand in Jharkhand as well.

Sharavan Kumar, the state coordinator of JD (U) in Jharkhand addressed a press conference on Thursday and said the central government must consider this demand.

The JD (U) leader appealed to political parties to join hands together and pass a resolution in the Jharkhand assembly to pressurize the centre to conduct the caste based survey.

On Tuesday, the Ajsu party chief and MLA Sudesh Mahto had shot a letter to the Prime minister to conduct a caste-based census in 2021. He argued that the census is necessary to know the current social condition of different caste which will ultimately help the government to chalk-out programmes for the overall uplift of society. Notably, the Ajsu is the part of the NDA led alliance.

While the JMM, the big

The JD (U) leader appealed to political parties to join hands together and pass a resolution in the Jharkhand assembly to pressurize the centre to conduct the caste based survey

brother of the ruling UPA alliance in Jharkhand has yet to officially make any statement but the Congress which is part of the JMM led alliance has now started speaking on this issue.

The Congress has demanded chief minister Hemant Soren to conduct an independent caste census in Jharkhand as the central government has refused the same.

The RJD which is part of the UPA alliance too has supported the caste based census. The party has advised the Soren government to table a bill regarding caste census before the house during the monsoon session of the assembly. Former MLA Radhakrishna Kishore said that census is required since due to absence of the correct data the government fails to formulate any plan for the development of OBC.

CBSE, JAC students protest over poor results

PNS ■ RANCHI

A large number of students who scored less marks in CBSE class X and Jharkhand Academic Council (JAC) XII results which were declared recently are on protest. On Wednesday morning a large number of parents along with their wards gathered at Crown Public School, Harmu protesting against several students getting less marks in CBSE examination.

The parents allege that many students who were topper in Class IX too have received 50 to 60 per cent marks. The parents allege that the school principal had asked students to clear all pending dues including fees and those students who had cleared all the pending dues during lockdown period have only received good marks.

The students also allege that those students who have not cleared their fees have received less marks, with many of them even failing in examination. However, the school principal refused to talk to parents stating that students have been given marks in the examination based on internal assessment.

The parents became furious when the principal refused to meet them. Later a large number of police personnel were deployed outside the school premises. Due to students' protest the traffic on busy Birsra Rajpath (Harmu road) came to a standstill.

Hold others' hands with positivity: Governor

Convocation ceremony of Pandit Sunderlal Sharma (Open) University

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

In this Covid-19 era, everyone should share each other's sorrows with positive thoughts and based on an ability support each other, Chhattisgarh Governor Anusuiya UIkey said on Wednesday.

The works should be done together for the sake of humanity, he said. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said students should play a vital role in fulfilling the dream of 'Gadhbho Nava Chhattisgarh' with a holistic and multidimensional development of the state.

The Governor and the Chief Minister were virtually addressing the fifth convocation ceremony of Pandit Sunderlal Sharma (Open) University here, an official communication said.

The Open University can play an important role in enhancing knowledge despite physical distance.



It helps those who left education midway, the Governor said.

Quality education in the tribal belts of Bastar-Surguja is being affected due to the vacancy of lecturers and professors in universities and colleges, she said. She patted Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and Higher Education Minister Umesh Patel for NAAC grading efforts in the state colleges. The Chief Minister urged the students to provide their talent, energy and all efforts to make Chhattisgarh a prosperous and happy state. Higher Education Minister Umesh Patel said the recruitment process of assistant professors is on across the state.

At the convocation, five students were awarded Doctor of Philosophy. Degrees were awarded to 2,015 students for session 2018-19 and to 10,730 students for session 2019-20. Meritorious students got gold medals.

Over 1 crore get first dose of Covid vaccine



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The number of people who have received the first dose of the Covid vaccine has crossed the 1 crore mark in Chhattisgarh.

According to a statement from the Health Department, till Tuesday 1,00,11,363 persons in state had been administered the first dose while those who have got the second dose stood at 24,02,361.

administered to 309,334 healthcare workers, 317,172 frontline workers, 52,10,068 persons in the age group of 45 years and plus and 41,74,789 persons in the 18-44 age group.

Both the doses have been given to 245,714 healthcare workers, 229,897 frontline workers, 17,48,292 in the age group 45 years and plus and 17,48,558 persons in the 18-44 age group, the statement added.

Baghel, Raman exchange barbs over CAG report

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday attacked BJP leader and former Chief Minister Raman Singh for his tweet on a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Citing details of the CAG report, Baghel said Singh had exposed himself with his tweet as the allegations of failing to use the funds allotted to the Chhattisgarh Road Development Corp Ltd (CGRDCL) happened primarily during the BJP regime.

"In 2018-19, the BJP ruled for nine months and the Congress for just three months. The BJP was thus responsible for the funds lying idle," he said.

Baghel turned poetic: "Darkar Aaina Dekhne Se Inkar Karta Hai, Fir Bhi Khud Hi Khud Ko Benakab Karta Hai."



Bifurcating the use of funds, Baghel said from the Rs 1,157 crore allotment to CGRDCL, the BJP utilized only Rs 322.80 crores over nine months -- or just 27.9 percent.

Thus, Raman Singh is exposing himself and the idleness of his government, said Baghel.

'Aspirations and Development of tribal areas' on Lokvaani

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The next episode of Lokvaani, the monthly radio programme of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, will be aired on Sunday (August 8) on the topic "Development and Aspirations of tribal areas".

It will be broadcast from all the centres of All India Radio, FM radio stations and regional news channels in Chhattisgarh from 10.30 am to 11.00 am, an official statement said on Wednesday. This will be the 20th episode of Lokvaani.

Police officers get fresh posts

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government has announced new posts for 38 state police officers, it was announced on Wednesday.

Raipur (Rural) Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Tarkeshwar Patel will be the Raipur (City) ASP while Raipur (ASP) Lakhan Pawar Patle will now be Raipur (Rural) ASP.

Dhamtari ASP Manisha Thakur Rawate has been made Kabirdham ASP while Baloda Bazar-Bhatapara ASP Nivedita Paul has given responsibility as Dhamtari ASP.

Anti-Corruption Bureau/ Economic Offence Wing ASP Maheshwar Nag has become ASP (Traffic) in Raigarh.

Bemetara ASP Vimal Kumar Bais has been posted as the State Intelligence Bureau (SIB) ASP in Raipur.

Abhishek Maheshwari, who is Assistant Inspector General of Police (Intelligence) with additional charges as ASP (Crime) in Raipur, will continue with the same post.

Prashant Katlam (Balrampur ASP), Pratibha Pandey (Garela-Pendra-Marwahi ASP) and Rahul Dev Sharma (Raipur City Superintendent of Police) are among other officers who got new postings.

Meanwhile, 69 Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSP) in various districts were given new posting in the departmental reshuffle.

Young entrepreneur shaping her dreams



STAFF REPORTER ■ KONDAGAON

Shaping her own dreams, young entrepreneur Ragini Jaiswal of Kondagaon district in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region is successfully running a fitness centre and a gym for the past two years.

Ragini benefitted under the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Srijan Yojana and has now become an inspiration for the young, an official statement

said on Wednesday. In the present age, determined to do something different from the traditional livelihood option, the girl took up a challenging task in the tribal heartland.

She took a loan of Rs 5 lakhs to start her business. Soon her fitness centre received a good response from girls in the town. Now she earns Rs 30,000-40,000 a month after paying the installments of her loan.

Paddy stops elephants from entering villages: Minister

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Placing paddy in the open to divert the attention of elephants and to reduce the human-elephant conflict has been successful, Chhattisgarh Forest Minister Mohammed Akbar said on Wednesday.

In three forest divisions, the elephants consumed 14 quintals of paddy kept in the open and did not invade the village, he said.

As part of the project, the paddy was kept in the open at different places in Surajpur, Dharamjaigarh and Balod divisions.

At Surajpur, the elephants ate up four quintals each in Banshipur and Tukukand and six quintals at Bagda, Akbar told the media here.

He said 16 herds having 307 elephants are on the constant move in Rehan, Tamor Pingla, the Badalkhol Sanctuary, Pratappur, Raghunathpur, Tapkara, Kunkuri, Manora, Duldula, Bark, Dharamjaigarh, Kapu, Lailunga, Bora, Bakaruma, Kudmura, Kartala, Pasand, Katghora, Raigarh Gharghoda, Tamnar, and Balod areas.



Minister counters BJP's allegations

Forest Minister Mohammed Akbar said no procurement of paddy is being done. It is only transfer from the Food Department to the Forest Department. He denied BJP's allegation that decayed paddy was given to the elephants.

He said elephants are very intelligent. Their memory and sense of smell

are very sharp. Once they consume the paddy, they will not harm the village houses and standing crops in the fields for food.

The Minister said the elephants generally damage houses which store rice, paddy and mahua. He added that an 'Elephant Alert System', an application, has been developed, which helps to generate sound and lighting in the affected villages.

Keeping paddy in the open is one way to keep the elephants away from damaging crops and houses.

Police held two for smuggling diamonds



STAFF REPORTER ■ DHAMTARI

The Chhattisgarh Police arrested two persons on charges of smuggling 12 pieces of rough diamonds valued at Rs 40,000 in Dhamtari district, police said on Wednesday.

Speaking to The Pioneer over telephone, Dhamtari Additional Superintendent of Police Manisha Thakur

Rawate identified the two as Ishu Sharma (29) and Dagendra Netam (26).

They were caught in the Borai police station area on Tuesday night when they were on a motorcycle while heading from Gariaband's Mainpur town towards Dhamtari.

The accused illegally brought the diamonds in Gariaband and they planned to sell it, the officer said.

Covid-19 warriors invited for I-Day celebrations

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Covid-19 warriors will be specially invited to the main Independence Day event here on August 15 where Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel will unfurl the national flag under strict Covid protocol -- which will be followed all across Chhattisgarh.

The Covid-19 warriors -- doctors, police personnel, health and sanitary workers -- will get special invitation in view of the leading role they played in combating the deadly virus. All of them will wear masks and keep social distance.

On Wednesday, the General Administration Department (GAD) asked everyone to strictly, adhere to Covid protocol and also

curtail the events. At the place where the, Chief Minister will unfurl the Indian flag and address the people, police and paramilitary contingents will give a Guard of Honour.

Similarly, in the districts, the chief guest will unfurl the flag while police and Home Guards will give a Guard of Honour.

No public programmes will be organized at Janpad Panchayat/Tehsil level where Janpad Panchayat chairman and urban bodies chairman will unfurl the national flag.

The main functions in Raipur will be held at 9.00 AM. Keeping this in view, all government offices will unfurl the national flag before 9.00 am so that employees can take part in the main function.

Online cricket betting racket busted, 3 held



STAFF REPORTER ■ DURG

The Chhattisgarh Police on Wednesday arrested three persons for operating an online cricket betting racket from a residential house in Bhillai city.

Durg Superintendent of Police Prashant Agrawal told The Pioneer that those arrested were Ashwani Kumar Pandey (24), Tejas Pandey (23) and Atul Patel

(23), all residents of Saket Nagar in Bhillai.

Police seized a laptop, four mobile phones, two registers, Rs 2.38 lakhs in PayTm app and betting records detailing transactions of Rs 8.68 lakhs, Agrawal said.

They were taking bets on a cricket test played between India and England via CARRY777 software from a rented house.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, CIRCLE NO-1 RAIPUR (C.G.)

Tender Notice (1st Call)
Contractors, Registered appropriate class in Unified Registration System [e-Registration] invited Online tenders for the following works :-

NIT No./ System Tender No.	Name of Work	Probable amount of contract
1	2	3
109/80039	SPECIAL REPAIR M.O.W. AND DEPOSITE WORK AT RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL GOVT. BUILDING UNDER SUB DIVISION ABHANPUR	Rs.50.00 Lakh
110/80044	CONSTRUCTION OF NYAY SADAN WITH ELECTRIFICATION & LIFT WORK AT A.D.R. BUILDING, ABOVE SECOND FLOOR CIVIL COURT CAMPUS RAIPUR	Rs.113.95 Lakh

Last date of tender Download Date up to 21.08.2021 Time 17:30 PM

Note :- All eligible/interested contractors are mandated to get enrolled on the e-Procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

Superintending Engineer
P.W.D. Raipur Circle No-1
Raipur (C.G.)

G- 62608/4 Ryp/Dtd 04.08.21

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER IN CHIEF

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, NAVA RAIPUR, ATAL NAGAR

(CENTRAL TENDER CELL) E-Procurement Tender Notice
Main Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>
Tenders are invited for the Following Works:-

S No.	System Tender No. / Date	Name of Work	PAC Amount (Rupees in Lacs)
1	80516 (First Call) 27.07.2021	Construction of Kachandur to Bharda Road Length 3.10 km. i/c Bridge and Culverts at Distt.-Balod. (CGRIDCL)	377.06
2	80569 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Strengthening of Bhainsbod to Bakalitola Road (Length 3.80 km.), i/c. Culverts, Distt. Balod. (CGRIDCL)	518.93
3	80570 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Upgradation & Renewal of Pithora -Bagbahara-Komakhan-Chhura Road, km.32/4 to 40/4(100)= L. 8.00 km., (Actual Length 8.50 km.) i/c. Culverts at Distt. Mahasamund. (CGRIDCL)	2720.42
4	80429 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approaches across Shabari River in km.2/2 on Kerlapal to Batanwada Road. (CGRIDCL)	1781.90
5	80428 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approaches across Basing Bahar Nalla at km. 19/2 & Kundla Nalla at km 23/2 on Narayanpur- Sonpur - Maroda Road. (CGRIDCL)	1274.74
6	80496 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approach Road Across Pawaras Nalla (Sabri Back Water) in km 314 on Sukma-Malkangiri Road. (CGRIDCL)	584.91
7	80430 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approaches Across Medhaki River in km 1/4 on Koyalibeda-Duta Road. (CGRIDCL)	1103.58
8	80431 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approach Road Across Mander Nala in K.M. 1/4 on Lalaguda-Rawatpara-Pujaripara road (CGRIDCL)	607.75
9	80421 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approaches Across Patharri(Jhura) Nalla in km 3/8 on Kariyapahar-Bhainlahari Road (CGRIDCL)	453.07
10	80432 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of Biranpur to Indori Road (3.25 K.M.), Gaurmati to Uraiya Road (2.80 K.M.) and Bodla Mohgaon Pratappur Road (16.00 K.M.) Total Length (22.05 K.M.) Division-Kawardha (Group Tender)(CGRIDCL)	1584.69
11	80582 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of Dantewada -Pharaspal Road To Dholkal Tourism spot at District Dantewada, Length=3.450 km. (CGRIDCL)	301.10
12	80574 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of Mini Stadium at Ranitarai,water supply sanitary fitting i/c Electrification, etc. at Block-Patan.	771.88
13	80707 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approach Road Across Hatkul River in km.2/10 on Kodabhat-Jhunlyapara Mohanpur Road. (CGRIDCL)	754.26
14	80577 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of Hathbandh-silapatti-Ninwa Approach Road L - 7.00 km & i/c. culverts at Distt. Balodabazar (Vidhansabha Dn. Raipur)	975.77
15	80704 (First Call) 28.07.2021	construction of Bypass Geedam Janpad to Bangabadi Road at District Dantewada, Length=10.60 km. (CGRIDCL)	2323.89
16	80708 (First Call) 28.07.2021	Construction of High Level Bridge i/c Approach Road across Malger River in km. 3/4 on chinna-para-Jeerampal Road. (CGRIDCL)	691.07

Last Date of Tender Downloading for Dates are 20.08.2021. For more details on the tender and bidding process please visit the above mentioned portal.

Chief Engineer
(Central Tender Cell)
Office Of Engineer In Chief
P.W.D. Nava Raipur Atal Nagar

G- 62619/5 Ryp/Dtd 04.08.21

Impose curbs during festivals, States told



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Alarmed that upcoming string of festivals might not turn into Covid super spreader events, the Union Health Ministry on Wednesday advised States to impose adequate local curbs to check spread of infection.

The advice comes in the backdrop of rising cases on Wednesday after usual weekend lull.

India's coronavirus cases have again crossed the 40,000-mark with 42,625 fresh infections in the last 24 hours and deaths shooting past the 500-mark in a single day in the last 24 hours.

For the past seven days except on Monday, India has been reporting more than 40,000 cases every day, a cause of concern for the Government fearing third Covid wave anytime soon.

However, more worrying is the fact that the number of people getting cured of the viral infection was lower than the number of new cases, as indi-

cated by the Wednesday data available from the Union Health Ministry.

Another key Covid number – the active cases – also saw a spike of more than 5,000 cases. The morning update provided by the Union Health Ministry stated that, at present, India has 4,10,353 active cases. The government data said India witnessed 36,668 recoveries in the last 24 hours.

A look at the cumulative numbers showed that Kerala witnessed the sharpest surge in the last couple of weeks. There was a nearly 30 per cent increase in weekly numbers even as almost 50 per cent of the country's total daily new Covid cases are registered in the Southern State.

In other Southern states such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Covid numbers have seen a slight uptick. However, India's recovery rate currently stands at 97.37 per cent.

The weekly positivity rate remains below 5 per cent and is currently at 2.36 per cent.

Covid cases again cross 40K-mark

'Covid death count still being carried out'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indicating that the number of Covid-19 deaths could be on the higher side than what has been reported so far, as States are still reconciling mortalities, the Government on Wednesday clarified that while some infections could go undetected, deaths could not be missed given the robust and statute-based death registration system in India.

During the peak of the second wave, the health system across the country was focused on effective clinical management of cases requiring medical help due to which correct reporting and recording of Covid deaths could have been delayed but it was later reconciled by states and UTs, the Union Health Ministry said in a statement

here.

The reconciliation of deaths is still being carried out allaying all speculations of under-reporting and under-counting of deaths due to Covid-19, it said.

States like Maharashtra and Bihar have already reported 'backlog deaths' pushing the number of total Covid death toll in the country. Maharashtra mortality tally rose by 29,920 fatalities in under two months, from 1,25,878 by 11 July in which 23,000 of the cases were "backlog" deaths — in that, they occurred much before the days they were reported on.

Also the Union Health Ministry has written all the districts to report every Covid death.

The daily positivity rate continues to remain below 5 per cent for 55 continuous days and currently stands at 2.31 per cent

Union Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan in a letter to the concerned officials from the States pointed out about various festivals like Muharram, Janmashtami, Ganesh Chaturthi and a few

others slated ahead and said measures should be ensured to curb crowds and that people strictly follow Covid appropriate norms.

The Health Ministry data says that a total of 62,53,741 vaccine doses were administered in the last 24 hrs. With this, a total of 48,52,86,570 vaccine doses has been administered in India so far.

Action sought against Rahul for violating POCSO Act



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Wednesday issued a notice to Twitter India, calling for action against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's handle for violating the POCSO Act by posting pictures of the parents of a 9-year-old girl who was allegedly raped and murdered in southwest Delhi's Nangal.

For its part, the BJP appealed to the NCPCR to take strict action against Rahul under the POCSO Act and issuance of notice to him for revealing the minor and her family's identity.

Rahul, who visited the parents of the minor Dalit girl, posted a photo that showed him comforting the girl's parents. He wrote: "The parents' tears ask for only one thing: their daughter, the country's daughter, deserves justice. And I stand with them in this fight."

"Revealing the identity of the girl by tweeting a photo of her parents (is) in violation of the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act... The NCPCR, taking cognisance of this, has asked Twitter India to issue a notice to Rahul Gandhi and remove the post," the NCPCR, the child rights body, tweeted.

Later, a notice signed by NCPCR chairperson Priyanka Kanoongo stated that Rahul

Gandhi, a former president of the Congress party, violated Section 74 of the Juvenile Justice Act, which prohibits disclosure of the identity of children, and Section 23 of the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act, which lays down procedure for the media to report sexual offences against children.

In its notice addressed to Twitter India's Resident Grievance Officer, the NCPCR said it was acting on a complaint that the photo "reveals the identity of the girl" by showing her parents.

The NCPCR reminded Twitter India that under the Juvenile Justice Act and the POCSO Act it is illegal to disclose the identity of a minor via any form of media, or publish any information or photograph that may, in any way, reveal his/her identity.

Reacting to Rahul's post, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "His (Rahul Gandhi) tweet violates sec 23 of POCSO Act & sec 74 of Juvenile Justice Care & Protection of Children Act that prohibits revealing the minor's identity."

"He revealed identity of child's family and is using the issue for his political agenda. I appeal to the NCPCR to take strict action under the POCSO Act and a notice must be issued to him. No one is a VIP. Rahul Gandhi must be answerable to this," Patra said.

Twitter hasn't shared specific details of policy to tag tweets as manipulated media: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (IT) told Parliament on Wednesday that Twitter has not shared its details of its policy pertaining to labelling of certain messages as 'Manipulated Media'.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology (IT), Rajeev Chandrasekhar said as per Twitter, the labelling of certain messages as 'Manipulated Media' has been done as per their "Synthetic and Manipulated Media Policy". "However, no specific details of how this policy became applicable have been shared. Government has been

engaged with Twitter on this issue," he said.

The minister said that the issue of labelling of user tweets as manipulated media does not come under the purview of above said Rules. Further, on the issue of manipulated media, Meity has pointed out to Twitter that they are violating the principle of natural justice and urged Twitter to be transparent and equitable in applying the criteria," he said.

"On May 26, Twitter was non-compliant of these Rules because it did not appoint key functionaries including Chief Compliance Officer, Nodal Contact Person and the Resident Grievance Officer," the minister said.

ED files chargesheet against naxalites

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ED on Wednesday filed a prosecution complaint (chargesheet under police parlance) against a notorious interstate criminal and also a member of a banned Naxal outfit, Madhav Das, wife Urmila Devi and his brother-in-law Yogendra Das, under money laundering charges.

In the prosecution complaint filed before the Special Judge (PMLA), Patna, the agency pleaded for awarding

punishment to the accused for committing offence of money laundering and confiscation of the attached assets worth Rs 1.01 crore owned by Madhav Das and his family members.

Das has a criminal record of several cases of bank robbery and dacoity in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of 24 FIRs lodged in various police stations of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

CBI takes over Dhanbad judge murder case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday took over the probe into the alleged murder of Additional District Judge, Dhanbad, Uttam Anand from Jharkhand police and despatched a 20-member team of officials of the SIT constituted to investigate the sensational case from the agency headquarters here to Dhanbad. A team of Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) will follow the SIT soon. The agency re-registered the case related to the death of ADJ, Dhanbad, Uttam Anand on the request of Jharkhand Government and further notification from the Centre and took over the probe into the sensitive case earlier registered by the local police vide FIR No.300/2021 at Police Station, Dhanbad.

The Dhanbad police had registered the case on July 28 under Section 302 (murder) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against unknown auto driver.

Samagra Shiksha Scheme to continue till 2026, says Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Playschools in government schools with trained teachers, focus on child safety and vocational and skill-based training from Class 6-12 are some of the key features that the Centre has laid emphasis on keeping in mind the post-Covid education scenario as it approved the continuation of the Samagra Shiksha Scheme (SSS) for school education till March 31, 2026.

The SSS is an integrated scheme for school education. It treats school education as a continuum and is in line with the Sustainable Development Goal for Education.

The revamped scheme favours formalisation of playschools and anganwadi in the school education system. The Government schools too



will have playschools and the teachers will be trained accordingly, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said after the Cabinet nodded the SSS.

As per the scheme, emphasis will be placed on vocational learning. Classes 6-8 will receive its exposure while focus on skills will be placed for students of classes 9-12. Further discussions are being held to formalise coding, augmented and virtual reality, etc. along with more modern skills in schools.

For the first time, the Centre has also added child safety within the SSS. Pradhan said, adding States will be given aid to make a commission for protection of child rights.

Cabinet approves continuation of 1,023 fast track courts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved continuation of 1,023 fast track special courts, including 389 exclusive POCSO courts, as a centrally sponsored scheme for another two years.

Briefing the media, Union Minister Anurag Thakur said out of 31 States and Union Territories, 28 have started the scheme. West Bengal is one of the States which has not started the scheme, he pointed out, adding "We are hopeful they will start it soon."

The scheme would continue from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023 with an outlay of ₹1572.86 crore — ₹971.70 crore as central share and ₹601.16 crore as State share, an official statement said.

The central share is to be funded from 'Nirbhaya' Fund. The scheme was launched on October 2, 2019.

Incidents of rape of minor girls below the age of twelve years and women below the age of sixteen years have shaken the conscience of the entire nation.

Coronavirus-induced lifestyle changes taking toll on health of school kids' eyes

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Covid-19 pandemic-induced lifestyle changes such as significant decrease in outdoor time and increase in screen time is taking a toll on the health of the eyes of school-children. It is causing myopia, also known as near-sightedness or short-sightedness, among children, researchers have cautioned.

Myopia is a condition in which the shape of the eye changes, causing light rays to bend (refract) incorrectly, focusing images in front of, instead of on the surface of, the retina.

Though there has been a rise in cases of Myopia for the past few decades, during Covid-19 crisis the trend has accelerated. Globally, it's projected that by 2050 half of the world's population will be myopic.

In their study published online in the British Journal of Ophthalmology, the researchers have warned eye care professionals, and also policy makers, educators and parents, that collective efforts are needed to prevent the potential public health

crisis among kids as a result of Covid-19.

Though the study was conducted on school students in Hong Kong, the results are applicable on almost all school kids world over, including India where schools and colleges have been shut down for the past one year, in a bid to control the march of coronavirus. Children have been particularly badly affected, with outdoor activities restricted or banned and socialising severely limited.

Like Hong Kong, India too has among the world's most densely populated cities, with most residents living in high-rises and small apartments with little outdoor space.

Some 709 of the children were recruited to the study at the start of the pandemic (December 2019 to January 2020) and were monitored for around 8 months; 1084 children had entered the study before the start of the pandemic and had been monitored for around 3 years.

The children's visual acuity--the ability to see clearly--was measured and they filled

in questionnaires on their lifestyle, including how much time they spent outdoors and on close work, at study entry and during subsequent clinic visits.

Around 1 in 5 (19.5 per cent) of the children in the Covid-19 group developed short-sightedness between January and August 2020, compared with around 1 in 3 (37 per cent) of those in the pre-Covid-19 group over a period of three years.

And after factoring in age, gender, length of monitoring period, parental short-sightedness, and how much time was spent outdoors and on close work, the numbers of new cases of short-sightedness were higher among children in the Covid-19 group.

The estimated 1-year incidence of short-sightedness was 28 per cent, 27 per cent, and 26 per cent, respectively, for 6, 7 and 8 year olds in the Covid-19 group, compared with 17 per cent, 16 per cent, and 15 per cent, respectively, for 6, 7, and 8 year olds in the pre-Covid-19 group, as per the study.

Rlys drops internet plan in trains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways has "dropped" its ambitious project to provide internet connection in trains because it was found not to be cost-effective.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said as a pilot project, Wi-Fi-based internet facility was provided in the Howrah Rajdhani Express train through satellite communication technology.

"This technology was capital intensive with recurring costs in the form of bandwidth charges and thus, was not cost effective. Also, the internet bandwidth availability to passengers was inadequate. Hence, the project was dropped. At present, suitable cost effective technology for provision of Wi-Fi based internet services in trains is not available," he said.

Former railway minister Piyush Goyal had said in 2019 that the Centre is planning to provide WiFi services in trains in the next four to four-and-a-half years.

India, Israel set to take defence ties to new height



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Signifying strong defence and strategic ties between the two countries, IAF Chief R K S Bhaduria on Wednesday reviewed the entire range of bilateral relations with his Israeli counterpart during his ongoing visit to Tel Aviv.

The two countries have forged close defence ties since diplomatic relations were established in the early 1990s. Israel has now emerged as one of the top weapon and technology provider to India.

Giving details about the IAF chief visit, officials said he is in Israel to discuss

enhancement of bilateral exchanges between air forces of the two countries.

"As strategic partners, India and Israel enjoy strong, multi-dimensional ties, an important pillar of which is defence cooperation and military level exchanges," IAF said on Twitter.

Both sides will discuss enhancement in the depth and scope of bilateral exchanges between the two air forces, it mentioned. "Air Chief Mshl RKS Bhaduria #CAS arrived in Israel for an official visit on August 3, on an invitation from Maj Gen Amikam Norkin, Cdr Israel Air Force," it noted.

Sea trials of desi built INS Vikrant starts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major milestone, the sea trials of the first indigenously designed and built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on Wednesday commenced. India has now joined the select group of countries including US, Russia, UK and France having the expertise to design and build the highly complex aircraft carriers.

Once it passes the sea trials, INS Vikrant is likely to be inducted into the Navy by the end of next year. The Navy on Wednesday described it as a "proud and historic day" and said India has joined a select group of countries having niche capability in this field of ship-building.

INS Vikrant is the largest and most complex warship to be built within the country. The 40,000-tonne aircraft carrier set off on its maiden sea trials, 50



years after its namesake played a major role in the 1971 war. It was built at a cost of more than Rs 23,000 crores by the public sector Cochin Shipyard.

Once the extensive sea trials are over, the aircraft carrier will be put through the stringent aviation trials before induction into service.

"It is a proud and historic day for India as the reincarnated Vikrant (IAC) sails for her maiden sea trials today in the 50th year of her illustrious predecessor's key role in the victory in the 1971 war," Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek

Madhwal said.

The aircraft carrier is around 262 metres long and 62 metres wide. In June, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the construction of the aircraft carrier that will be able to accommodate up to 30 fighter jets and helicopters.

The warship will have a fleet of Mig-29K fighter jets and Ka-31 helicopters.

There are 14 decks in all, including five in the superstructure. The ship has over 2,300 compartments, designed for a crew of around 1,700 people, including specialised cabins to accommodate women officers.

BJP received ₹785.77 cr donations in 2019-20

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Being the ruling party, the BJP continued to bag the lion's share of donations in 2019-20. It received over ₹785.77 crore in donations above ₹20,000 from 5576 donations including electoral trusts, individuals and corporate. The opposition Congress was far behind with ₹139.016 crore from 350 donations. The amount

received by the BJP is five times more than what Congress got during the same period and more than three times the aggregate of ₹228.035 crore declared by the INC, NCP, CPI, CPM and AITC.

Interestingly, BJP declared a donation of Rs 4.80 lakhs from Amravati Municipal Corporation. No details of address, bank name, PAN etc. have been

provided by the party against this donation, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a non-government organization that released the data, said.

"A casual search on the internet shows that the aforesaid donor is a Government of Maharashtra local body. It raises questions on the legality of the contribution made by a municipal cor-

poration which is a governing body (whose Mayor and deputy Mayor are from BJP) to a political party," the ADR said. The report, prepared by the ADR focuses on donations received by the national political parties, above Rs 20,000, during the financial year 2019-20, as submitted by the parties to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

LS proceedings adjourned 5 times on Wed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned five times on Wednesday after the passage of two bills without any debate, amid protests by the opposition over Pegasus snooping allegations and other issues. As soon as the House met again at 3:30 pm, Rajendra Agrawal, who was chairing the proceedings, took up the Coconut Development Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which was moved by Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh

Tomar. However, the opposition members continued their protest on the Pegasus snooping row as well other matters.

Amid the din, Tomar moved the bill, saying the proposed legislation will benefit coconut farmers in different states.

Soon thereafter, the bill was passed without debate even as the opposition objected to the hasty approval to the bill. The bill has already been approved by the Rajya Sabha. As the opposition uproar continued, Agrawal adjourned the



proceedings for the day.

Earlier in the day, the House had given its nod to the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region

and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021.

The Bill was moved by Environment Minister Bhubender Yadav for consideration and passage.

Mamata speaks to Modi about Bengal floods

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With already three lakh people having been displaced due to floods and weather office forecasting more rains in the coming days Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday accused the central agencies for creating man-made flood in her State and wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking respite from the present situation.

The Chief Minister who also had a telephonic talk with the Prime Minister earlier on the day and told him how faulty maintenance and erroneous decisions taken by the centrally controlled Damodar Valley Corporation had left flooded large parts of southern Bengal.

Besides Banerjee lodging a verbal complaint with the Prime Minister she also wrote a letter to him about what she called "grave man-made flood situation" in South Bengal districts adding how the DVC authorities had released "unprecedented" volume of water from its dams at Panchet, Maithon and Tenughat.

While sources said that the DVC had released 5.98 lakh cusec of water in last four-five days Banerjee on Wednesday told newsmen that "the DVC had announced leaving of 54,000 cusecs of water ... but they



have released 2 lakh cusecs of water without informing us... every year we have to face this problem for no fault of ours and lakhs of our people get affected and thousands of hectares of land get inundated causing losses worth crores."

In her letter to the Prime Minister she wrote "The entire flood protection system managed through different dams including state barrages both on West Bengal and Jharkhand side are very old. Due to years of siltation and lack of proper maintenance the water holding capacity has reduced."

She said "we have been complaining against this practice for years but nothing has been done as a result of which the State is suffering." A tweet from the Prime Minister's office later

said that he had assured of all support to Bengal. Banerjee had called up Modi after conducting a survey of the flood-hit areas.

She visited the worst-hit areas in Amta and Udairainpur in Howrah district. At least 15 people have died, and around three lakh displaced after heavy rain lashed parts of south Bengal.

Meanwhile rejecting the Chief Minister's allegations that arbitrary decision of the DVC was responsible for the Bengal floods the Corporation authorities said that "Blaming DVC for flood is unjustified as the DVC only implements the decision of the committee on water regulations. State government's consent is taken before the discharge of water and DVC issues warning to district administrations."

BJP creating atmosphere of terror among Brahmins in UP: Satish Chandra Mishra

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

BJP national general secretary and MP Satish Chandra Mishra has said that BJP is creating an atmosphere of panic in the State. There is constant oppression of Brahmins and Dalits. Many Brahmins have been murdered in the last four and a half years. This society is constantly being targeted. He was addressing an enlightened class seminar at Habib Garden, Maris Road Aligarh. He also targeted SP along with BJP on the issues of Shri Ram temple donation, unemployment, crime, development. Satish Mishra has been holding an enlightened conference across the State since July 23, the first phase of which has started from Ayodhya and the second from Banke Bihari. Under the second phase, he came to Aligarh from Agra. From here he left for Bareilly.

Satish Mishra said that the purpose of this seminar is to remind the enlightened society that it should not be afraid, but should compete. He said that the BSP is with Brahmins in this contest like it was in 2007. The question asked, why has the condition of Brahmins in Uttar Pradesh become worse today. First BJP harassed the people of Dalit society. There have been many incidents of burning, raping daughters. In Hathras case, the body of the daughter was



not even given to the parents.

He said that not only in Uttar Pradesh, but wherever BJP is in power, the situation is same. After his government came to power in Uttar Pradesh, the Brahmin community is being targeted. Five youths were burnt in Pratapgarh, who were later declared criminals.

Similar tales happened in Rae Bareilly, Bundelkhand, Jhansi. Encounters of many people were done like this, while the Supreme Court has called the encounter wrong. In Ballia, criminals were saved openly under the patronage of the MLA. A boy working in Apple company was shot dead in Kanpur. A young Brahmin boy was killed in Lucknow. There were three such cases in the capital. In Kanpur, a report has been filed against dozens of Brahmins in the guise of a person. Strong Brahmins are being harassed. There are hundreds of tales to count. He narrated the story of Khushi Dubey, a sixteen-and-a-half-year-old girl

from Kanpur. National General Secretary said that the thinking of BJP is not different from SP for Brahmins. Neeraj Mishra was assassinated in Kannauj during the SP regime.

He reminded that Brahmins constitute 13 per cent of the population in the state. There are more than three crore Brahmins. Now the time has come that Brahmins are not divided. If the votes of other societies are mixed with that of Brahmins and Dalits, then the number reaches 45 to 50 per cent. In such a situation, the Brahmin community can repeat the situation of 2007. They will have full respect if BSP government is formed. In 2007, there were 15 MLC Brahmins in the BSP government, the Legislative Council president was also from this class. 35 others had the status of Ministers of State. Five thousand public prosecutors belonged to this community, whose honorarium was increased ten-fold. He has been kept as the leader in the Lok Sabha till date.

Satish Mishra, while attacking the law and order, said that according to the National Crime Records Bureau, a woman is being raped every two hours in the state. Regarding development, he said that no government has done more work than BSP. Bank on the banks of river Sarayu in Ayodhya, bank on the banks of Ganga in Banaras, sewerage system at Allahabad.

Kerala relaxes lockdown rules despite high rate of new Covid cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala logged 22,414 new cases of Covid-19 on Wednesday while 108 patients succumbed to the pandemic during the last 24 hours. Though the average Test Positivity Rate continued to be slightly higher at 11.37 per cent, the State Government decided late on Tuesday to do away with the total lockdowns slapped during the weekends.

Veena George, Minister of Health, the frontline leader of the fight against the pandemic, told the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday that shops and commercial establishments of all places barring regions with high TPR would be allowed to function from 7 am to 9 pm. "We have decided to continue with the lock down on Sundays. The gathering for all functions would be limited to 20 persons. Restrictions would be enforced in places based on the number of cases tested positive for every 1,000 persons," said George.

The minister also said that places of worship which could accommodate larges gathering would be allowed to admit not more than 40 persons.

The department of health tested 1.97 lakh samples on



Wednesday. Malappuram remained the epicentre of the pandemic with 3691 new patients and was closely followed by Thrissur (2,912).

The death toll in Kerala due to the pandemic touched 17, 211 on Wednesday. There are more than 1.76 lakh Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the State.

Physicians in Government Hospitals in Kerala are of the view that the correct numbers were not being released by the Health Department as details of the kind of tests done on samples are being kept as a secret.

"While Tamil Nadu Government discloses the daily count of RT-PCR tests done on the samples, the information provided by the Government of Kerala is not clear about the kind of tests," said the Government doctors who spoke on condition of anonymity.

JD-U MP claims his phone was tapped in past

Patna: A day after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar demanded investigation in the Pegasus snooping case, a JD-U MP on Tuesday alleged that his phone was also tapped in the past.

Kaushalendra Kumar, who represents Nalanda, said that many leaders and Ministers of the NDA Government are claiming that their phones were being tapped.

"It is the need of the hour to investigate the Pegasus phone tapping case thoroughly. Our Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has also advocated the same and he is absolutely spot on," he said.

However, clarifying that they were "not opposing the NDA or the Narendra Modi Government, he said: "The investigations in this extremely sensitive espionage case will eventually help the NDA Government in future."

"The phones of many Union Ministers were tapped during the Pegasus incident. Clarity will come only after investigations of the cases," he added.

The MP's statement makes it seems that the JD-U wants to raise the issue in a bid to corner its alliance partner BJP.

Contacted for a reaction, Deputy Chief minister Tar Kishore Prasad declined to comment, saying that the Pegasus issue is related to the Centre and hence, he would not speak on it.

Mumbai gets first genome sequencing lab

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As part of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)'s ongoing fight against the Covid-19, the first-ever next-generation genome sequencing laboratory in Mumbai was commissioned at the TN Medical College & BYL Nair Charitable Hospital here on Wednesday.

The new laboratory, set up at one of the premier medical institutes in the city in the run up to its centenary that falls on September 4, will enable the BMC to identify variants of Sars-Cov-2 that causes Covid-19.

The new facility can analyse a large number of samples in a short period and also identify mutants, something that will be especially useful in hotspot areas and congested cities.

The next-generation genome sequencing (NGS) is a method of characterisation of pathogens. This technology is used to determine the order of nucleotides in entire genomes or targeted regions of RNA or DNA, which helps in understanding differences between two strains of the virus, thereby identifying mutants. The specialty of NGS is that a large number of samples can be processed in a short period at high speed.

Every batch for testing will comprise 384 samples and



results will be declared in four days

Inaugurating the laboratory, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said that the facility would go a long way in combating the Covid-19.

"We are currently fighting a war with a hidden enemy like the Coronavirus. The new genome sequencing laboratory will enable detection and treatment of the Covid-19 virus or its incarnations, and even other contagious diseases speedily," the chief minister said.

The chief minister said that it was very critical to have a virus testing lab in Mumbai to avoid delays in getting the test report which often led to fatalities in the past.

Uddhav said that Nair Hospital, which was set up 100 years ago during the Spanish flu pandemic, was preparing to

cater to the health of citizens for another century which is commendable.

Nair Hospital Dean Dr. Ramesh Bharmal said that the genome sequencing laboratory could handle 1,000-cases simultaneously and provide the results within the next few hours.

The entire cost of the equipment and the operating expenses have been raised through donations by a US company, ATE Chandra Foundation and the TM Nair Medical College Global Alumni Association.

Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar, Municipal Commissioner I. S. Chahal, Public Health Committee Chairperson Rajul Patel, Dr. Shashank Joshi and Dr. Sanjay Oak were among those present at the inaugural function.

T'gana HC surprised over ₹60 cr sanctioned to fight contempt cases

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court on Wednesday expressed surprise over the State Government sanctioning ₹60 crore to fight contempt of Court cases pending against State bureaucrats including Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar.

Passing interim orders, a division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice Vijayen Reddy directed the State Government not to

release the money.

The court was hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by a lecturer against the government's financial assistance to meet the legal expenses to fight contempt cases filed predominantly against Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA), a post held by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar.

The court questioned how the government would spend

the taxpayers' money. It wanted to know what are the treasury norms and if they allow this financial assistance.

The High Court served notices to secretaries of finance and revenue departments, directors of treasury, CCLA and to Somesh Kumar in his personal capacity.

The court adjourned the hearing till October 27.

The chief secretary had on June 7 issued a Government

Order (GO) sanctioning Rs 58,95,63,000 towards contempt cases pending in the High Court.

More than 250 contempt cases are reportedly pending against the bureaucrats.

The PIL has come up for hearing close on the heels of the High Court taking serious view of willful disobedience by bureaucrats. In some cases, court imposed fine on district collectors and sentenced few others to imprisonment. IANS

TN Govt to again come out with law banning online gaming

IAN S ■ CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Government will again come out with a proper law banning online games like rummy, said Law Minister S. Regupathy.

In a statement issued here, Reghupathy said public interest is important, by following due procedures and specifying valid reasons, the Government will again come out with a law banning online games like rummy.

The Madras High Court on Tuesday struck down the law brought in by the previous AIADMK Government banning online gaming in the state. The law also provided for fine and jail term for the violators.

Finding youngsters getting cheated and committing suicide and to protect the innocent citizens, the AIADMK government brought the law by amending the Tamil Nadu Gaming Act, 1930 (Tamil Nadu Act III of 1930), Chennai City Police Act, 1888 (Tamil Nadu Act III of 1988) and Tamil Nadu District Police Act, 1859 (Tamil Nadu Act XXIV of 1859).

According to Reghupathy, the court had said the government did not specify the reasons for banning the online gaming when the law was made.

PMK founder S. Ramadoss urged the Tamil Nadu govern-

ment to come out with a law by rectifying the defects.

He said thousands of families in Tamil Nadu were happy when the online gaming was banned last year while the Madras High Court order on Tuesday is disappointing.

With attractive advertisements the online gaming companies lure the youth and then push them into debt trap. Ramadoss said about 25 youth committed suicide during the last couple of years as they were unable to pay back their debts incurred to play the online games.

He said the previous Tamil Nadu government had first brought an ordinance banning the online gaming last November and later made it into a proper law this February.

As a matter of fact, it was the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court in July last year that had suggested to the state government to enact suitable laws to regulate the online gaming industry.

Quashing the first information report (FIR) filed by the Kudankulam police against a school teacher who had watched a game of rummy played in a farm, the court expressed its concern at the unregulated growth of online gaming industry.

Citing the laws against lottery and charging of usurious interest enacted by the Tamil Nadu government the High Court hoped that the state

government shall take note of the present alarming situation and pass suitable legislation to regulate and control online gaming through license, keeping in mind the law of the land as well as the judicial precedents in this regard.

"This Court is not against the virtual games, but, the anguish of this Court is that there should be a regulatory body to monitor and regulate the legal gaming activities, be it in the real world or the virtual world," the court had said.

The court also said the government take the views of the stakeholders before passing a legislation in this regard.

The court also explained the modus operandi of online games.

"If X and Y want to play a game, both of them have to bet a sum of Rs 10/- (Say). The winner will get the amount that he put in place, ie, Rs 10/- and in addition to that, he will get an additional sum, say 75 per cent that was put in place by the opponent, being the prize amount. The balance, ie., 25 per cent, will be credited to the account of the particular online gaming site. The loser will lose everything," the court said.

"If a group of persons (say 10) wants to play a game, each one of them have to bet a sum of Rs 10/- (say). At the end of the game, the winner will get his amount as well as 100 per cent of his bet amount, being the prize money.

Stop Lankan Navy from firing on TN fishermen, Stalin urges Jaishankar

IAN S ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has urged External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan Government not to attack Indian fishermen in the sea.

Citing the firing by Sri Lankan Navy on fishermen at Kodiyaikkarai, Stalin, in a letter to Jaishankar, said that a permanent solution must be arrived at as the attacks are affecting the livelihood of thousands of Indian fishermen.

While Indian fishermen were fishing from a registered boat near Kodiyaikkarai on August 1, the Sri Lankan Navy opened fire, injuring Kalaiselvan in his head. He was being treated at Nagapattinam government hospital while nine other fishermen in the boat escaped miraculously, he said.

"Unleashing violence on our fishermen without following international laws and practices is condemnable," Stalin said, noting India cannot remain a mute spectator to this outrage by the Sri Lankan Navy and that solution has to be found out immediately.

He said that the attack has caused great unrest among the people living in the coastal areas of the country and called upon the government to act immediately to protect the lives and equipment of Indian fishermen.

Priyanka attacks Yogi over poor law and order

Congress to launch 'Kisney Bigada UP' stir on Aug 9

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday attacked the Yogi Adityanath Government over the killing of an Ayurvedic doctor in Sitapur, saying the security of the common man was in a poor State and the Uttar Pradesh Government was not doing anything except indulging in false propaganda.

"In Sitapur, UP, a doctor was hacked to death by criminals who stormed his clinic," she said. "Such incidents are creating fear in the minds of the people of the State. The security system for the common people is in such a poor State and the Government is not doing anything except indulging in false propaganda," the Congress general secretary



said in a tweet in Hindi.

It may be mentioned that a doctor in Sitapur district was hacked to death in broad daylight by a person over an alleged property related dispute. The incident occurred in Mudrasan village in Hargaoon police station area on Tuesday. The victim, Munendra Pratap Verma, was examining a patient at his clinic in Mudrasan when a man entered with a sharp-edged sword and started attacking him.

According to the police, the attacker, Achchey Lal Verma, first chopped off the doctor's hand and then inflicted several wounds on his head and neck. The doctor somehow

opened the door of his clinic and called for help. By the time people reached the spot, the doctor had died due to excessive loss of blood. The incident took place in spite of the doctor's clinic being near a police picket. The police have arrested accused Achchey Lal Verma.

Superintendent of Police RP Singh said prima facie it appears that some issues over money to be transferred in a land deal was the reason for the murder.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Congress under the leadership of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has now decided to go offensive against the Yogi Adityanath government in their run-up to the assembly polls early next year.

The party has worked out a campaign theme for UP polls. Desperate to reclaim the lost ground, the Congress prepares to break the calm. To the Bharatiya Janata Party's claim of 'Sushashan and Vikas' in UP, Congress plans a mega campaign titled 'Kisney Bigada Uttar Pradesh (Who destroyed UP).

TRAFFIC, WWF India create awareness about 16 species of owls

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a conservation awareness initiative, TRAFFIC and WWF-India have identified 16 species of owls that are commonly trafficked in the illegal wildlife trade in India.

As part of an effort to create awareness about the owl species and help with their identification, TRAFFIC and WWF-India have come out an informative poster 'Imperilled by illegal wildlife trade: Owls of India', which is freely available to download.

Of the approximately 250 owl species found worldwide about 36 are found in India. All owl species in India are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, making poaching, trade, or any other form of exploitation a punishable offence. They are also listed in Appendix II of CITES, thus tightly regulating their international trade.

Despite the legal restrictions, every year, hundreds of birds are sacrificed for mystic rituals and practices linked with superstition, totems, and taboos.

Akhilesh's cycle yatra today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, after a long gap, will ride a bicycle in the State Capital on Thursday, to pay tribute to socialist leader late Janeshwar Mishra, on his 89th birth anniversary.

The SP president has said the cycle yatra will also be a protest against the anti-people policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party Government.

More than 2,000 youths will ride bicycles on the streets of the State Capital along with Akhilesh Yadav with the flags of

Samajwadi Party for over 6.5 kilometres.

Similar cycle yatras will also be held in all the tehsils.

Akhilesh Yadav has called upon the party workers to make the cycle yatra a success, saying that the BJP government in UP is about to complete its five years, but in this entire period, there has been no development but only destruction everywhere. He said that the BJP government had razed democracy by misusing time and resources.

Yadav said that BJP had inflicted a huge damage to the dignity of politics. He alleged

that with the help of lies and hypocrisy, the BJP had spread ideological pollution and the BJP government was working only to mislead the people to hide its failures.

The SP chief said that his party had decided to fight against injustice through cycle yatra. He said the purpose of cycle yatra was also to protest against keeping Mohammad Azam Khan in jail by implicating him in fake cases, crime and corruption reaching the peak in UP, galloping inflation, three anti-farmer agricultural laws, youth suffering from unem-

ployment, women oppression, danger to democracy due to rigging in the panchayat polls and the COVID-19 deaths due to the collapsed health system.

Meanwhile, Yadav will leave the party office at 10 am on Thursday on his bicycle, to be flagged off by his wife and former MP Dimple Yadav. The Samajwadi Cycle Yatra will reach Janeshwar Mishra Park after covering a distance of 6.5 kilometres via Loreto Square, Kalidas Chauraha, Jiamau, 1090 Chauraha, Jaiprakash Narayan International Centre, CMS Chauraha and Dayal Square.

The right way?

Kerala is reporting quite a high number of COVID cases but the reasons are genuine

For a couple of months now, the focus of pandemic watchers was on Kerala and the State has consistently reported the highest share of nationwide, fresh COVID-19 cases. Even on Tuesday, the State's numbers went past 23,500, the highest single-day count recorded by any State in the last eight weeks and grabbing a 56 per cent share in the national figure. The current test positivity rate in the State stands at 11.8 per cent. However, when it comes to the more alarming issue of the R-number — it indicates how many persons one COVID-19 patient can infect — Kerala has company. Eight States and Union Territories returned the reproduction — number of 1.2, meaning that one patient is infecting more than one person. Nine other States have an R-number of 1. The greater the ability to infect fresh persons, the greater is the transmissibility of the virus. The number of cases does not give the real picture. The R-number does that job. The more dangerous the variant, like the Delta Plus variant, the faster the transmissibility. Contract tracing will show the speed of transmission. The combination of testing and contact tracing alone can show if the case trajectory is reaching a problematic level in a region in the country. It is high time the Government accords testing and contact tracing as much primacy as vaccination. The jabs, it must be noted, do not necessarily stop new infections but only mellows their intensity.

Unfortunately, except Kerala, no other State or Union Territory is doing extensive testing and neither the national COVID task force nor the Union Health Ministry has insisted on it as yet. It is in this context that the Kerala example should be emulated by the rest of India. The latest sero survey has recorded low seropositivity of 44 per cent for Kerala as against the national average of 68 per cent. That means the majority of the State's population has remained protected from the virus. Considering that a majority of Kerala's population is urban, the achievement is all the more impressive. Secondly, the State conducts the most COVID-19 tests daily, the figure hovering around 1.4 lakh. A record 1.96 lakh tests were conducted on July 28. The State Government concentrates the testing in localities with high positivity. As a result, there is a high incidence of positive cases. In the absence of heavy testing, it cannot be said that other States reporting fewer fresh cases are safer. Thirdly, reports suggest the Delta variant entered Kerala later than the rest of India and that could explain the current surge in cases. Kerala has also managed to keep the fatality rate far lower than the national average despite the high number of daily cases. As of Tuesday, 39.9 per cent of the State's population is vaccinated. The Kerala model will be complete if the R-number is brought down, contract tracing is increased and localised lockdowns are brought back into force.

PICTALK



People flout social distancing norms at a weekly market, in Mumbai

PTI

The middle path

The Govt and the Opposition would do well to sit together and thrash out their differences

The continued disruption of Parliament is not unexpected. The scale and implications of the Pegasus snooping scandal are so overwhelming that it would have been naive to hope that the Opposition will not use it as a handle to corner the Government. The relations between the Opposition and the ruling BJP have steadily worsened over the alleged misuse of Central probe agencies. The last nail has been the fact that several Opposition leaders are on the list of those whose phones may have been compromised by Pegasus infections. Still, one would have expected that the two sides would find a middle path and Parliament will dutifully take up its legislative business. But sadly, neither side is ready to blink and the country has to witness yet another round of Parliament logjam, the type of which has become routine over the years. From the Opposition's point of view, the demand for a debate on the scandal is justified. After all, Parliament is the right forum where such an issue that poses a grave threat to India's

democracy, should be discussed and debated even if the Government were to altogether reject the demand for a probe into the matter.

However, the Government feels that it owes no such favour to the Opposition because it allegedly wants to use the scandal as an opportunity to unite with an eye on the upcoming Assembly polls and presidential elections next year, and the Lok Sabha polls in 2024. Amid such distrust, it will be futile to hope for resumption of Parliament proceedings any sooner, though strategically the Opposition may agree to debate on issues like inflation, fuel price hike and the economic situation — issues that could help it corner the Government. The Pegasus scandal has become a glue to unite the Opposition and those wanting to uproot the Modi Government are working overtime to bring the Opposition on one platform. The unprecedented Opposition unity has emboldened them to stick to the path of confrontation, something which the Government can afford only at the cost of making people further sceptical about the very purpose of the existence of our democratic institutions. It's time both the ruling dispensation and the Opposition leaders sit down and find a middle path to restore the dignity and relevance of the legislature as one of the strongest pillars of our democratic institutions.

India tells Pak to vacate all its areas

Pakistan has coercively been occupying areas in Gilgit-Baltistan that belong to India since the princely State's accession to India in 1947

India has rejected the "cosmetic exercise" of the recent elections in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Traditionally, the ruling party in Pakistan wins elections in PoK and the incumbent ruling party, Tehreek-e-Insaaf, won these elections. India lodged a strong protest with Pakistan last week, saying that such exercises can neither hide illegal occupation of the areas of the then princely State of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan, comprising about 35 per cent of its total area, nor the grave human rights violations, exploitation and denial of freedom to people in these occupied areas. India has called on Pakistan to vacate all the Indian areas under its illegal occupation since 1947, on which it has no *locus standi*. By virtue of accession of the ruler of the then princely State Maharaja Hari Singh to India in 1947, sovereignty of the whole erstwhile State lies wholly and solely with India.

The time appears to have come for Pakistan to introspect deeply and reflect on its illegal actions in these illegally occupied parts of now Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh. Steeped in abject poverty and backwardness, this illegally occupied area is still considered to be the most neglected area in South Asia. Despite violent protests by people at every stage, Pakistan has illegally, forcefully and through underhand means changed frontiers and composition of these areas beyond recognition. After illegally occupying the areas following an aggression on the then princely State, Pakistan established an administrative structure in the occupied area named as Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government. Even though with a nominal legislature, the Government there continues to be under strict control of Pakistan Government.

During the late 1970s, Pakistan started to take steps to bifurcate the subsequently extended occupied area in two parts, one it had already named as Azad J&K and the other as Northern Areas, comprising Gilgit-Baltistan, which it had deemed to be a separate geographical entity to be administered federally by Pakistan. The Northern Areas is mostly inhabited by Shia Muslims and Pakistan also initiated steps for demo-



graphic change in the area. This resulted in violent protests by the people. Even the so-called Azad J&K Government protested tooth and nail this bifurcation and also instituted a suit in its court. But so great was Pakistan's urge to keep the fruits of aggression and to extend the borders of Pakistan illegally that it ignored all opposition and continued to resort to illegal means, including torture, to make it a federally administered area with nomenclature as Northern Areas.

Earlier too, in utter disregard for law and territorial integrity and sovereignty of India, Pakistan had ceded Shakasgam track territory in this illegally occupied Northern areas to China when Sino-Pak Frontier agreement was signed in 1963. It has also since annexed Chitral, Hunza and Nagar and other territories in or around Northern Areas including Puniyal, Ishkoman and Yasin which formed a part of the then princely State or were under its suzerainty at the time of its accession to India.

Pakistan again changed the status of Northern Areas on May 21, 2018, when it promulgated the Gilgit-Baltistan Order replacing its earlier 'empowerment and self-government' order of 2009. Under the new order, all powers exercised by Gilgit-Baltistan Council were



AFTER ILLEGALLY OCCUPYING THE AREAS FOLLOWING AN AGGRESSION ON THE THEN PRINCELY STATE, PAKISTAN ESTABLISHED AN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE OCCUPIED AREA. WITH A NOMINAL LEGISLATURE, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BE UNDER THE PAK GOVERNMENT'S CONTROL

given to the Assembly. But the Council was retained as advisory body for federal functions with regard to the Northern Areas. Thus legislative powers on key subjects are vested in the Prime Minister of Pakistan and not in the elected Assembly.

There were protests against this order not only in the area, but at many places in Pakistan. This reform package was seen as a precursor to attempts by Pakistan to make this area as its fifth province as also to change its demographic composition.

This perception was confirmed when last year Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan announced that the territory will be given provisional provincial status. Again in violation of international law and sovereignty of India and amid strong protests by people in PoK, Pakistan permitted China to run the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project which passes through this Gilgit-Baltistan territory. Even the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific in its report in May 2017 stated that the CPEC project could create geo-political tensions with India and lead to further instability in the region. Though reportedly prepared at the request of the Chinese Government, the report also pointed out concerns about its social and environmental safeguards. Provision

of provisional provincial status to Northern Areas by Pakistan appears to be an attempt to lend legal cover to the much-criticised CPEC project which runs through Gilgit-Baltistan, an Indian territory.

India has already strongly protested against this yet another severe illegality of Pakistan. Last week, the Indian MEA rejected a reference to CPEC in a recent Pakistan-China joint statement. It said that the CPEC lies in Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan and that India resolutely opposes it. With regard to reference to J&K in the joint statement, the MEA spokesperson said that the UTs of J&K and Ladakh are an integral and inalienable part of India.

Obviously, if Pakistan still chooses to continue with its illegal actions and material changes in J&K and Ladakh under its illegal occupation, that will mean continued violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. This will lead to more instability in the region. For overall development, India desires peace with Pakistan, but Pakistan's action could lead to one more war over Jammu and Kashmir which could be far more dangerous.

(The writer is a journalist, former IIS officer and producer. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

The flood is manmade, the unprecedented release of water from the Damodar Valley Corporation dams is responsible for the situation.

West Bengal Chief Minister
— Mamata Banerjee

We've other options if US President Joe Biden continues to ignore the country's leadership.

Pakistan National Security Adviser
— Moeed Yusuf

You don't sleep the entire night and then record this early in the morning. And you don't get sleep coz it's Kishore da's birthday.

Actor
— Ayushmaan Khurrana

It will not stop with this. There will be many more successes going forward. Definitely, I will play in Paris.

Indian shuttler
— PV Sindhu

There are only 34 Cabinet berths. Some (MLAs) have been left out. Whenever there is an opportunity, the party will give them responsibilities.

Karnataka Chief Minister
— Basavaraj Bommai

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIAN WOMEN MAKE US PROUD

Sir — The brilliant performance put up by Indian women athletes sets them apart at the Tokyo Olympics. Although India's total medal tally is modest, the contributions of women athletes is commendable. The silver by Saikhom Mirabai Chanu in weightlifting, a bronze by badminton star PV Sindhu, a bronze by Lovlina Borgohain in boxing and the women's hockey team's spectacular performance which enabled them to enter the semifinals, all these show that women athletes of India have a bright future in international sports events.

When we think about the social discrimination and gender inequality that women face in India, theirs is indeed great achievement. It must be understood that of the 15 Olympic medals that India has won since 2000, women have won seven. Considering that India ranks 112 out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, women's achievement is so great. Given the fact that women in general and professional women in particular face gender discrimination and prejudice in India, their achievement is tremendous when compared with that of men. Indian women's achievement at the Tokyo Olympics is certainly an inspiration for prospective women athletes in the country and for women in general who want to prove their expertise in different fields.

Venu GS | Kollam

CREATE JOBS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Sir — Candidates at job interviews after the lockdown will have an additional challenge at hand. It could be a fresher graduating out of a college or people at different stages of their career seeking a job either for better prospects or as a fall-out of unfortunate job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first challenge is that there may be fewer jobs for them to grab. Too many candidates may be chasing too few jobs. How does a candidate stand apart in such a situation? Apart from evaluating candidates for their fitness for the job, the companies

Slum children need special care



A holistic approach is to be taken in case of street children and there must be a concrete scheme for the uplift of children as help will not come from heaven as in *Slumdog Millionaire*. We want to protect the children from COVID-19 but what is the use if they die of hunger instead unless timely help is not given. The family cannot even apply for a ration card as they do not have any residence proof or any identity documents. The Government has plenty of schemes for slum redevelopment, but most of these are on paper. Importantly, sanitation is not on the agenda. Clean atmosphere and

are going to evaluate them on how they coped with the uncertainties posed by the pandemic. In one way, this is actually a great opportunity for both candidates and companies. Companies will look for in the candidates the ability to adapt to uncertain conditions. Candidates can stand apart from others if they prove that they can think and act differently in such uncertainties. Facing pay cuts, job losses and rising costs, many people grit their teeth and made the most of an extremely rough year. This, then, is as good as it gets. It is time to create more jobs opportunities.

MR Jayanthi | Mumbai

PUNISH THE SAVAGES OF DELHI

Sir — Shocked to know that a Dalit girl was sexually assaulted and murdered in Delhi and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Government will order a magisterial inquiry instead of an CBI investigation. The Chief Minister announced a compen-

civic amenities can make them healthy children.

The way things are, there is no collective vision; no rules either. Nearly 60 per cent live in slums in most of the metro cities, but a good chunk of the municipal corporation's agenda is devoted to gardens, roads, parking and so on; the slums don't feature. In our lopsided system of political representation, slum dwellers have been relegated to a vote bank. They are patronised, and encouraged to live in deprivation. Poor sanitation and environment, contaminated drinking water and crowded conditions all make the matter worse. Everyone is talking about Swachh Bharat, but how many toilets have been constructed in slums under this project? The politicians always look at how many votes they can garner in an area. They don't look at problems like housing or their poor living environment. Even yearly allotment of funds to MPs or MLAs can help out the cause of slum children in the best way possible.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

sation of ₹10 lakh for the girl's family. But the girl cannot come back. The fact of the matter is that there is a need to strengthen law and order in Delhi and the Union Government must take firm steps in this direction.

The Delhi Government must appoint top-notch lawyers to ensure that the guilty are punished. The victim's parents, accompanied by hundreds of locals, staged a protest near the site of the incident in Old Nangal area, southwest Delhi. The police, based on the statement of the victim's mother, added rape charges to the FIR. Four people, including the priest of a nearby crematorium, have been arrested. It is high time all the four accused must be severely punished in the shortest period of time and their trial must be in a fast-track court.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN AN INNOVATIVE INSTITUTION

SWIFT bridges financial inequalities by offering financial services to the underprivileged



GOBHANU SASANKAR **KORISEPATI**

An Indian student has developed an innovative microfinance concept for women, inspired by Bangladesh's Grameen Bank — the world's largest microfinance institution — which made banking more accessible to the poor. SWIFT- Sustaining Women in Financial Turmoil — was formed in September 2020, when its founder, Gobhanu Korisepati, launched a microfinance social business platform. He spent over three months in an internship with Grameen Bank to learn the logistics. SWIFT was founded to bridge financial inequalities in India by making financial services accessible to the underprivileged. The need was felt because he witnessed the complexities accompanying traditional loans such as mandatory collateral and proof of income firsthand and found that financial services tend to discriminate against the poor directly. The institution is based on an adapted version of micro-finance that best targets women who lack access to financial services. It brings women financial stability and human dignity by



providing them micro-loans to start their entrepreneurial adventures. A loan can change the life of any individual, especially for a woman coming from an underprivileged background. To date, SWIFT has loaned to over 1000 women, working with a focus on sectors such as agriculture, clothing, and food services. The largest loan SWIFT has lent individually is worth ₹20,000. The borrower is a young woman, Magali, and the loan helped her buy wholesale fabric, thread, elastic, yarn, and maintain her sewing machine. The loan was unique as it was aimed at reaching vulnerable populations in an isolated region. SWIFT's many loans are targeted to help the women who need it the most, and they have been successful in lending over ₹19 lakh so far. Another borrower from SWIFT is Meela, a rural farmer who aspired to be an entrepreneur, and the loan provided the perfect opportunity to do so. Meela has a family of three and a monthly household income under the poverty line. By providing her a loan, SWIFT helped her buy seeds and fertilizers to increase agricultural production. SWIFT currently selects the needy based on criteria that are constantly being adapted to fit the best interests of Indian women.

The criteria currently considered are based on the community impact a loan would have: how many people the loan can positively affect and risk evaluation factors, loan duration, and repayment schedule. It is important to note that SWIFT does not charge any interest on the loans as its goal is only to better the livelihoods of the borrowers and their communities. When asked how SWIFT has raised funds, Gobhanu says that SWIFT is fortunate enough to have gained a following on social media platforms and its website (swiftmfi.org), which primarily allocates its funding addition to local fundraisers such as bake-sales and charity games. What makes SWIFT unique from other charities is that it is run directly by children. A few months after founding SWIFT, Gobhanu sought out help and was overwhelmed by the support of youth he could find online. Today the SWIFT team consists of over 20 high school students who donate their time and efforts to make the world a better place. SWIFT is also currently inculcating the habit of microfinancing throughout schools as the organization believes that financial literacy is a fundamental step for India's development. Gobhanu says that his vision is for SWIFT to reach developing and developed nations worldwide, not just India. In the coming years, he hopes to create a sustainable student-run organization that works to create equality of opportunity for marginalized communities.

(The writer is a student from Andhra Pradesh and founder of the SWIFT initiative. The views expressed are personal.)

Youth and radicalism: Search for cannon fodder



AMRITA BHINDER

The so-called movement for Khalistan checks all the necessary boxes to be an 'ideal' issue for agencies like Pakistan's ISI to attack India

William Faulkner's observation that "the past is never dead, it is not even the past" holds for issues that enemies of India exploit to fuel unrest. The resurgence of the talk surrounding 'Khalistan' indicates how those interested in harming India never stop sowing seeds of discontent.

For any strife to continually 'catch the fancy' of the people, it has to appear personal and immediate. Such issues can find easy access in India with many societal, caste, religious, and sectarian fault lines. The abundance of youth is a bonus for those looking to take advantage. The radicalisation of youth to be used as cannon fodder is commonplace across strife-driven regions like in Syria where the social unrest originated from college campuses. The JNU protest is another illustration where sloganeering against a fee hike soon transformed into a demonstration of whatever was the 'flavour of the month protest'.

The so-called movement for Khalistan checks all the necessary boxes to be an 'ideal' issue for agencies like Pakistan's ISI to attack India. It is well-documented that ISI pumped monetary and arms resources and provided a haven for extremists who propagated the demand for a separate State of Khalistan.

In the last few years, long-standing issues like left-wing extremism or Islamist terror are being called out or are past their sell-by date. The significant churn in the United States and Australia, and the United Kingdom against Chinese influence in college campuses has shaken things up. The crackdown by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in 2017 on Islamist terrorists unleashed significant changes in how Jihadist terror operated across the globe. Vowing to galvanise an Islamic military coalition that aimed to counter "terrorism and extremism," Mohammed bin Salman led a series of high-level meetings of an alliance of Muslim nations against terrorism funding and the day-to-day disruption of al-Qaida, the Islamic State, and like-minded jihadists. In this atmosphere, global entities that benefit from strife, such as the military-industrial complexes, need to fan new issues to survive.

One of the reasons why Khalistan is a red-flag issue unlike ever before is the global support that has come its way in the recent past, with significant ramifications. In a recent Club House chat, a young person of Indian origin based in Europe and dedicated to the Khalistan cause claimed that the movement aimed at the physical separation of Punjab from the Indian union in less than two generations. The support for the separatist elements of the Khalistan movement, especially amongst the second-generation Punjabi youth based in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, has gained momentum as it ostensibly seeks to correct a historical wrong. However, the danger has increased manifold due to a suc-



KHALISTAN WAS NEVER A DOMESTIC ISSUE, AND THE SOONER THE AVERAGE INDIAN REALISES THAT IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WORLD, THE FASTER WE CAN COUNTER IT. THE REASON THAT WE CANNOT TAKE ALL OF THIS TO BE AN OVERSTRETCHING OF ONE'S IMAGINATION IS STARING US IN THE FORM OF A SIMPLE FACT — THE WORLD HAS SHIFTED FROM 'CONVENTIONAL WARFARE' TO THE UNCONVENTIONAL

(The writer is a lawyer and columnist. The views expressed are personal.)



cessful shift in the perspective. The anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 is not attributed to Congress but the 'Indian State.' As a result, the Khalistan issue now targets the Indian government and propagates a 'revolt' as the only way out.

This status transition is strategically designed and it would be foolish to think otherwise. It is similar to the Israel-Palestine issue and the desire of vested parties to replicate the model where a narrative would constantly stoke fires of how the Indian state has unleashed a flurry of horrors upon the ordinary citizens of Punjab. The narrative-building machinery is also in place, with socio-cultural events such as literary jaunts with authors and think tanks disseminating ideas and information to that end.

One can see how global concepts such as critical race theory, a 40-year-old idea that believes racial division to be a social construct instead of a personal bias, are promulgated locally. The ongoing farmers' protest is a testimony to the same, where a broad idea — farmers opposing the three laws — has been rejigged to make it region-specific — how the state has primarily targeted the farmer of Punjab.

The Khalistan issue is also being pitched as a shared narrative at a global level, claiming to echo the sentiments of the Sikh community, even though the citizens of Punjab rejected the very idea of a separate State. The local view is routinely, and even vehemently, dismissed on public platforms and social media by radicalised elements based outside of India. While

Indians wave off the issue as bunkum or pointless wishful thinking of a handful of wavered NRI youth, global media picks on that point of view and furthers it. The physical or virtual protests also have many Pakistan-sponsored implants disguised as Sikhs. The cycle is then completed when such news is peddled for domestic consumption as the local view that an authoritarian government has suppressed.

The propagators of Khalistan are quick to portray Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the all-powerful fascist responsible for the subjugation of Punjab, even though the actions of the current Indian government tell a completely different story. In 2018, a Delhi court awarded the first death penalty to two persons in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the cases that were probed and re-opened by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the Modi government in 2015. In 1994, the two had gotten away due to lack of evidence, and their conviction became possible only due to the evidence provided by the BJP state government.

The Khalistan issue is a testing ground for other pan-India strifes that can be used against the country. It is in tandem with a 2016 Pakistan Senate recommendation to the then Nawaz Sharif government to play up caste and religion issues in India to curb India's global influence. A 13-member committee of the Senate, Pakistan's equivalent to the Rajya Sabha, asked the government to talk about 'Dalits, unhappy Muslims, and encourage those opposing Prime

Minister Narendra Modi' to destabilise India. It also made some tactical recommendations to "hire International lobbyists and strategic communication firms and reactivate Pakistani community living abroad to change the global narrative".

The narrative-building efforts to push Khalistan or any exploitable local fault line to the forefront as a global agenda cannot be ignored or undermined. One is reminded of how the US attack on Iraq in 2002 also resulted from a complex narrative-building exercise. India's stature as a geopolitical player on the global stage has only increased in the recent past. Whether it is Asia or the Indian Ocean Region, India's significance is now key to shaping the world as it has also emerged as a natural counter balance to China. This reality does not suit traditional foes such as China and Pakistan and their new supporters, namely, Turkey and Iran.

Rest assured, any narrative that thwarts India would be ready to pick for them. Khalistan was never a domestic issue, but its play has only increased, and the sooner the average Indian realises it has the potential to change the world, the faster we can counter it. The reason that we cannot take all of this to be an overstretching of one's imagination is staring us in the form of a simple fact — the world has shifted from 'conventional warfare' to the unconventional. While we might not comprehend the severity of unconventional warfare, it surely is at play around the world by those interested in it.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT AFRAID OF DEBATING ON PEGASUS IN PARLIAMENT? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HIDE? — AIMIM CHIEF ASADUDDIN OWAI SI



WITH CHECKS AND BALANCES IN PLACE, ILLEGAL SURVEILLANCE IS NOT POSSIBLE. THOSE REPORTS HAVE NO FACTUAL BASIS. — ELECTRONICS AND IT MINISTER ASHWINI VAISHNAW

Maldives and Indian relationship

There have been a few untoward incidents that led to the Maldivians harbouring anti-India sentiments

Maldives and India are having a relationship crisis owing to media articles and social media posts attacking the dignity of the Indian High Commission office in that country. The Indian High Commission wrote a letter to the ministry of external affairs that was shared with the Maldivian local media. The commission complained letter about the malicious and increasingly personal attacks that may damage the bilateral relations between India and the Maldives.

The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) released a statement that empathised with Indian diplomats and termed the attacks as derogatory. The MDP blamed the whole drama on a local newspaper, Dhiyarees, and its owner, Ahmed Azaan.



PK VASUDEVA

(The writer is retired Senior Professor, International Trade and Member, Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

The MDP believes that the anti-India campaign run by Azaan is a well-funded, tailor-made, and intricately choreographed political campaign to bring ties between the Maldives and its closest ally, India, to breaking point.

The reason for the 'India out' campaign was the military presence in the Maldives, which according to the locals, is a threat. The 'India out' campaign started in 2020 and spread across social media like a wildfire. The co-founder of the Dhiyarees media, Shifxan Ahmed, clarified that they had only one issue — about the Indian military presence.

It is not the first time that an anti-India campaign had reared its ugly head. Back in 2013, when the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) was in



power, international relations between India and Maldives took a hit. PPM, led by Abdulla Yameen Abduls Gayoom, had tilted towards the Chinese. To please the Chinese, the Yameen government indulged in anti-India slogans and policies.

Researcher Dr. Gulbin Sultana, an analyst at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDS), shares the same sentiment about the anti-India rhetoric of 2013. But even if the Yameen government had a biased that

favoured the Chinese, they engaged in an India-first policy as well.

There have been a few untoward incidents that led to the Maldivians harbouring anti-India sentiments. The first incident was when India gifted two Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) in 2010 and 2015. These helicopters were to be operated by Indian officers and to be used for ocean search and rescue operations, airlifting patients across the islands, and Maritime weather surveillance. They were based in Addu atoll and at Hanimaadhoo but the pro-China stance of the Yameen government let it interpret them as proof of the Indian military's growing presence in the Maldives. In 2016, when the agitation reached its peak, the Yameen government requested

India to take back their choppers and the defence personnel. The Indian refusal to take back the choppers added fuel to the fire. In 2018, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih came to power and scrapped agreements that proscribed the use of choppers and he extended the stay of Indian personnel stay in the Maldives. Solih's friendly stance towards India and its choppers again fuelled anti-India sentiments in the Maldives.

The Maldivian government believed in keeping terms of contracts about defence, sovereignty, and national security secret. Some groups of people interpreted this secrecy as a threat to democracy. The domestic players in the Maldives opposed agreements with India because of this lack of transparency. According to

Maldivian law, any agreement has to be tabled in Parliament and needs parliamentary approval. It is only after the approval the government can engage in bilateral treaties. But the Solih government, in the name of national security, does not share any data with Parliament. The idea of keeping everything under wraps in the name of national security angers the people and fuels protests.

The second incident was the signing of Sifvaru-Uthuru Thilafalhu (UTF) harbour project agreement between India and the Maldives in 2021, under which India will be developing a Maldives National Defence Force Coast Guard Harbour. This project was initiated under the Yameen government. The dockyard is an atoll located near Malé, the cap-

ital of the Maldives.

The Indian motive behind signing this agreement was the growing presence of the Chinese in the Indian Ocean region. This agreement would satisfy the strategic interests of both India and the Maldives. But in 2019, when the Solih government came to power, media suspicion began to grow, owing to Solih's inclination towards India about the UTF project. The Maldivian government has repeatedly clarified that they would not allow any military presence on their land, be it Indian, Chinese, or anyone else. The Maldives has repeatedly asked India not to interfere in its domestic politics.

After the threats to blast the Indian high commission in the Maldives, appropriate security measures have now been taken.

Attack targeting acting Af Defense Min kills 8



AP ■ KABUL

A bombing attack that targeted Afghanistan's acting Defense Minister, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, killed at least eight people and wounded 20, authorities said on Wednesday. The Deputy Minister was not hurt in the attack claimed by Taliban insurgents.

The blast went off late Tuesday in a heavily guarded upscale neighborhood of the Capital of Kabul. It was followed by a gun battle that also left four militants dead, authorities said. The casualty toll could rise, Interior Ministry spokesperson Mirwais Stanekzai said Wednesday.

Taliban spokesman

Zabihullah Mujahid in a statement Wednesday claimed responsibility for the attack. It came as the insurgent group presses ahead with an offensive that is putting pressure on provincial capitals in the south and west of the country.

Mujahid said the attack was revenge for recent attacks by Afghan national forces in various provinces that he said caused civilian casualties and displacement.

Stanekzai said it appeared the guesthouse of acting Defense Minister Bismillah Khan Mohammadi was targeted in the attack but he was not hurt.

Mohammadi's Jamiat-e-Islami party was told the minister was not in the guest-

house at the time and his family had been safely evacuated.

All four attackers were shot and killed after five hours of fighting, Stanekzai said.

Stanekzai said the attack took place in the posh Sherpur neighborhood, located in a section of the capital known as the Green Zone, where security is tight. It is home to several senior government officials.

Hours after Tuesday night's attack, the Defense Ministry released a video in which Mohammadi said his guards had been wounded in a suicide attack. "I assure my beloved countrymen that such attacks cannot have any impact on my willingness to defend my countrymen and my country," he said.

UNSC says it does not support restoration of Islamic Emirate in Af

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council, currently being presided over by India, has declared that it does "not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate" in Afghanistan as it expressed deep concern over the high levels of violence in the war-torn country following the Taliban stepping up its military offensive.

It also condemned in the "strongest terms" last week's "deplorable" attack against the United Nations in Afghanistan's Herat.

In a Press statement on the "escalating violence in Afghanistan" issued by Council President India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti, members of the 15-nation Security Council reaffirmed that there is no military solution to the conflict and "declared that they do not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate."

"The members of the Security Council called on both the Islamic Republic and the Taliban to engage meaningfully in an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process in order to make urgent progress towards a political settlement and a ceasefire," the press

statement said.

"The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the deplorable attack" against the UN compound on July 30, which resulted in the death of an Afghan security forces guard and several injured.

Security Council members "expressed their deep concern about the high levels of violence in Afghanistan following the Taliban's military offensive and called for an immediate reduction of violence," the press statement said.

"They also expressed deep concern about the number of reported serious human rights abuses and violations in communities affected by the ongoing armed conflict across the country," it said.

The Council condemned in the strongest terms all instances of terrorism and deliberate targeted attacks against civilians and "recognised that a sustainable peace can be achieved only through a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process that aims at a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, as well as an inclusive, just, and realistic political settlement to end the conflict in Afghanistan."

The Council stressed the

need for full, equal and meaningful participation of women in this regard.

Afghanistan Foreign Minister Mohammed Haneef Atmar said in a tweet that he spoke with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar "to discuss convening an emergency UN Security Council Session" on Afghanistan.

"UN & intl community must play a greater role to stop the unfolding tragedy in due to Taliban violence & atrocities. Appreciate the lead role of as current UNSC President," Atmar said.

Following the issuance of the Press Statement, Afghan Mission to the UN tweeted that it welcomes the "strong condemnation" by the Security Council of all instances of terrorism and deliberate targeted attacks against civilians, including on the UN compound caused by the recent violent Taliban offensive.

"While continue prioritising the achievement of peace through negotiations, the AFG Gov, fulfilling its mandate, will continue to defend its citizens against atrocities and war crimes committed by the Taliban and their associated regional and intl terrorist groups," the Mission added.

British navy group: Hijackers have left vessel off UAE coast

AP ■ FUJAIRAH (UAE)

The hijackers who captured a vessel off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf of Oman left the targeted ship on Wednesday, the British navy reported, ending a ship seizure that revived fears of an escalation in Mideast waters.

The incident, described by the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations the night before as a "potential hijack," ended with as much mystery as it began.

While the details of who briefly impounded the asphalt tanker and why remain unclear, the seizure once again reveals a region on edge as Iran and the United States seek to broker a resolution to their standoff over Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Over the past years, the rising tensions have played out in the waters of the Persian Gulf, where just last week a drone attack on an oil tanker linked to an Israeli billionaire off the coast of Oman killed two crew members. The West blamed Iran for the raid, which marked the first known fatal assault in the yearslong shadow war targeting vessels in Mideast waters.

Iran denied involvement.

Late on Tuesday, intruders boarded a Panama-flagged asphalt tanker called Asphalt Princess sailing off the coast of Fujairah, authorities said. The official news agency of Oman's military said it received reports that the Asphalt Princess had been hijacked and dispatched Royal Air Force maritime patrol aircraft and naval vessels "to contribute to securing international waters."

Possible signs of trouble began to emerge that evening when six oil tankers off the coast of Fujairah announced around the same time via their Automatic Identification System trackers that they were "not under command," according to MarineTraffic.com. That typically means a vessel has lost power and can no longer steer.

Satellite-tracking data for the Asphalt Princess had showed it gradually heading toward Iranian waters off the port of Jask early Wednesday, according to MarineTraffic.com. Hours later, however, it stopped and changed course toward Oman, just before the British navy group declared the hijackers had departed and the vessel was now "safe."

Turkey says it won't shoulder Af migration, slams US

Istanbul: Turkey's Foreign Ministry has called the United States "irresponsible" after the Biden administration announced it would expand efforts to assist at-risk Afghan citizens with the major caveat that the adjudication process would take months in a third country.

Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tanju Bilgic said Wednesday the U.S. statement had suggested Turkey as an application spot "without consultation." He said Turkey does not have the capacity to shoulder another migration crisis.

"The U.S. may directly transport these people by plane. Turkey will not take over the international responsibilities of third countries," Bilgic said and added Turkey would not allow its laws to be abused by other countries. He said the U.S. announcement would trigger a major refugee crisis.

Turkey is already hosting some 3.7 million Syrians who fled the civil war there. Afghans have also fled to Turkey to escape their country's war and instability. AP

Israel fires back after 3 rockets launched from Lebanon



AP ■ TEL AVIV

Three rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israeli territory on Wednesday and the army responded with sustained artillery fire, Israel's military said. There was no immediate information on damages or casualties.

The announcement came after sirens sounded in northern Israel warning of a possible rocket attack from Lebanon. Two rockets landed inside Israeli territory, the army said, adding that it fired artillery back into Lebanon. Channel 12 reported that

one rocket exploded in an open area and another was intercepted by Israel's defense system, known as the Iron Dome.

The warnings went off near Kiryat Shmona, a community of about 20,000 people near the Lebanese border.

A Lebanese army official said the military had no comment pending investigations. Other Lebanese security officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

However, several witnesses in the border area in south Lebanon said two rockets landed in an Israeli community across the border, followed by multiple artillery shells that were fired from Israel. The Israeli shells landed in an area between the Lebanese villages of Marjayoun and Kham, they said, adding it was not clear where the rockets were fired from.

There have been several similar incidents in recent months.

PEGASUS SCANDAL Top Israeli defence committee to convene 'closed' session on use of offensive cyberarms

Jerusalem: Israel's top defence committee will convene a special session on the use of 'offensive cyberarms' in the wake of international backlash over the alleged misuse of NSO Group's Pegasus software and further revelations that other Israeli firms may have also supplied similar spyware solutions to other countries, according to a media report.

The Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee will convene a closed session to discuss not just NSO and the string of revelations about its spyware's potential targets exposed as part of the Project Pegasus, but also other Israeli offensive firms that have made headlines in recent months, daily Haaretz reported on Tuesday.

The Pegasus Project is a consortium of media outlets that reported the NSO's Pegasus spyware was linked to hacks and potential surveillance.

Firms like Candiru and Quadream have also sold their spyware solutions to non-democratic regimes, the report said.

"The session of the influential Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee is apparently not listed on their official agenda and it will be sealed off from the public and its minutes kept off the record because the session will be held by a sub-committee dedicated to 'intelligence issues and other special issues,' the daily reported. The meeting is reportedly set for August 9, though the committee chair, lawmaker Ram Ben Barak, has denied it. PTI

NY Gov urged to resign after probe finds he harassed 11 women

New York: New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has faced mounting pressure to resign, including from President Joe Biden and other onetime Democratic allies, after an investigation found he sexually harassed nearly a dozen women and worked to retaliate against one of his accusers.

"I think he should resign," Biden told reporters Tuesday, echoing House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and New York's US Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, all Democrats.

The leader of the state Assembly, which has the power to bring impeachment charges, said it was clear Cuomo could no longer remain in office. Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat, said he would move to complete an impeachment inquiry "as quickly as possible." Cuomo remained defiant, saying in a taped response to the findings that "the facts are much different than what has been portrayed" and that he "never touched anyone inappropriately or made inappropriate sexual advances."

In a telephone conversation with Heastie, Cuomo insisted he wouldn't leave office and told the speaker he needed to work fellow Democrats and garner enough votes to stop an impeachment, according to a person familiar with the conversation.

But Heastie said he couldn't do that, said the person, who could not publicly discuss details of the private conversation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity. AP

WHO: 4 mn new coronavirus cases reported globally

AP ■ GENEVA

There were more than 4 million new Covid-19 cases reported globally in the last week, driven mostly by spikes in the Middle East and Asia.

That's according to the World Health Organization's

latest weekly report on the pandemic.

The U.N. health agency said Wednesday infections have been increasing for more than a month, although the worldwide number of deaths dropped by about 8%.

In the Middle East and Asia, however, deaths

increased by more than a third. In the last week, the highest numbers of coronavirus cases were reported by the U.S., India, Indonesia, Brazil and Iran. More than 130 countries have now reported cases of the easier-to-spread delta variant, first identified in India.

US trying to help India, others to produce vaccine: Biden

Washington: The United States is helping India and other countries to be able produce the vaccines by themselves, President Joe Biden has said.

With a need for several billion doses around the world, the US was committed to provide half a billion, Biden said during a press conference at White House on Tuesday.

"We have committed to over a half a billion doses. And we're trying to provide for more and provide for the capacity of countries like India to be able to produce the vaccine themselves. And we're helping them do that. That's what we're doing now," he said in response to a question.

"And we're trying to...by the way, it's free. We're not charging anybody anything. And we're trying to do as much as we possibly can," he added.

In this fight against COVID-19, Biden asserted, the United States was committed to become the "arsenal of vaccines", the manner in which it was the arsenal of democracy during World War II.

"We are backing up that commitment. We have contributed more than any other nation to COVAX as a collective global effort to deliver COVID-19 vaccines across the world. We have supported manufacturing efforts abroad through our partnerships with Japan, India, Australia - known as the Quad," he said.

Biden said that during his trip to Europe in June, he had announced that the US would purchase a ground-breaking 500 million doses of Pfizer and donate to nearly a hundred low- and middle-income countries that don't have the vaccine. Those doses will start to ship at the end of this month, he said. PTI

Head of UN health agency seeks vaccine booster moratorium

AP ■ GENEVA

The head of the World Health Organisation is calling for a moratorium on administering booster shots of Covid-19 vaccines as a way to help ensure that doses are available in countries where few people have received their first shots.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus made the appeal mostly to wealthier countries that have far outpaced the developing world in numbers of vaccinations.

WHO officials say the science is unproven about whether giving booster shots to people who have already received two vaccine doses is effective in preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

The U.N. Health agency has repeatedly called for rich countries to do more to help improve access to vaccines in the developing world. Tedros pointed to a WHO target set earlier this year to ensure that 10% of the populations in countries receive vaccines against the coronavirus.

"Accordingly, WHO is calling for a moratorium on boosters until at least the end of September to enable at least 10% of the population of every country to be vaccinated," he said Wednesday.

To help take the heat out of the pandemic, WHO has been focusing on getting vaccines to older adults, health care workers and other target populations in many countries before booster shot campaigns are carried out.

Israel, France, Germany and many Middle Eastern countries have already started administering booster shots, and other nations, including the United States and Britain, are considering plans to do so in the wake of the emergence of the highly transmissible delta variant.

PUBLIC COURT
Lost the original Sale Deed dated 23.04.1963, which was got executed in favour of Late Sh. Bawa Suresh Singh by the then Refugee Co-operative Housing Society Limited, with regards to the property bearing No. 45, North Avenue, Punjabi Bagh West, New Delhi - 110026. Further, the said lost article was also got published in the newspaper i.e. "Hindustan" New Delhi, in the Classified section of the said Newspaper published on 11.04.2008, in the middle column and in the same, it was also requested that whoever finds the said Sale Deed, shall duly inform the documents, as mentioned above have not been traced till date, and it is once again requested that, if someone finds the same, please contact Mr. Parveen Kumar Narula at Contact No: 9811039231.

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RBI's MPC begins deliberations

LIKELY TO MAINTAIN STATUS QUO ON INTEREST RATE

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI's rate-setting panel MPC began its three-day deliberations on Wednesday to finalise the bi-monthly monetary policy amid expectations that it may opt for status quo on interest rate on account of inflationary concerns.

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das will unveil the resolution of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Friday.

Headed by the RBI Governor, the six-member MPC also includes three external members.

Experts are of the view that the RBI may prefer to wait and watch for some more time before taking any major action on the monetary policy front as the central bank's focus is on managing inflation as well supporting economic growth.

The central bank had left the benchmark interest rate unchanged at 4 per cent at the June policy meet. It was for the



sixth time in a row that the MPC maintained status quo on interest rate.

M Govinda Rao, chief economic advisor of Brickwork Ratings, said the MPC has kept key policy rates unchanged since May 2020, after having brought them down to a record low of 4 per cent from 5.15 per cent through two rate cuts (75 bps in March 2020 and 40 bps in May 2020), to assuage the economic consequences of the Covid-19

pandemic.

Moreover, the MPC has continued with the accommodative policy stance after changing it from neutral in June 2019. "We expect the RBI MPC to hold the repo rate at 4 per cent and continue to be accommodating to support the nascent recovery, in the upcoming MPC. We also expect it to sound a cautionary note and emphasise the need to closely monitor the situation," Rao said.

Markets maintain record run on earnings boost; Sensex scales 54,000 for 1st time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks clambered up to fresh lifetime highs on Wednesday, with the Sensex surging past the 54,000-mark for the first time, as stellar earnings whetted risk appetite amid supportive global cues.

Banking and finance stocks saw hectic buying after largest lender SBI reported a 55 per cent jump in standalone net profit at ₹ 6,504 crore for the June quarter, helped by a decline in bad loans.

Surging for the third straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 546.41 points or 1.02 per cent to end at its new record of 54,369.77, bettering the previous session's closing high. It scaled its lifetime peak of 54,465.91 during the session.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 128.05 points or 0.79 per cent to its all-time peak of 16,246.85. It touched a lifetime intra-day high of 16,290.20.

HDFC was the top performer in the Sensex pack,

Rupee climbs to over 5-week high of 74.19/USD

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee added another 9 paise to mark its highest level in over five weeks at 74.19 against the US dollar on Wednesday, aided by bullish equities and subdued crude oil prices. Further, gains in Asian peers against the US dollar too bolstered rupee sentiment.

surging 4.77 per cent, followed by Kotak Bank, ICICI Bank, SBI, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank.

On the other hand, Titan, Nestle India, UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, Maruti and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards, dropping up to 2.14 per cent.

However, the market breadth was negative, with 16 Sensex stocks closing in the red, while 14 advanced.

PHDCCI calls for 3-tier GST, capping highest slab at 18%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry chamber PHDCCI on Wednesday called for a 3-tier GST rate structure, with the highest slab at 18 per cent, to help boost consumption and reduce evasion.

Under the Goods and Services Tax (GST), a four-rate structure that exempts or imposes a low rate of tax 5 per cent on essential items and top rate of 28 per cent is levied. The other slabs of tax are 12 and 18 per cent. Besides, a 3 per cent rate is applied on gold, silver and processed diamonds.

PHDCCI President Sanjay Aggarwal said an ideal GST rate structure would be to have two to three slabs of GST rates.

"We suggest the lowest rate at 5 per cent, a moderate rate of 12 per cent, by clubbing the category of 12 and 18 per cent, and the highest rate of 18 per cent for luxury and sin goods only," he said.

This rationalisation of rates will increase consumption and tax revenue, reduce compliances, reduce tax evasion and

PHDCCI President Sanjay Aggarwal said an ideal GST rate structure would be to have two to three slabs of GST rates

help to make

GST as good and simple tax, as simplified tax regime is the need of hour to reduce litigation pertaining to tax matters. "This will also lead to removal of hardships and provide ease of doing business and compliance among taxpayers," Aggarwal added.

Aggarwal further said that the government had rationalised GST rates in the 28 per cent slab category and taking out about 200 items from the highest slab and putting in either 18 or 12 per cent.

Still products such as air conditioners, and cements are charged at 28 per cent GST, he said. A nationwide GST, which subsumed 17 local levies like excise duty, service tax and VAT and 13 cesses, was rolled out on July 1, 2017.

Over 360 UDAN air routes operational now

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

India has till date operationalised 361 air routes under the regional connectivity scheme 'Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik' or RCS-Udan.

The scheme was launched in 2016. Under it, airlines are provided with a 'Viability Gap Funding' to keep fares affordable and accessible. "Till date, 361 routes and 59 airports (including 5 heliports and 2 water aerodromes) have been operationalised under the Udan scheme," the Ministry of Civil Aviation said in a statement on Wednesday. "The scheme is envisaged to establish strong aerial connectivity in all States and UTs of the country which hitherto were not connected, laying the foundation of a new regional segment in India's aviation market." According to the ministry, on Tuesday, the first direct flight operations between Imphal (Manipur) and Shillong (Meghalaya) was flagged off under the RCS-UDAN. "The operationalisation of this route fulfills the objectives of the Government of India to establish strong aerial connectivity in priority areas of NorthEast India."

BRIEFS

FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT OPERATIONS FLAGGED OFF ON IMPHAL - SHILLONG ROUTE UNDER UDAN

New Delhi: The first direct flight operations between Imphal (Manipur) & Shillong (Meghalaya) was flagged off under the RCS-UDAN (Regional Connectivity Scheme — Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) of the Government of India. The operationalization of this route fulfills the objectives of the Government of India to establish strong aerial connectivity in priority areas of NorthEast India. The officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and Airport Authority of India (AAI) were present during the launch of the flight operations. The aerial connectivity between the capital cities of Manipur & Meghalaya has been a long-awaited demand of the people of the region. The beautiful city of Shillong is surrounded by hills from all sides. Famous for the presence of many well-reputed educational institutions, Shillong is the hub of education for the entire North-East India. Apart from being the beauty & education centre, Shillong also acts as the gateway to Meghalaya, the state famous for heavy rainfall, caves, tallest waterfalls, beautiful landscapes, and its rich heritage & culture. Shillong is famous for Elephant falls, Shillong Peak, Uman lake, Sohpetbeng Peak, Don Bosco Museum, Laitlum Canyons.

YUVRAJ-BACKED HEALTHIANS' FREE SERVICES FOR INDIAN OLYMPIC SQUAD

New Delhi: In support of Olympic athletes and to promote sports in the country, Yuvraj Singh on Wednesday announced that Healthians, India's leading "health test at home" startup, would provide free healthcare screening for all Tokyo Olympics participants from India. In addition, medal winners will be able to avail 10 years of free health checkup packages from the company. Yuvraj said, "We need to support sportsmen and move towards a glorious future in sports." Deepak Sahni, founder and CEO of Healthians, said, "For every sportsman, health comes first, and with this campaign, we hope to inspire the current and next league of athletes and sportspeople to bring further glory to our country."

EK NAYI ANANDI, EK NAYA ADHYAY

New Delhi: Balika Vadhu — a powerful story that marked the dawn of a new age on television, a grave issue that left a long-lasting impact on the minds of the viewers, endearing characters that touched million hearts and are still revered iconic — is going to start its season two. 13 years ago, COLORS brought a new revolution on Indian television with its path-breaking show Balika Vadhu that addressed the subject of child marriage in the simplest yet powerful manner. The show will capture the journey of a 'nayi Anandi' (played by Shreya Patel) as she takes definitive steps to fight and undo the injustice done to her.

RBI cautions against fraudulent offers of buying/selling old notes

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday cautioned the public not to fall prey to fictitious offers of buying or selling of old banknotes and coins on commission basis by unauthorised entities.

In a statement, the RBI said it has come to its notice that certain elements are fraudulently using the name/logo of the Reserve Bank of India and seeking charges/ commission/ tax from public for transactions related to buying and selling of old banknotes and coins through various online/ offline platforms.



"It is clarified that Reserve Bank of India does not deal in such matters and never seeks charges/ commissions of any sort. Reserve Bank of India has also not authorised any institution/ firm/ person etc to col-

lect charges/ commission on its behalf in such transactions," it said. RBI advised the public to remain cautious and not to fall prey to elements using its name to extract money through such fraudulent offers.

India, World Bank sign \$250 mn project for making dams safe

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Government, the Central Water Commission, representatives from 10 participating States, and the World Bank on Wednesday signed a \$250 million project for long-term dam safety programme and improving the safety and performance of existing dams across various States.

The Second Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP-2) will strengthen dam safety by building dam safety guidelines, bringing in global experience, and introducing innovative technologies.

Another major innovation envisaged under the project, that is likely to transform dam safety management, is the introduction of a risk-based approach to dam asset management that will help to effectively allocate financial resources towards priority dam safety needs.

The project will be implemented in approximately 120 dams across Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu, and at the national level through the CWC. Other states or agencies may be added to the project during project implementation.

India needs 3 private players in telecom; hope Govt offers support to industry: Airtel CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel CEO Gopal Vittal on Wednesday asserted that a large nation like India needs three private players in the telecom sector, and hoped the Government would take measures to offer relief to the industry that is facing "serious financial stress".

The comments assume significance in the backdrop of Vodafone Idea's desperate struggle to stay afloat.



Aditya Birla Group Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla had in June this year offered to hand over the group's

stake in debt-laden Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) to the government or any other entity to ensure that the company remains a going concern.

Speaking at the Q1 earnings' call, Airtel CEO Gopal Vittal said, "I think just from national perspective, it would be appropriate to see an industry structure where three players not just survive, but thrive and of course the government player is always there."

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that one male namely Unknown, S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown, Age about 60 years, Height 5'4", Complexion Shallow, Face Long, Built Thin, Wearing Grey colour shirt and green colour pajama was found dead at Waiting Area Near Gate No. 6, Lady Hardinge Medical College Hospital, New Delhi on 30.07.21.

In this regard a DD No. 47-A dated 30.07.21 U/S 174 Cr.PC has been lodged at PS Mandir Marg, New Delhi. The dead body has been preserved in Lady Hardinge Medical College Hospital Mortuary, New Delhi for 72 hours for Identification. Any person having any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be informed to the undersigned.

SHO

PS : Mandir Marg, New Delhi

DP/303/IND/21

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL



General public is here by informed that this girl Namely: Beena, D/o: Pappi, R/o: H. No. Y-1/62, Budh Vihar, Phase-I, Delhi, Age: 20 years, Height: 5 feet 1 inch, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing: White Colour Kurti, Red Colour Pajama and Slippers in Feet, has been Missing since 06.07.2021 from the area of P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 39A, dated 25.07.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this girl but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: cic@cbl.gov.in SHO
Website: <http://cbl.nic.in> P.S. Vijay Vihar, Delhi
Fax: 011-24368639 Ph. 011-27061294, 8750870329
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/957/RD/2021

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to bring to the notice of general public that one ID card Mr. Iqbal issued by Iqbal bank Ltd. Having ID card no.2110595 has been found missing and lost on LAXMI NAGAR delhi. Anyone who find the said ID card, is requested to return the said ID card, to the manager & management group (icici bank limited, SD tower sec-8 Rohini delhi). Therefore, all the customer of ICICI Bank Limited are here by notified not to make any payment to any unauthorized person holding the said ID card no. 2110595. Please take further notice that anybody making payment to any person holding the said ID shall do so at his/her own cost, risk and peril and ICICI bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any payment. Date: 04/08/2021 FOR ICICI BANK LIMITED Place: New Delhi SD TOWER ROHINI

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one male Namely **Ajay S/o Shyam Sunder** R/o H. No. 23 Gali No.-2 Rahul Garden Behta Hajipur Loni, Ghaziabad U.P. has been missing/kidnapped from the jurisdiction of P.S. Gandhi Nagar Delhi since 28.07.2021. In this regard, a DD No. 33A, dated. 29.07.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Gandhi Nagar, Delhi. The description of the missing male as under.



Age: 30 years, Complexion: Fair, Height: 5'6", Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow Colour T-Shirt and Gray Colour Pant. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out him but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing male then please inform P.S. Gandhi Nagar, Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: cic@cbl.gov.in and Website: <http://cbl.nic.in>

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/527/SHD/2021 PH. 011-22082235, 7065036024

Office of the Superintending Engineer 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora

Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 3084 / Nivida-01/2021

Dated : 03/08/2021

National Competitive Bidding (E-Tendering) E-TENDER NOTICE

The Superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 07/08/2021 & onwards on website <https://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	Construction of 36Mt. Span Steel Girder Bridge over Guard Ganga River at Machhibagad gwalde Motor Road in Block Garur under SCSP Scheme.	5000.00 + 18% GST	4.05 Lakh	120 Days	18 Months	Category "A" & above Bridge works
2	Improvement & Damarikran work in Kaffara-Baret-Tipola Motor Road in constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector Distt. Almora Km 12 to 16	5000.00 + 18% GST	5.12 Lakh	120 Days	15 Months	Class "A" & above in Road work
3	Improvement & Damarikran work in Simalgaon- Surikhet Motor Road in constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector Distt. Almora Km 0 to 5	5000.00 + 18% GST	4.05 Lakh	120 Days	15 Months	Class "A" & above in Road work

Notice under section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (The Act)				
S. NO	Name of Borrower(s) (A)	Particulars of Mortgaged property/ (ies) (B)	Date Of NPA (C)	Outstanding Amount (Rs.) (D)
1	LOAN ACCOUNT NO. HHLROH00389053 1.SUBHASH CHANDER 2.SAROJ	PROPERTY NO.-JUR/W01/0661, KHEWAT NO.-3819/3578, KHATA NO-4333, KILA NO. 34/2, TADADI KILA NO.-34/2, MAUJA NAGAR PAULIKA, JHAJJAR-124100, HARYANA.	31.03.2021	Rs. 28,01,900.70 (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh One Thousand Nine Hundred and Paise Seventy Only) as on 31.03.2021

That the above named borrower(s) have failed to maintain the financial discipline towards their loan account (s) and as per books of accounts maintained in the ordinary course of business by the Company, Column D indicates the outstanding amount. Due to persistent default in repayment of the Loan amount on the part of the Borrower(s) the above said loan account has been classified by the Company as Non Performing Asset (as on date in Column C) within the guidelines relating to assets classification issued by Regulating Authority. Consequently, notices under Sec. 13(2) of the Act were also issued to each of the borrower.

In view of the above, the Company hereby calls upon the above named Borrower(s) to discharge in full his/her liabilities towards the Company by making the payment of the entire outstanding dues indicated in Column D above including up to date interest, costs, and charges within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which, the Company shall be entitled to take possession of the Mortgaged Property mentioned in Column B above and shall also take such other actions as is available to the Company in law.

Please note that in terms of provisions of sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, "A borrower can tender the entire amount of outstanding dues together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred by the Secured Creditor only till the date of publication of the notice for sale of the secured asset(s) by public auction, by inviting quotations, tender from public or by private treaty. Further it may also be noted that in case Borrower fails to redeem the secured asset within aforesaid legally prescribed time frame, Borrower may not be entitled to redeem the property."

In terms of provision of sub-Section (13) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, you are hereby prohibited from transferring, either by way of sale, lease or otherwise (other than in the ordinary course of his business) any of the secured assets referred to in the notice, without prior written consent of secured creditor.

Place: JHAJJAR (HARYANA) Sd/-
For Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. Authorized Officer



Bollywood
'Funk music has been a huge inspiration in my life.'
—Benny Dayal

REMOTE WORKING — BOON OR BANE?

ANAND DORAIRAJ talks about how 'workations' may lend a fun element to your job

Not long before the global pandemic hit us — reappraising the way we think about work and leisure — the prospect of working from home, even if it were only fortnightly, was an exciting proposition. The benefits of skipping the endless commute to the workplace, attending meetings while virtually donning your favourite pair of pyjamas, and aligning your tasks around your chores or sleep cycle, would always outdo the regularly inconvenient humdrum of life otherwise.

But COVID altered our lives and beliefs in so many unexpected ways. The novelty of working from home started to fade away in a matter of a few months after offices were shut. The makeshift work desks at different corners of homes eventually blurred the personal-professional boundary, triggering overwhelming sentiments of 'living at work', burnouts and 'Zoom fatigue', resulting in monotony, lethargy and reduced productivity levels.

The sustained monotony of working from home has also proved to be detrimental to mental health, particularly impacting professionals who have been living away from families. However, since large companies are looking at the remote working structure as a more permanent solution for its obvious pros and considering how the third wave of COVID-19 is just around the corner, as per experts, we may have to find ways to mix things up and make working from home a sustainable and agreeable process.

The solution — A 'workation'
Experts swear by the mantra of rotating your workspace, so your day feels more varied. Initially, professionals tried to mix things up depending on the amount of space at their disposal. But as they ran out of options, a few took it to the next level by hiring a space in the outdoors — to work!
And that's how the term



'workation' was coined. Workation = work + vacation. It's combining business with leisure. It's attending Zoom calls against the enviable backdrop of a waterfall. It's scheduling emails while sunbathing at a beach. It's creating campaigns while sipping a cup of hot cocoa at a rustic cafe somewhere in the hills. It's hitting targets while hitting the roads.

A workation allows you to take your office along with you on your vacation. When you work from the hills or beaches, you integrate the elements of leisure into it, giving yourself time to unwind and rejuvenate whilst delivering on your daily targets. The idea of taking a road trip to a nearby destination — to relocate for a few weeks or even months — has proven to do wonders for your productivity, boosting motivation and striking a perfect work-life balance.

Smart marketing by the travel and hospitality sector

With the workation fad doing the rounds, hotels and homestays near metro cities have introduced 'Workation Packages' to cash in on the trend. They have bolstered their infrastructure to offer the best remote working experience — contactless



check-ins, high-speed internet (even on the beaches and open spaces), comfortable work desks, in-room dining services, and babysitting services for kids. They are training their staff rigorously on the COVID SOPs to ensure compliance with all social distancing and safety measures. To promote longer workations, they are rolling out lucrative offers with slashed tariffs on long-term rentals and extended stays.

The workation-readiness isn't limited to the hospitality sector. The travel industry, which was equally affected by the pandemic (if not more), is all geared up to facilitate safe commute to workations, which are usually in smaller towns located a few hundred kilometres away from densely populated urban spaces. The safety benefits and convenience offered by car rentals coupled with the charm of a classic road trip after months of confinement is what's making car rentals the preferred choice of travel among workationers. After all, who does not want to be pampered by a doorstep pickup and drop, with a chauffeur-driven car at your disposal?

If you are based in any one of the metropolitan cities and can't wait to get away from the hustle and bustle, listed below are some brilliant recommendations located amid picturesque attractions:

Bangalore

▣Kabini: Witness the wild waking from slumber in their natural habitat at any one of Kabini's jungle lodges. After a busy workday, unwind by opting for an evening safari ride for the ultimate wildlife experience.

▣Honnavar: Don your favourite beach shorts and cabana-style shades to answer your Zoom calls amidst the clean yellow sands and turquoise waters of Honnavar.

▣Dandeli: A visual retreat for nature and adventure lovers, the rustic jungles and idyllic waterfalls of Dandeli will serve as your picture-perfect workation.

▣Sakleshpur: Nestled amid the Western Ghats, this gorgeous hill station will overwhelm your senses with its vast aromatic tea and spice estates. You can also treat yourself to trekking and camping activities after a fruitful work week.

Mumbai

▣Igatpuri: A hidden paradise tucked in the Sahyadris, it will be the perfect workation for mountain lovers.

▣Jawhar: Lush greenery, pristine lakes and waterfalls, breathtaking treks and dense forests — it is a land of serenity still unexplored and offbeat.

▣Velas: Known for its Olive Ridley sea turtles, it is a paradise for beach lovers. After an exhausting day at work, unwind by trekking your way to the cliffs and witness the picturesque sunsets at the Velas beach.

▣Goa: Delicious

seafood, unparalleled nightlife, alluring beaches, cosy cafes, affordable stays, it is already a favourite amongst workationers!

Delhi

▣Pushkar: Why work from home when you can work from a majestic palace! And once you have pampered yourself with all the royal treatment, work from one of the desert camps in the place.

▣Jim Corbett: Book a cottage with large windows with a view of the stunning jungles of Jim Corbett. Listen to the sounds of birds cooing or river flowing nearby and the occasional roars of the Royal Bengal Tiger to chill your spines. This one's not for the faint-hearted!

▣Mussoorie: Travel back in time to the colonial town of Mussoorie. Work against the majestic backdrop of the Garhwal Himalayas and rejuvenate your senses.

▣Jaipur: Spend your evenings witnessing the ancient forts, admiring the old-world charm and enjoying the delectable Rajasthani cuisine in the Pink City.

Kolkata

▣Sundarbans: Find your inspiration for work in the wilderness. The trees, the forests, the streams, and the unique fauna of Sundarbans can inspire you. Take a relaxed break cycling or taking nature walks or go for wildlife photography.

▣Lachung: Work amid pine forests, rhododendron sanctuaries, snow-capped peaks, rustic cottages, hot springs and rich biodiversity.

▣Falta: The serene river town of Falta is surrounded by lush green landscapes and has a fascinating history associated with it. Unwind after work exploring its fort and port or go for a tranquil ferry ride.

▣Kalimpong: Experience the charm of working amidst rolling hills, picturesque valleys, magnificent monasteries and rich diversity of flora and fauna.

Escape the monotony of home and head out to refresh your mind and soul while working from outdoors.

(The author is the VP, head of growth at Savaari Car Rentals, the largest chauffeur-driven car rental company in India in terms of geographical reach.)



'A BREATH OF FRESH AIR'

Actor AAHANA KUMRA shares how the teleplay, *Sir Sir Sarla* is a story replete with love and nostalgia. By TEAM VIVA

For Aahana Kumra, shooting for Zee Theatre's *Sir Sarla* was an immensely rewarding experience. She remarks, "The wonderful thing is that during the shoot, I did not lose the flow I experienced on stage while performing a play live. Thankfully the director just let us be and didn't ask us to give multiple retakes. The whole experience turned out to be enjoyable."

Aahana attended the first screening of the play at the writer, director and actor Makarand Deshpande's house and shares, "Spending time at Mac sir's place was a nice way to relive the shoot especially because we have not been able to perform the play on stage for a live audience due to the pandemic."

Sir Sir Sarla explores the story of Professor Palekar and his student Sarla — the pretty, innocent young girl who seems smitten by her mentor — and Phanidhar who shares a love-hate relationship with the professor. The play dwells upon the bond between the students and their professor, which faces many vicissitudes. Secrets are revealed, accusations are hurled, and the three lives remain interwoven for many years to come. The narrative is very unique and also relatable, says Aahana. "Even though we were travelling extensively with the play before the pandemic, it took me a long time to understand Sarla. Then in cities like Lucknow and Bareilly, I actually met people who were like Keshav and Sarla. They would come to meet me after the show and say that this was their story. That was such a revelation and as an artiste, I began to feel there was an added responsibility to portray Sarla in a real and organic way because so many women saw themselves in her," she adds.

With time and experience, the play's theme began to make more and more sense to her. As she says, "In a world full of hate and anxiety, this play is like a breath of fresh air. It really transports you to a place replete with love and nostalgia."

Sir Sir Sarla is written and stage directed by Makarand, and stars him alongside Aahana, Sanjay Dadhich and Anjum Sharma. Its filming director is Suman Mukhopadhyay. Watch the play on DishTV D2H Rangmanch Active.

As a first-time mom-to-be last year, Amy ideas of a postpartum body were all driven by the hundreds of articles on 'how to bounce back' on the internet. But the reality of what a postpartum body looks (and feels) like hit me like a deer caught in headlights. It was not only opposite to all the miraculous flat belly pictures that I saw of women at just three months postpartum but no one was talking about how regressive it was to put societal pressure on women to bounce back when their bodies had to completely change to create a universe.

It was time to change the dialogue. But if I had to, I needed to be first empowered with the knowledge of what really changed in my post-baby body. I chose to do this by getting certified as a pre-post-natal specialist so that I could share the post-baby body changes no one tells you about.

First, yes, we must have the doctors' permission before starting exercise post-delivery but it should not be interpreted to mean that you can or should start lifting weights immediately, run or take part in intense cardio. It should ideally be light walking and rehabilitative exercises to restore strength and function to the deep core stability system (focussing on transverse abdominal (TA) and pelvic floor muscles) under the guidance of a postnatal specialist. Unlike popular belief, our body is not miraculously ready to resume exercising once the doctor gives the go-ahead at the four or six weeks check-up.

Second, post-baby urinary incontinence is a real thing and the life quality of one out of three new moms will be affected due to it. And Kegels (exercises where you pretend you have to pee and then hold it) aren't enough. It's normal to pee when you laugh, cough, sneeze,

Shh! Secrets revealed

SUCHETA PAL talks about the post-baby body changes no one tells you about and what to do about them



jump and run postpartum, but you don't have to live with it. Your pelvic floor needs to be able to lengthen, relax and contract — not just contract. If the pelvic floor is always in a contracted state, the muscles become shortened, tightened, and sometimes weak. And it doesn't help in the recovery process. Thus Kegels alone are not the answer. Instead, practising proper activation and release of

these muscles with the technique of connection breath/ diaphragmatic breathing is the key.

Most probably you have a condition called Diastasis recti which is the partial or complete separation of the rectus abdominis, or 'six-pack' muscles, which meet at the midline of your stomach. Diastasis recti is very common during and following pregnancy. This is because

the uterus stretches the muscles in the abdomen to accommodate your growing baby. Diastasis recti is what we popularly see externally as the post-baby belly.

Don't get disheartened with the flat belly before and after pictures of women on social media within weeks of childbirth. Every woman's body is different and so is their recovery time. It can take anywhere from six weeks, six months to even a few years before you see improvements. What we need to understand is the reason behind it. If left untreated, diastasis recti can potentially lead to poor core stabilisation, pelvic floor dysfunction, and back or pelvic pain. And of course, the external effect is the post-baby belly.

Crunches, planks, leg lifts, and bicycles can cause an increase in intra-abdominal pressure and worsen diastasis recti or ab separation. The first step instead is rehabilitating the deep core with movements such as the dead bug, open book, clamshell and heel slides.

We made an entire universe and popped it out too. So, will we be able to rebuild our 'pre-pregnancy strength'? We may actually exceed it in ways we can't even imagine.

The key is to lay a strong foundation with a strong core post-pregnancy. Our body goes through a lot of changes through pregnancy and regaining physical strength, post-birth, is tough but at the same time, there is a newfound appreciation for the body and what it is capable of.

It's not going to be easy but we need to stay on track, be patient and show grace to our body and celebrate every small win.

(The author is the founder of the MOM.BOD.STRONG programme and is an ambassador of Zumba® in India.)

Pull out your Bellbottoms!

The team behind Pooja Entertainment's forthcoming spy thriller, *Bellbottom*, congregated at Delhi for the film's trailer launch. The film releases in theatres, in 2D and 3D formats, on August 19



Producer Jacky Bhagnani, Lara Dutta, Akshay Kumar and Vaani Kapoor captured together



Akshay Kumar with the rest of the team behind *Bellbottom* during the trailer launch

Photos by Pankaj Kumar

TRENDBLAZER



ENCOURAGED BY YOUTH: AKHTAR

As the unique show on poetry, *India Shayari Project* will be launched on August 15, iconic poet and lyricist JAVED AKHTAR shares how he is impressed to observe that the younger generation is keen to understand the beauty and nuances of poetry.

"India has been a country of many great poets and *shayars*. It is heartening to see the youth wanting to embrace and understand the beauty and nuances of the spoken word," says Akhtar.

The show will be launched on ZEE5.

fairtalk

RANVIR SHOREY



"I think indie cinema works like the R&D department for the business of cinema. You see, in mainstream commercial films, there is huge money involved so it is naturally a profit-making venture. If cinematic excellence is not supported by the big production houses, the sensibility will not change in the business as well as among the larger section of the audience."

dailytalk

SHREYAS TALPADE



"OTT is definitely an addiction. You won't go to a movie theatre or watch TV for 24 hours. But your phone is there with you all the time. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic situation, we are kind of becoming loners. Whereas earlier we would socialise, that is not happening so regularly now. So we want entertainment and are stuck on our phones."

NOT TOO KEEN ON ACTING AGAIN: POMPEO

Actor ELLEN POMPEO, who is known for her work in the show *Grey's Anatomy*, hasn't ruled out returning to acting one day, but she isn't 'super excited' about continuing her acting career.

"I'm not saying I'll never act again, I very well may, but I'm not super excited about continuing my acting career. I'm more entrepreneurial at this stage," Pompeo said, reports femalefirst.co.uk.

The actress is excited about investing in businesses and starting businesses.



Lending a helping hand

VIT (AP) offers ₹62 lakhs as scholarships to Covid-affected students

Dr G Viswanathan, founder-chancellor of VIT announced ₹62 lakhs as scholarships in the form of 100 per cent fee waiver for 25 VIT-AP University students who have lost a parent, who was the bread-winner of the family, due to COVID-19. These 25 students are pursuing various Engineering & Non-engineering programmes. During the first wave of the pandemic, VIT (AP) offered a building as a quarantine centre to the state's health department and donated ₹75 lakhs to the Andhra Pradesh CM Relief Fund to aid the government's efforts in its fight against the novel Coronavirus.

"VIT (AP) hopes that such students do not face financial difficulties and will be able to complete their study on time," says Dr S V Kota Reddy, vice-chancellor of VIT (AP).



Home-grown talent elevated to the top leadership position of SRM University

SRM Institute of Science and Technology, an internationally acclaimed and Category 1 private university headquartered in Chennai with multiple campuses across India has appointed Prof Dr C Muthamizhchelvan as its 5th vice-chancellor.

Dr Muthamizhchelvan is a home-grown talent of SRM who had started his career as a lecturer in the department of physics and has been a part of the institution for over 35 years. His experience and global exposure would set a new milestone for the university in the ever-changing education space. The founder-chancellor on the occasion of welcoming the new vice-chancellor, sent a strong message to the internal community on his trust in fellow members and freedom to grow within and lead.

Dr Muthamizhchelvan, on assuming office as vice-chancellor, shared his



thoughts, "SRM IST is a unique breed of a multi-stream university which outgrew its challenges of the century through its agility,

valour and culture. It has been a land of opportunities for the academic and innovation community turning to the brighter sides for more

than a lakh of students and researchers. The new age challenges require a thorough understanding of the global learning ecosystem

and the strongly inherited strengths of the university to set a new benchmark in the education space. I believe, our visionary leader, the founder-chancellor has seeded this idea in me from my early days and has now handed over the mantle of vice-chancellor, SRM IST, to me to lead this prestigious university towards making a strong impact."

He further added, "As a home-grown talent of SRM my focus (I SEE) on this role will be to:

- ◆ Intensify efforts and consistently improve processes in the changing paradigm of teaching and learning.
- ◆ Scale up the aspiration levels of the students and research community.
- ◆ Encourage the innovative and enterprising minds to achieve their career goals.
- ◆ Envision socially relevant and sustainable goals to achieve an impactful model for the goodness of mankind and every life on this planet."

Electrification of remote villages in Kargil and Ladakh

Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (POWER-GRID), a Maharatna PSU under the Ministry of Power, has successfully commissioned 40 km of 11 kV transmission line from Lalung to Darchik under the rural electrification scheme PMDP (Prime Minister Development Programme). The line is used for the electrification of adjoining villages namely Lalung, Silmoo, Batalik, Darchik, Hurdass, Sinikcey and Garkon. With the commissioning of this line, all remote villages in Aryan Valley (in Kargil district) are now connected to the national grid through 220 kV Srinagar-Leh transmission system has been transferred to POWER-GRID as ISTS and POWER-GRID is committed to maintain high system availability and provide reliable power to the entire Ladakh region.

In addition to the above, electrification of 20 villages in Leh district has also been completed by POWERGRID which involves the commissioning of the project in

remote villages like Largiab in Nubra Valley.

Besides, a number of 11 kV lines totalling 150 km, connecting villages Wanla to Fatoksar, Lamayaru to Atishe, Fotorse and Saspol area have been established by POWERGRID and it connects all villages in-between.

POWERGRID has built a state-of-the-art 220/66 kV gas-insulated substations (GIS) at Drass, Kargil, Khalsti and Leh connecting the Ladakh region to the national grid through the 341 km of 220 kV transmission line emanating from Srinagar. 220 kV Srinagar-Leh transmission system has been transferred to POWER-GRID as ISTS and POWER-GRID is committed to maintain high system availability and provide reliable power to the entire Ladakh region.

The reliable power from the Grid will drive economic development in the region and bring prosperity to the remotest villages of Ladakh besides eliminating generation through DG sets.

CLW Women's Welfare Organisation organises tree plantation drive



World Environment Day was observed by Chittaranjan Locomotive Works' (CLW) Women's Welfare Organisation.

Based on this year's theme of 'Ecosystem restoration', Namita Kashyap, president of CLW-WWO, Satish Kumar Kashyap, general manager of CLW, and other members of CLW-

WWO actively participated and together they planted 101 saplings of different species in various areas of CLW.

This plantation drive was held over a period of two days. Namita urged everyone to plant a sapling for environmental protection. This plantation drive was carried out following social distancing norms.



Mini Ipe takes charge as the managing director of Life Insurance Corporation of India

DDB Mudra Group's new initiative

We, here at DDB Mudra Group, are closely involved in an initiative with Give India and Puma to raise funds for Covid relief in India.

As professionals, we see this initiative as an opportunity to volunteer our time, talent and influence to deal with a humanitarian crisis of epic proportion.

Your support can make a huge difference. The initiative is called Team For Humanity, and it represents an opportunity for all of us to come together in the face of a common enemy.

It is also an invitation to the global sports community to come together (putting rivalry aside) for the fight that matters most at this point in history — humanity vs COVID-19.

We have brought onboard Indian and global influencers like Virat Kohli, Usain Bolt, Lewis Hamilton, Kareena Kapoor among many others.

Fans, teams, leagues, associations, sportspeople, brands, networks, media, influencers and NGOs in India and abroad are joining hands to help in humanity's fight against covid.



POWERGRID organises O&M conference

K Sreekanth, chairman and managing director of Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, inaugurated the 16th Asset Management Conference on July 29, at Gurugram in presence of board members and CVO. Asset management employees from all over the country joined the conference through virtual mode. The objective of this conference was to devise strategies for operations and maintenance management of the rapidly increasing transmission system. A number of presentations and ideas were discussed and shared during the conference by various experts.

The event was organised adhering to all COVID-19 related protocols.

Placement updates from VIT

The first day of the placement season saw 81 students from VIT getting packages above ₹25 lakhs per annum, with the highest salary touching ₹75 lakhs per annum

Campus placements at Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) commenced on July 15 for the 2022 graduating batch with VIT sharing the first slot with eight super dream companies such as Microsoft, Dyte, Amazon, PayPal, D.E. Shaw India Pvt.Ltd, Morgan Stanley, Udaan and WorkIndia.

VIT adheres to a centralised placement process and this year too, the students from all the four campuses of VIT, Vellore, Chennai, Amaravati (AP) and Bhopal (MP) participated in all the campus recruitment processes. The entire process for all companies in the first slot, mainly pre-placement talk, online test, technical and HR interviews were conducted online as well as remotely.

Chancellor of VIT, Dr G Viswanathan announced the results of the campus placements by the companies in the first slot this week.

Microsoft selected 21 students for full-time vacancies. PayPal - 13 offers, Udaan - three offers, Dyte - six offers, WorkIndia - eight offers, D.E. Shaw India Pvt.Ltd - two offers, Morgan Stanley - 10 offers and Amazon - 13 offers. At present, the highest CTC is offered by Dyte with ₹75 lakhs annual salary package to two students from the 2022 graduating batch in VIT.

Followed by first slot placements, companies like Wells Fargo, Texas Instruments, Walmart labs, Komprise and Societe Generale are in the pipeline for forthcoming slots.

129 students from the 2022 graduating batch received pre-placement offers (PPO) from companies during their summer internships. Pre-placement offers were made by D.E. Shaw India Pvt. Ltd (one offer), Fidelity Investments (13 offers), HPE CTY (eight offers), JP Morgan (60 offers), Natwest (two offers), Wells Fargo (10 offers),

Visa (10 offers), Morgan Stanley (five offers) ZS associates (seven offers) and Appointy (3 offers) to summer interns. The other PPO results of VIT students who did their summer internships with Optum, SKF, Kristal, and Adobe are expected soon.

"Overall, 195 placements in super dream companies and internship offers were rolled out to VITians by top companies within two weeks of the placement season. VIT's placement calendar is packed till the end of August", said Dr Viswanathan.

He added that the other super dream companies like Walmart, Nielson, HealthRx, Thorogood, HyperVerge and Razor pay, which offer more than ₹10 lakhs per annum as CTC will be conducting their recruitment in the coming weeks. Other Dream companies, core engineering companies and IT service companies are expected to

hire VITians next month.

The PG internship placements which started in VIT in March is continuing simultaneously, 118 companies have already completed their remote hiring process and have selected 912 PG students from M Tech, MTech (Software Engineering), MCA and MSc courses of the 2022 graduating batch.

Intel, Qualcomm, NetApp, Nokia, Philips, Titan, PayPal, VMware, Media Tek and Danfoss are some of the prominent recruiters who hired interns from VIT this year. Intel and Nokia have hired more than 100 students for internships.

Dr Viswanathan congratulated all the students who got selected for internships and placements and wished the other students a great placement season. He also thanked all the companies that have accepted to conduct remote hiring in these challenging times.

'Cleanliness counts, everywhere'

HASHMAT ALI KHAN kickstarts *Swachata Pakhwada*, a cleanliness drive, in Jammu



A special cleanliness drive, *Swachata Pakhwada*, was inaugurated at Jammu's Department of Hospitality and Protocol under the guidance and active participation of director-general of hospitality and protocol, Hashmat Ali Khan, KAS, to bring a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of *Swachata*. The first day of the campus cleanliness drive began from the Circuit House, Canal Road in which all the staff of the Department of Hospitality and Protocol participated.

Speaking on the occasion, the director-general motivated the staff to set the highest standards of cleanliness as the core objective of the department since the department daily deals with numerous guests official and non-official, from within the UT as well as all across the nation. He further explained that this event is part of the 76th Independence Day celebrations and the motive behind these activities under *Swachata Pakhwada* is to ensure that every member of the staff realises their duty towards keeping their workplaces, and their surroundings, clean. He further urged the employees to pay attention to the minutest details as they form the bigger picture.

The event was organised by the joint director of Hospitality and Protocol, Anusuya Jamwal, KAS who informed that a complete calendar has been charted out for carrying out the *Swachata*



Pakhwada in all the houses and assets of Hospitality & Protocol viz Circuit House, State Guest Houses, Tara Niwas Udhampur, Director Generals Office, Joint Director Office and stores of H&P et al as per the government directions which will witness the participation of all the officials and imbibe in them the spirit of cleanliness and bring qualitative *swachata* improvement especially during these challenging times of Covid-19. She impressed staff to adopt the learnings of the event and make certain that the practices are replicated throughout the year.

Others who participated in the drive included the deputy director of Stores, Ashima Sher, assistant director, Amir Choudhary, Muneeb Umar, assistant director (Central), Dr Anand Thakur Sen, Accounts Officer, assistant of housekeeping Bua Ditta Sharma, manager of Circuit House, Puneet Kour and all the officials of the Department of Hospitality and Protocol. The drive ended with a commitment to carry out the objectives of the drive with the same zeal and enthusiasm in all premises for the whole year.

NTPC recognised for its digital initiatives

NTPC Ltd, India's largest integrated power producer has been bestowed with the DIGITAL PSU Award in Maharatna Category at the 8th PSU Award 2021 by Governance Now.

A K Gautam, director (finance), NTPC Ltd received the award from Dr Kiran Bedi, Former Lt Governor of Puducherry, during the virtual award ceremony.

In the past three years, the digitalisation efforts of NTPC have helped in creating more than 20 lakh files in PRADIP, which is equivalent to more than 50 crore paper pages. PRADIP, a unique initiative to make NTPC



paperless, stands for Pro-Active and Digital Initiatives to become Paperless. It has helped in saving close to 61,000 trees, a concrete step towards a more sustainable ecosystem. NTPC has also held over 2,35,000 meetings in virtual mode,

leading to a massive decrease in the company's carbon footprints.

The award is a testimony to NTPC's digitalisation efforts that have led to the digital transformation of the company. In the past few years, NTPC has successfully

implemented a number of IT initiatives such as PRADIP, virtual office platform - M365, vendor payment portal, CLIMS, PI apps, Suraksha app, RTM (Real Time Marketing) app. The largest integrated power producer is in the process of embracing new technological platforms - AI/ML, RPA, IOT, AR/VR to make the infrastructure more robust and seamless.

The digitisation efforts have been a definitive step towards making the internal processes robust and unified which is contributing immensely towards addressing the ESG parameters for NTPC.

POWERGRID to set up oxygen plant in Gurugram

An MoU has been signed between Maharatna PSU, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) and the deputy commissioner of Gurugram on August 4 for the supply and installation of PSA Type 2x50 Nm³/hr oxygen generation plant with bottling facility at Tau Devi Lal Stadium, Sector-38, Gurugram, Haryana under the CSR initiative of POWERGRID in Northern Region-I.

The aforementioned oxygen plant has a capacity of filling approximately 250 oxygen cylinders daily, which in turn would be distributed by the state



government through its distribution channels to rural as well as urban Gurugram.

The agreement was signed by Sanjay Sharma (Sr GM of POWERGRID) and Yash Garg, IAS, DC,

Gurugram. Vinayak Chauhan (Sr. GM, CSR) and Vinod P Baxla (Sr DGM, HR) from POWERGRID were also present along with other senior officials during the ceremony.



WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

●**Athletics:** Neeraj Chopra qualified for final by topping qualification round in men's javelin throw. Shivpal Singh finished 12th in group B qualification and 27th overall in men's javelin throw; failed to advance to final round.

●**Boxing:** Lovlina Borgohain lost to Busenaz Surmeneli of Turkey 0-5 in women's 69kg semifinal.

●**Golf:** Aditi Ashok at tied second and Diksha Dagar at tied 56th after round 1 in women's individual stroke play.

●**Hockey:** India lost to Argentina 1-2 in women's semifinal.

●**Wrestling:** Ravi Kumar beat Oscar Eduardo Tigreros (Colombia) in first round, beat Georgi Vangelov (Bulgaria) in quarterfinals, beat Nurislam Sanayev (Kazakhstan) in semifinal of men's freestyle 57kg.

Anshu Malik lost to Iryna Kurachkina (Belarus) in first round of women's freestyle 57kg; will play in repechage round.

Deepak Punia beat Ekerekeme Agiomor (Nigeria) in first round, beat Zushen Lin (China) in quarterfinals, lost to David Morris Taylor (USA) in semifinals of men's freestyle 86kg; will play for Bronze medal.

IN ACTION TODAY

●**Athletics:** K T Irfan, Rahul Rohilla and Sandeep Kumar in men's 20km race walk event. (01:00 pm)

●**Golf:** Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar in women's individual stroke play round 2. (04:00 am)

●**Hockey:** India vs Germany in men's Bronze medal match. (07:00 am)

●**Wrestling:** Vinesh Phogat vs Sofia Magdalena Mattsson (Sweden) in women's freestyle 53kg. (08:00 am).

Anshu Malik vs Valeria Koblova (ROC) in repechage round of women's freestyle 57kg. (second bout after 07:30 am start)

Ravi Dahiya vs Zavur Uguev (Russian Olympic Committee) in men's freestyle 57kg final. (ninth bout after 02:45 pm start)

Deepak Punia in men's freestyle Bronze medal match. (11th bout after 02:45 pm start)

Live on SONY TEN & SIX Network

PTI ■ CHIBA

Ravi Dahiya on Wednesday became only the second Indian wrestler to qualify for the title clash at the Olympic Games, when he sensationally turned around the 57kg semifinal bout by pinning Kazakhstan's Nurislam Sanayev but Deepak Punia was left to fight for Bronze medal after he lost his semifinal, here on Wednesday.

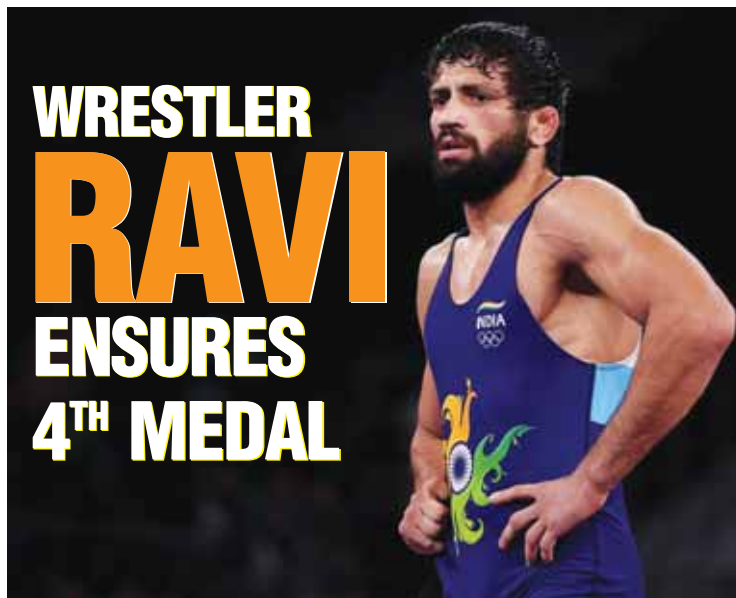
Before Dahiya, Sushil Kumar was the only Indian to make the Gold medal bout at the 2012 Olympics in London where he had settled for a Silver.

The fourth seeded Dahiya trailed 2-9 after Sanayev effected a few 'fitley' (leg lace) but as the clocked ticked away, Dahiya regrouped and got hold of his rival with a double leg attack that resulted in a 'victory by fall'.

"I had no business conceding that much lead against Sanayev. I am not happy with it," Dahiya told PTI when asked about his inspiring achievement.

It just shows the kind of standards the Indian from Nahri village in Haryana has set for himself.

"I have beaten Sanayev twice before, so I knew I can put it off despite trailing by a



Ravi Dahiya reacts after win against Kazakhstan's Nurislam Sanayev during the men's 57kg freestyle semifinal @Tokyo2020hi

huge margin. I was assured inside, but I should not have conceded lead and made it a close fight. That was pretty bad of me," he said.

"I still have some unfinished business to do. I came with a target here and that is not complete yet (winning

Gold)."

In the final on Thursday, Dahiya will face reigning world champion Russian Zavur Uguev to whom he had lost in the 2019 World Championship semifinals.

Despite a huge deficit, the 23-year-old Dahiya did not

panic, showing tremendous mental strength and dramatically turned the bout in his favour.

After the end of the first period, Dahiya had a 2-1 lead but Sanayev came prepared

and attacked the Indian's left leg, got a good grip and turned



India's Deepak Punia, top, and China's Lin Zushen in action on Wednesday AP

him thrice to log six points in a jiffy.

Suddenly, Dahiya's lead was gone and he was staring at a defeat but his superior stamina and technical prowess was still at work. The remaining one minute was enough for him to turn the tide and he did it in style.

He got hold of Sanayev with a double leg attack and then gripped him tightly with the Kazakhstan wrestler's back on the mat and finished the bout with a mighty 'pin'.

A dominant Dahiya had won both his previous contests on technical superiority en route the final.

Dahiya outclassed Colombia's Tigreros Urbano (13-2) in his opener and then

outwitted Bulgaria's Georgi Vangelov (14-4).

While Dahiya was a live-wire on the mat, Deepak Punia (86kg) made good use of a favourable draw to reach the semifinals but lost to the formidable American David Morris Taylor. He will now fight for Bronze on Thursday against the winner of the repechage round between Myles Amine and Ali Shabanau.

It was always going to be a herculean task for Deepak to trouble the American, the 2018 world champion and the reigning Pan-American champion.

It was hardly a contest as Taylor effected one move after another to win by technical superiority in the first period itself.

Deepak could make only one move on counter attack but the American did not give the Indian any chance to convert that into points.

The 22-year-old Deepak had earlier got past Nigeria's Ekerekeme Agiomor, the African championship Bronze medallist by technical superiority and then prevailed 6-3 over China's Zushen Lin in the quarterfinal.

Anshu Malik, on the other hand, lost her opening 57kg bout to European champion Irina Kurachkina but since the Belarus wrestler has

reached the final, the 19-year old Indian has got a second chance to be in medal round.

She will now compete in the repechage round on Thursday and if she wins, she will also fight for Bronze.

Dahiya will now be only the fifth Indian wrestler to win an Olympic medal.

KD Jadhav had become India's first wrestler and also the first individual Olympic medallist when he won a Bronze during the 1952 Helsinki Games.

After that, Sushil Kumar enhanced wrestling's profile by winning a Bronze at 2008 Beijing Games and bettered the colour of the medal by claiming a historic Silver in 2012 at London Olympics that made him India's only athlete with two individual Olympic medals for nine years.

The feat then has now been matched by shuttler PV Sindhu. In the same 2012 Olympics, Yogeshwar Dutt won a Bronze.

Sakshi Malik became the first Indian woman wrestler to win an Olympic medal when she took a Bronze in 2016 Rio Olympics.

This Tokyo edition could well be a watershed Olympics for Indian wrestling with both Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia also in contention for a medal.

Lovlina ends with Bronze

Tokyo: Indian boxer Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) signed off with a Bronze medal in her debut Olympic Games after a comprehensive 0-5 loss to reigning world champion Busenaz Surmeneli on Wednesday, bringing an end to the country's campaign in the sport here.

Up against quite literally a bully in the ring, Borgohain was completely out-punched by the Gold medal favourite Turkish boxer, who produced a thoroughly dominating performance.

Borgohain also coped a one point deduction in the second round for not paying attention to the referee's instructions despite a couple of cautions.

"I don't know what to say. I could not execute what I had planned. I could have done better," Borgohain said after the loss.

The Indian's start was not all that bad as she stood up to the strong challenge but she came undone after Surmeneli got down to connecting her vicious hooks



India's Lovlina Borgohain, right, exchange punches against Busenaz Surmeneli of Turkey during their women's welter weight semifinal boxing match PTI

and body shots.

The third round was especially punishing for Borgohain, who faced two standing eight counts during the bout.

Surmeneli was unrelenting in all three rounds after being unsettled only slightly in the opening few seconds when Borgohain tried to keep her at long range and struck only counter-attacking straight hits.

The flamboyant Turkish boxer didn't just out-punch her rival after that but also taunted her with some show-boating, including dropping her guard to dare the Indian.

Nonetheless, Borgohain goes home a history-maker as the 23-year-old has become only the third Indian boxer to ensure a podium finish at the showpiece after Vijender Singh (2008) and MC Mary Kom (2012).

Another heartbreak in hockey

Tokyo: A brave Indian women's hockey team put up a gritty performance but it was not enough to secure a maiden Olympic final berth as it lost 1-2 to world No 2 Argentina in a hard-fought semifinal on Wednesday.

India still have a chance to win the Bronze medal as they will take on Great Britain in the third-fourth place play-off match on Friday.

The Indians fought valiantly and gave Argentina a run for their money by taking the lead in the second minute through a penalty corner conversion by Gurjit Kaur.

But the Las Leonas bounced back strongly with skipper Maria Barrionuevo's (18th, 36th minutes) twin strikes from penalty corners to secure the hard-fought win.

The Netherlands will play Argentina in the final on Friday.

The bunch of 18 fearless and determined Indian women had already done the unthinkable when they stunned three-time champions Australia 1-0 on Monday to enter the Olympic semifinals for the first time.



Indian players react after defeat against Argentina in the semifinal match PTI

India has learnt to bounce back from losses: Marijne

Tokyo: The Indian women's hockey team has learnt to bounce back from losses, said coach Sjoerd Marijne, adding that the defeat to Argentina in the Olympic semifinal is history as the side focusses on claiming a historic Bronze.

"We came here to win a medal and still there's one (available). It's now about recovery, about the mindset. The good thing is, it's not always good that we lost a lot

in the past but we also have learned to deal with the losses," Marijne said after the match.

"So it's okay, what can we improve on from this match?"

The Dutchman feels India failed to grab their opportunities against Argentina, which eventually made the difference. "In these matches it is about taking your opportunities. Argentina did that better than us. With the PC, the

injection was not always perfect, the trapping was not good and then you can't play exactly the PC you want," he said.

"I can't be angry with the girls or be mad because we don't play these kind of matches so much. It's a whole new experience and you also have to learn how to play these matches. It's all about taking your opportunities. The intensity we showed in the last quarter, that was really good."

Neeraj into the final with one attempt

Tokyo: Medal contender Neeraj Chopra became the first Indian javelin thrower to enter the finals of the Olympic Games with a stunning throw of 86.65m in his opening attempt that put him on top of the qualification round on Wednesday.

The 23-year-old kept India's hopes of an elusive Olympic medal from athletics alive by earning a direct entry into the finals to be held on Saturday as he sent the spear well past the qualifying mark of 83.50m in his first attempt.

However, Shivpal Singh, failed to make the final cut with a below-par best throw of 76.40m, which he came up in his first attempt, to finish a lowly 12th in the Group B qualification which featured 16 athletes.

Competing in his first Olympics, Chopra took just a few seconds to make the final round. He topped the Group A contest as well as the two qualifications rounds and left the javelin arena after his first throw.

"I am at my first Olympic Games, and I feel very good. In warm-up my performance wasn't so good, but then (in the qualifying round) my first throw had a good angle, and was a perfect throw," Chopra said after his event.

Chopra is, however, under no illusion that the final will be a totally different contest where the world's best will go for podium finish.

"It will be a different feeling (in the finals), since it is my first time in the

Olympics. Physically we (all) train hard, and are ready, but I also need to prepare mentally.

"I will need to focus on the throw, and try to repeat this (performance) with a higher score," said the youngster who came into the Olympics with the fourth best throw (88.07m) this year.

Chopra's performance on Saturday will go down as one of the best performances by an Indian in the Olympics, as he finished ahead of Gold medal favourite and 2017 world champion Johannes Vetter of Germany.

Vetter, who had earlier said that Chopra will find it tough to beat him in the Olympics, struggled in his first two throws before crossing the automatic qualification mark with a 85.64m final throw.

The 28-year-old towering German, who came into the Olympics after having seven monster throws of over 90m between April and June, was lying at a dangerous seventh position after his first two throws but eventually qualified for the final at second overall behind Chopra.

Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, who had won a Bronze medal when he

Chopra clinched Gold in the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, topped Group B

to earn an automatic qualification to the finals with a second round throw of 85.16m.

He qualified for the finals at overall third behind Chopra and Vetter.

PTI

Aditi placed 2nd ahead of big names

Tokyo: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok got off to a brilliant start at the Olympic Games, carding a four-under 67 in the opening round for a share of the second spot at the Kasumigaseki Country Club on Wednesday.

Aditi, who caught the golfing world's attention five years ago at the Rio Olympics, shared the position with World No 1 Nelly Korda.

She was one shot behind the leader, Madalene Sagstrom of Sweden, who shot 66.

"I think I played better than I expected today because I had a lot of hybrids into the greens, so I didn't really expect to be like 5-under through 17," Aditi said.

Aditi may well have had a share of the lead but for a bogey on the 18th hole.

While Sagstrom shot a bogey free five-under 66, Aditi



had five birdies against one bogey and that on the closing hole.

She was placed well ahead of some big names in women's golf, including the formidable defending champion, Inbee Park (69).

India's other entrant in the

field, Diksha Dagar (76) had a rough start in her maiden Olympics as she had five bogeys and no birdies to lie at the tied 56th spot.

The 60-player field will play 18 holes each day and there will be no cut, so all players get to play 72 holes.

PTI

avoid unnecessary tackles in front of their circle.

Going by rankings, there is hardly anything to differentiate between the two sides as India are currently on third place and Germany on fourth. But Germany would be a tough nut to crack. Having lost 1-3 against Australia in the semifinals here, the Germans would be determined to prove a point.

Having failed to secure the Gold medal here after two successive yellow metals in 2008 and 2012 Games, the Germans had to settle for a Bronze in Rio 2016 and they would be determined to at least return with a podium finish from here.

In the Olympics, both the sides have faced each other 11 times recording four wins each and three games ending in draw.

India vs Pak on Oct 24

New Delhi: The marquee T20 World Cup clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan in all likelihood will be held on October 24, which is a Sunday, even though the ICC will be releasing the official schedule of the tournament in few days.

"As of now, Sunday, October 24 looks the likely option as the first week's Qualifying round matches starting October 17 will be held in Muscat, Oman," a source privy to developments in the ICC board said.

"So when the main round robin fixtures are played, it is better to start with an Indo-Pak game which will have the best TRP," India and Pakistan are slotted in Group 2 along with the WTC winners New Zealand and Afghanistan.

PTI

TTFI to issue show cause to Manika

New Delhi: Table Tennis Federation of India on Wednesday decided to issue a show cause notice to star paddler Manika Batra for her refusal to take national coach Soumyadeep Roy's help at the Tokyo Olympics.

Though Manika's coach Sanmay Paranjape was given access for training sessions in Tokyo, he did not have the accreditation to enter the field of play and a request to upgrade his access card was denied. In a show of protest, Manika had refused help from designated team coach Roy during her singles matches.

"Before she boarded the flight to Tokyo, she very well knew that her personal coach did not have field of play access. Therefore, she should not have acted the way she did. We will issue the notice tomorrow and Manika will have 10 days to respond and based on that we will decide what action to be taken further," TTFI secretary general said.

PTI

England all out for 183 on Day 1

PTI ■ NOTTINGHAM

England were all out for 183 in their first innings against India on the opening day of the first Test here on Wednesday.

Having reached tea at 138 for four, England lost their remaining six wickets for just 45 runs in the day's third and final session.

Skipper Joe Root made 64 off 108 balls, even as the others failed miserably to stand up to the Indian pace bowling attack. For the visitors, Jasprit Bumrah picked up four wickets for 46 runs, Mohammed Shami had 3/28, while Shardul Thakur bagged 2/41.

England scored 77 runs in 25.2 overs bowled in the afternoon session for the loss of two wickets, after scoring 61 in the first session.

The pitch had enough for the pacers in the first hour of play with the ball swinging and seaming around.

With India going in with four pacers, Shardul Thakur came into the side but the one



Indian players celebrate after England batsman Jonny Bairstow was declared out on Day 1 of first Test AP

spinner picked was Ravindra Jadeja, who didn't bowl in the first session.

Dropping premier spinner R Ashwin was a big call as he had been well prepared for the series opener with his prepara-

tion including a county game.

Earlier at tea, Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow frustrated Indian bowlers with solid Test match batting in challenging conditions before Mohammed Shami broke their 72-run stand by dismissing

the latter to leave England at 138 for four at tea on day one.

Like the first session, Indian pacers beat the batsmen regularly but Root (52 batting off 91 balls) and Bairstow (29 off 71) played with grit and patience to

thwart their attempts.

Shami was finally able to break their threatening stand by having Bairstow leg before at the stroke of tea. Shami got one to jag back in and India reviewed the umpire's decision successfully. England scored 77 runs in 25.2 overs bowled in the afternoon sessions for the loss of two wickets.

India had their tail up early on in the session when Shami had Dom Sibley caught at short mid-wicket in the third over post lunch. Shami made Sibley fall into a trap set for him with a full ball on his pads which the England opener flicked it straight to K L Rahul, leaving the hosts at 66 for three.

Bairstow joined Root in the middle and they ended up batting the rest of the session.

While the Indian pacers kept asking questions with the ball constantly moving around, Root seemed to find answers more often than not. He played with soft hands and close to his body, and was quick to latch on to the loose balls.