

**OPINION 6**  
CHINA'S 'FRIENDSHIP'  
MUST BOTHER PUTIN

**WORLD 8**  
GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS  
CASELOAD TOPS 193.6M

**SPORT 12**  
MI-CSK TO KICKOFF  
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BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY JULY 26 2021; PAGES 12 &amp; 4

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## BSY waits for 'orders' as exit looms large

BJP mulls  
Lingayat  
strongman's  
replacement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the longest-serving BJP Chief Minister and 'Lingayat' strongman BS Yediyurappa readies to pave the way for a new incumbent, the BJP central leadership on Sunday considered candidates for the top post who may lead the party in the 2023 Assembly polls in the State which is the BJP's 'gateway' to South India.

Yediyurappa, 78, on Sunday gave enough hints that he has been asked to exit after completing the two-year term of his fourth tenure at the helm which falls on July 26 (Monday).

With the countdown for the change of guard nearing, several names are doing the rounds including those of central leaders from Karnataka.

Given that 'Lingayat' seers are demanding that there should not be any change of



Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa visits area affected with rain-water in Belgaum district on Sunday

PTI

leadership, the BJP continued to play subtle and soft with BSY, as he is fondly called by people. On Sunday, BJP president JP Nadda said in Panjim, that Yediyurappa was doing good work and there was no leadership crisis in Karnataka.

Be that as it may, a change of guard seems inevitable with the BJP top leadership short-listing the names of frontrun-

ners for the Chief Minister's job. These include Basavaraj Bommai ('Lingayat'). At present he is the Home Minister of Karnataka and a close confidant of Yediyurappa.

Then there is the Mines and Geology Minister in the Karnataka Government Murugesh Nirani ('Lingayat') who is considered close to Union Home Minister Amit Shah; two-time MLA Arvind

Bellad ('Lingayat') backed by the RSS; BJP general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh (Brahmin); Union Minister Prahalad Joshi (Brahmin) and BJP general secretary CT Ravi (Vokkaliga).

The final decision would be taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah and the RSS's general secretary and second-in-command Dattatreya Hosabale, according to sources.

## India tightens its border security belt

Police stations  
on frontiers to  
form 2nd line  
of defence

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Amid hyper activities by Chinese PLA all along the Line of Actual Control, the Centre is creating a 'border belt' comprising all the police stations adjoining the frontiers that will act as a second line of defence after respective border guarding forces across the land border with various countries.

Typically, the Central paramilitary forces designated for the various border security roles are also known as border guarding forces like the BSF and ITBP among others, and act as the first line of defence. The border guarding forces are also designated as the Lead Intelligence Agency on their respective operational frontier.

While the ITBP secures the frontier with China, the BSF is deployed along the borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Sashasthra Seema Bal (SSB) secures the borders with Nepal and Bhutan. The Assam Rifles is deployed along the border with Myanmar.



The process of mapping the police stations falling under the border belt is underway.

This will help identify the police stations, districts, area, length of the border under their jurisdiction and the population covered by the border belt," a senior security official said.

The Union Home Ministry will coordinate with the police chiefs of the States and Union Territories along the border to initiate action in a time-bound manner.

As part of the overhaul of the police stations along the borders, the development of infrastructure is also being included in the Border Area Development Programme funded by the Centre. The Station House Officers of the border police stations are also proposed to be given a fixed two-year tenure to maintain continuity of the development

programmes and gather ground level intelligence.

The SHO of such police stations are also proposed to be included in the meetings of the Lead Intelligence Agency. Officers from the Crime Investigation Department (CID)/State Intelligence are also proposed to be posted in the border police stations.

For this, the Union Home Ministry, Intelligence Bureau (IB) and police chiefs of the States and Union Territories will coordinate to implement the proposals in a time-bound manner, they said.

In addition, use of optimum technology, technological surveillance solutions like anti-drone technology, foliage penetration radars, sensors, surveillance cameras and intrusion detection systems among others have been deployed for effective border management.

## CAPSULE

**PEGASUS ISSUE: RS MP MOVES TO SEEKING PROBE**  
New Delhi: Rajya Sabha member John Brittas has moved the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored probe into reports of alleged snooping of activists, politicians, journalists and constitutional functionaries using Israeli spyware Pegasus.

**MAHA MONSOON FURY: 113 DEAD, 100 MISSING**  
Mumbai: The number of deaths due to flooding, landslides and other rain-related incidents in parts of Maharashtra reached 113 on Sunday with one more casualty reported in the last 24 hours, while 100 people were missing after the monsoon fury.

**CRIC ABOLISHES RENEWALS OF LICENCES**  
New Delhi: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has abolished the requirement of periodic renewal of licence and registration issued to Customs Brokers and Authorised Carriers. This move is expected to help reduce the compliance burden on the trade, which had to otherwise file applications and submit numerous documents to renew their licences/registrations.

**28% PLAN TO TRAVEL: 3RD WAVE SET TO RISE**  
Mumbai: With as many as 28 per cent Indians planning to travel in August-September, which is also the time for some of the major festivals in the country, the risk of the third wave of the pandemic is set to rise, according to a survey. In a statement, online platform Zinnov also said its survey on April 12 had outlined the immediate second wave risk.

## Holiday turns nightmare as landslide kills nine

Three hurt as  
boulders fall  
on vehicle in  
Himachal

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Nine tourists were killed and three injured in a massive landslide in Sangla valley in Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur district on Sunday afternoon.

The incident was reported near Batsari village along the Sangla-Chitkul link road. Tourists from various States were travelling in a Tempo Traveller when heavy boulders fell on it killing nine people, including the driver on the spot. While two tourists escaped death they were hurt in the landslide and another person on the road also got injured.

A terrifying video footage of the landslide showed large



A bridge collapsed after a landslide at Batsari of Sangla valley in Kinnaur district on Sunday

PTI

chunks of rocks breaking off a mountain top and rolling down into the valley below. The landslide also led to a bridge collapse at Batsari and several roads were also reportedly blocked.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) offered condolence over the deaths of the tourists in the landslide. "An ex gratia of ₹2 lakh each from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund

(PMNRF) would be given to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the accident in Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh. ₹50,000 would be given to the injured," the PMO said.

"All arrangements are being made for the treatment of those injured in the accident. I wish them a speedy recovery," read another tweet from the PMO.

## Hyder's postmortem held at B'swar DHH

- 2 cartridges recovered from encounter site
- Diary found from gangster's pocket
- 144 imposed in Kendrapada till July 30

PNS ■ BALESWAR/ KENDRAPADA

The postmortem of slain gangster Siekh Hyder was held at the Baleswar District Headquarters Hospital in the presence of Magistrates amid tight security.

As per the rules, the proceedings were video-graphed. Before the postmortem, the family members of the deceased were allowed to see the dead body. Later, the body was handed over by police to the family to be taken to Kendrapada for last rites.

Four bullets were removed from Hyder's body, informed Baleswar ADMO Sushant Nayak. Sources said a small pocket diary containing phone numbers and names was found



in the pocket of Haider and seized by police.

Earlier on the day, a forensic team along with a Magistrate went to the site near Simulia where the encounter of Hyder had taken place on Saturday. The team seized two empty cartridges from the spot.

The probe into the incident was carried out in the presence of the Baleswar SDPO and the Simulia police station IIC.

Notably, the dreaded gangster, who was involved in more than 15 cases of murder, loot, extortion, tender-fixing and kidnapping in several districts of the State, succumbed to the gunshot wounds he received during the encounter.

## UPWARD AGAIN 371 new infections in Bhubaneswar

Active cases now 1,988

15 more die; 231 recovered

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

State capital Bhubaneswar on Sunday registered an upward figure of 371 new Covid-19 positive cases. With this, the total tally in the city surged to 98,066.

Out of the new cases, 263 were local contacts and 108 quarantine cases.

The local contacts included 15 cases each in Nayapalli and Patia, 14 in Khandagiri, 12 in Old Town, 11 in Niladri Vihar, 10 in Samantarapur and nine in Dumunda.

The active cases stood at 1,988 in the city.

Meanwhile, 15 more patients succumbed to the disease in the city, pushing the total death toll to 751.

However, 231 persons recovered on the day, increasing the total recoveries to 95,036.

## State has 1,833 new Covid +ve, 67 deaths

- Highest 24 casualties in Khordha
- Total fatality toll mounts to 5,512
- 2,108 more patients recovered

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State on Sunday registered 1,833 Covid-19 positive cases in the 30 districts and the State pool, with which the total tally increased to 9,67,548.

A total of 71,039 samples were tested in the last 24 hours and the test positivity rate (TPR) was 2.58 per cent.

The active cases in the State stood at 18,914.

Out of the new cases, 1,062 were from quarantine and 771 local contacts.

Khordha district reported the day's highest 490 cases followed by Cuttack with 240, Puri 139, Baleswar 129 and Jajpur 110.

The districts which reported below 100 cases were: Bhadrak 89, Kendrapada 87, Angul 77, Jagatsinghpur 61, Mayurbhanj 59, Sundargarh

47, Nayagarh 28, Keonjhar 24, Malkangiri 19, Gajapati 16, Dhenkanal 13, Rayagada 11, Bargarh and Subarnapur 10 each, Ganjam and Koraput nine each, Jharsuguda and Kandhamal eight each, Deogarh, Nabarangpur and Kalahandi six each and Balangir two.

Besides, 94 cases were reported from the State pool.

Meanwhile, another 67 patients succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours, mounting the total death toll to 5,512, the Health and Family Welfare Department said.

The maximum 24 deaths were reported from Khordha district followed by Angul and Keonjhar with 10 each, Sundargarh six, Puri five, Ganjam and Mayurbhanj two each, and Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Jharsuguda, Kandhamal, Kendrapada, Malkangiri and Nuapada one.

However, another 2,108 patients recovered on the day, increasing the total recoveries to 9,45,177.

## Zero medals but woman power on display

Mary, Manika,  
Sindhu shine

PTI ■ TOKYO

The shooters came undone once again and the hockey team took a hammering but badminton ace PV Sindhu, boxing great MC Mary Kom and table tennis star Manika Batra went about their jobs with trademark resolve to keep India's Olympic campaign on track despite a medal-less second day at the Games here on Sunday.

A day after Mirabai Chanu sent Indian spirits soaring with her weightlifting Silver, it was huge disappointment at the Asaka shooting range where the young Indian marksmen and women failed to make a single final.

It ended with another disappointment when the men's hockey team was literally toyed



India's MC Mary Kom, right, exchanges punches with Miguelina Hernandez Garcia of the Dominican Republic, during their women's flyweight 51-kg boxing match at the 2020 Summer Olympics on Sunday in Tokyo, Japan

AP

with by world number one Australia, which prevailed 7-1 in one of the most lopsided contests at this stage.

In between these two major disappointments, there were some successes to be celebrated with Sindhu, Mary Kom and Batra showcasing

the woman power of the contingent.

The 26-year-old Sindhu, seeded sixth, beat the 58th ranked Ksenia Polikarpova 21-7, 21-10 with consummate ease to start her quest for a second Olympic medal in style.

## With 7-1 win Aussies give India the stick in hockey

PTI ■ TOKYO

The Indian men's hockey team was pummeled 1-7 by world number one Australia in their second pool A match of the Olympic Games here on Sunday, a morale-shattering loss that exposed every possible chink in the side's armour.

The mighty Kookaburras simply toyed with the Indian defence after the first quarter and scored goals at will to comfortably secure their second consecutive win in the competition. For India, it was their biggest loss since Australian Graham Reid took charge of the team as coach in April 2019.

Australia looked dominant and were in complete control



India's Manpreet Singh, center right, meets with Australia's Jeremy Thomas Hayward (32) and goalkeeper Andrew Lewis Charter (30) after their men's field hockey match at the 2020 Summer Olympics on Sunday in Tokyo, Japan

AP

from the onset, scoring goals through Daniel Beale (10th minute), Joshua Beltz (26th), Andrew Flynn Ogilvie (23rd),

TOKYO 2020					
OLYMPICS: MEDAL TALLY TILL NOW					
RANK	COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
1	China	6	1	4	11
2	Japan	5	1	0	6
3	USA	4	2	4	10
4	Korea	2	0	3	5
5	ROC	1	4	2	7
6	Italy	1	1	3	5
7	Australia	1	1	1	3
7	France	1	1	1	3
9	Hungary	1	1	0	2
9	Tunisia	1	1	0	2
24	Belgium	0	1	0	1
24	Bulgaria	0	1	0	1
24	Colombia	0	1	0	1
24	Spain	0	1	0	1
24	Georgia	0	1	0	1
24	Romania	0	1	0	1
24	India	0	1	0	1



# 14.53 L cases pending in courts in State

Highest 1.6 lakh in Khordha dist

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As many as 14.53 lakh cases are pending for disposal in different courts in Odisha, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a reply in Parliament.

In response to an unstarred question of BJD member Samit Patra in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister said 14,53,079 cases are pending in various courts of the State. The highest 1,60,012 cases are pending for disposal in Khordha district and 1,31,029 cases pending in Cuttack district and 1,08,452 in Baleswar district.

Similarly, 62,970 cases are still pending in Angul district, 43,231 in Balangir, 42,077 in Bargarh, 86,550 in Bhadrak, 10,682 in Boudh, 9,356 in Deogarh, 35,512 in Dhenkanal, 8,084 in Gajapati, 65,205 in Ganjam, 37,179 in

**Orissa High Court has decided to continue virtual hearing of cases in view of Covid-19**

Jagatsinghpur, 56,037 in Jajpur and 36,230 in Jharsuguda.

The other districts' pending cases are: Kalahandi (34,111), Kandhamal (14,613), Kendrapada (33,444), Keonjhar (46,672), Koraput (32,160), Malkangiri (9015), Mayurbhanj (68,309), Nabarangpur (22,586), Nayagarh (21,011), Nuapada (21,011), Puri (68,106), Rayagada (68,106), Sambalpur (77,444), Subarnapur (11,436) and Sundargarh (92,470), the Minister informed.

Meanwhile, the Orissa High Court has decided to continue virtual hearing of cases in view of Covid-19. The High Court will continue to function through video-conferencing mode till July 30, the court has said in an order. All the Benches notified by the court for the period July 30 will function through videoconferencing.

# Pandian visits Baramunda bus terminal site

Project to be completed by June 2022

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Secretary V K Pandian on Sunday morning visited the project sites and reviewed the progress of Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) at Baramunda, a new road to connect CRPF Square to Institute of Mathematics, an affordable housing project at Chandrasekharpur and an incubation tower near Infocity in Bhubaneswar.

The ISBT, Baramunda project is being built by the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) over 15.5 acres at a cost of Rs 180 crore. It is targeted to be completed by February 2022. Pandian asked for resolution of the land-related issues and to ensure completion of the work at the earliest.

The BDA is constructing affordable housing project in Chandrasekharpur on PPP mode. The project with 2,600 houses is coming up over a 20.2-acre area, of which 6.5 acres is for the development by the PPP partner. The colony will have common facilities like primary school, primary health centre, shopping area,



phases. The total road of 13.6 km has been estimated at Rs 92 crore.

Currently, 5.17 km of the six-lane road is under construction connecting Xavier Square to Infocity Square. This project is expected to be completed by February 2022. Pandian asked for resolution of the land-related issues and to ensure completion of the work at the earliest.

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# BJP demands urban polls without more delay



**Or else to move impeachment motion against SEC**

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Sunday demanded that the Government and the State Election Commission (SEC) conduct local body elections without any delay, failing which the party would move an impeachment motion against the SEC.

BJP State president Samir Mohanty told reporters that since last three years there are

no people's representatives in the urban local bodies and everything is now controlled by bureaucrats, for which urban citizens are deprived of the various entitlements and schemes meant for them.

Mohanty alleged that the funds sent by the Centre for Centrally-sponsored schemes are being misappropriated by the bureaucrats.

"The State Government failed to conduct the civic body elections while the SEC has initiated a process to start panchayat polls, but the fact display of many that the SEC has not mentioned about conducting urban local body elec-

tions," he said.

Party spokesman Pitambar Acharya said that unless the State Government moves the High Court to conduct panchayat elections before the urban local body polls, the BJP would be forced to move an impeachment motion against the commission in Parliament.

It's quite unfortunate that the SEC has forgotten its Constitutional duty and is carrying the wishes of the State Government even though the terms of the municipal bodies have already expired three years ago, said Acharya.

# Artworks sent for display in Olympics



PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Indian Contemporary Arts Association (ICAA) organised an international virtual arts exhibition on Olympics games, Olympia, at the ICAA premises here.

The programme was inaugurated by former MP and former Indian Hockey Team Captain Dilip Tirkey. As many as 70 reputed artists from across the country and abroad participated. The event was coordinated by ICAA artist secretary Sanjib Biswal.

A video of the art show was prepared and sent to the Tokyo Olympics Committee for display at the Memorial Hall during the game. The participating artists included Minaketti, Patnaik, Rajeeb Lochan Sahoo, Mamata Samantary, Mohammad Anwar, Dityamaye Padhi, Ranjan Malik, Manoj Mohanty.

The Olympics Committee has already given permission for display of such art video during the game.

# IN ODISHA No primitive tribal has succumbed to Covid

All 314 affected PVTG persons have recovered

TATHYA ■ NEW DELHI:

As many as 314 persons from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) have been infected with Covid-19 so far. However, none of them died due to the virus. Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Bishweshwar Tudu told Parliament recently.

In a written reply to a question asked by Odisha's lone Congress MP Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, the Minister said all 314 PVTG persons have recovered from the disease. No PVTG person is there either in hospital or home isolation or at a quarantine centre, he said.

Informing about the measures taken by the Odisha Government to control spread of Covid-19 in the PVTG hinterlands, Tudu said a door-to-door survey was conducted by the Community Resource Persons (CRPs) jointly with ASHA and Anganwadi Workers.

About 64,214 households have been surveyed in 1679

PVTG villages so far while special vaccination camps have been held with 23,968 PVTG persons getting vaccinated. Assistance has been given to the tribal population by the Community Resource Person in COWIN registration, he said.

Masks and sanitisers have been distributed to the PVTG households. Local dialects-awareness messages in all the 13 PVTGs dialects have been prepared and are used, Tudu said.

In the border villages, the local administration has deployed police personnel to check entry of any outsiders from neighbouring States. Teams of dedicated health workers have been constituted to look into the PVTG areas and ensure timely treatment. Oxygen and ICU facilities have been arranged for use in any case of emergency treatment. Dedicated ambulances have been arranged to respond to address exigency issues.

Besides, a control room has been opened for assistance round the clock. A CM's relief package for all the PVTG households @ Rs 5,000 each has been announced and is being transmitted to their accounts through the DBT mode, Tudu added.

ACF DEATH

# Cops in Balangir to probe 'Bachelors' Party' thrown by ACF's wife

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI/BALANGIR:

A five-member team of the Balangir police on Sunday reached Balangir to intensify the probe into the mysterious death of ACF Soumya Ranjan Mohapatra.

The team is expected to carry out a detailed investigation into the 'Bachelors' Party' thrown by the ACF's wife Bidyabharati Panda at the Livestock Inspectors Training Centre (LITC) to which she had allegedly been accompanied.

Notably, Bidyha was a student of the LITC and a photo of her student days went viral on social media recently.

While being queried upon the list of persons to be questioned by them, a police officer maintained that they can share information only after the completion of the probe.

Notably, DFO Sangram Keshari Behera, along with Bidyabharati have been named



as the suspects in the alleged murder case of the ACF.

While Gajapati SP gave a clean chit to the DFO in the case on Friday, he later changed his statement by saying the matter is currently under investigation.

However, the lawyer of Soumya's father had called the investigations by the police as "arbitrary" and questioned the role of the DFO in the case. He could give a clean chit to the DFO without proper questioning.

# Culture Dept officer goes missing

WIFE SEEKS CM INTERVENTION

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The wife of Santosh Kumar Dalabehra, Desk Officer of Culture Department at the Lok Seva Bhawan, on Sunday alleged that her husband has gone missing for a month allegedly due to harassment by senior officials.

Manjulata sought intervention of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and ST Secretary VK Pandian for tracing her husband.

In a letter, Manjulata alleged that though she filed a missing complaint with the Sabeed Nagar police a month back, they are yet to take any action. She urged the Chief Minister and the ST Secretary to direct the police to take appropriate steps so that her husband can be traced soon.

She apprehended that Santosh might have taken any wrong action for work pressure put on him by his higher officer. She even expressed suspicion that he might have been kidnapped.

She had not revealed the name of the harassing officials, but he had said that a woman officer always used to harass him over work-related issues.

"My husband did not have any enmity towards anyone. We cannot think of the reason behind his disappearance. We suspect he could have been kidnapped or he left on his own to escape the work pressure," she added.

# BPUT to provide insurance to students admitted in year 2020-21

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR:

The Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) has decided to provide insurance to its students admitted in the academic year 2020-21.

All students in the 160 colleges affiliated by the BPUT would be insured till completion of their courses. About 33,550 students are going to get the benefit, official sources said.

Financial assistance would be provided against unforeseen events such as parents or self due to accident, permanent/partial disability of self or parent, hospitalisation of self, loss of laptop/study material of self, etc.

In case of death of a student due to accident, parents would get Rs 2 lakh while Rs 1 lakh would be provided to a student in case of accident resulting in irreparable loss of sight of one eye or loss of use of one limb.

Rs 1 lakh would be given to a student who has an accident resulting in grievous injury to any limb.

Reimbursement of the cost up to Rs 50,000 would be extended to a student in case of hospitalisation due to illness/disease/injury.

Moreover, an assistance of Rs 2 lakh would be given if a student or an earning parent/guardian becomes permanently totally disabled because of an accident.

If death of an earning parent/guardian (as per University record) occurs due to an accident, the student is eligible to get Rs 2 lakh.

## CONTEMPORARIES

# Let there be no 'hyperbolic verbiage' in charge-sheets



S JYOTIRANJAN

Invoking the Supreme Court in AK Roy Vs Union of India, the Delhi High Court has recently in the Asif Iqbal Tanha Vs State of NCT Delhi case underlined the significance of the observation of the apex court in the aforesaid judgment and quoted, "The life and liberty of the person cannot be put on peril of an ambiguity". The fact remains that last month, the Delhi HC granted bail to student activists Natasha Narwal, Devanagana Kalita and Asif

Iqbal Tanha in the main north-east Delhi riots conspiracy case filed under the stringent anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). While passing orders in this case, the court took serious note of the incompetence of the state to make out prima facie cases against the accused while justifying their arrests.

The decision of the court has, however, been appealed by the State, but what remains is to brood over for a while about the observations made by the court. The court has been critical of the State and has observed, "We find ourselves unpersuaded and unconvinced with this submission since we find it is not founded on any specific factual allegation and we are of the view that the mere use of alarming and hyperbolic verbiage in the subject charge-sheet will not convince us otherwise. In fact, upon closer scrutiny of the submissions made on behalf of the State, we find that the submissions are based upon inferences drawn by the prosecuting agency and

not upon factual allegations."

The court's criticism of the State for just being inclined to resort to "alarming and hyperbolic verbiage" in the charge-sheet instead of factual allegations and such charge-sheet almost being premised upon the inferences drawn by the prosecuting agencies about the involvement of the accused in a conspiracy to incite or participate in the riots without elucidating any specific role, is a state of affairs mostly adhered to across the nation in such cases. Accordingly, the court in Tanha's order said that in the charge-sheet, there were no specific allegations other than "those sought to be spun by mere grandiloquence".

The court further observed, "We are constrained to express that it seems that in this case, to suppress dissent, in the mind of the State, the line between the constitutionally guaranteed right to protest and terrorist activity seems to be getting somewhat blurred. If this mind-set gains traction, it would be a sad day for democracy".

Such modus operandi of

the prosecuting agencies shows that they have perhaps not heeded to the caution of the apex court in AK Roy case, that is, not to put the life and liberty of the person on peril of an ambiguity. And the result is, the charge-sheets filed in the riots cases often make uniform state of affairs about acts of violence to be a part of 'deep-rooted conspiracy hatched under the garb' of the particular protests, as in this case the anti-CAA protests, intending to spread misinformation and create communal tensions. But fact remains that such assertions are ambiguous and will never pass the muster in the eyes of law, being situated upon the foundations of a very wide interpretation of constitutional liability and which may also extend to include the bystanders and media persons covering that event, which indeed is ridiculous and laughable in the absence of an action or omission on their part making them part of the unlawful conspiracy, this jurisprudence has also been ressonated in the

Supreme Court's decision in Mithu Naicker Vs State of Tamil Nadu. Such biased approach of terrorism and the practice of investigating or prosecuting agencies are unwelcome even though we follow an adversarial system of justice.

This indeed is a dangerous apprehension, he trended to routinely lay emphasis on fictitious or perspective-based inferences of the prosecuting agencies and not upon material fact. For example, in Tanha's case, Faizan Khan, a salesman at a mobile store, was charged with committing a 'terrorist act' under Section 15 of the UAPA, for being part of the conspiracy and acting as alter-ego of Tanha, as he issued and activated a mobile SIM card some months before the riot. However, the court found no link between his act and that of the other accused.

The court further noted that prosecution was even unable to establish the fact of, "actual knowledge" of Faizan, about the plan to commit offences alleged in this case.

Therefore, the court in the context of definition of 'ter-

rorist Act' in Section 15 UAPA observed, "The phrase must partake of the essential character of terrorism and the phrase 'terrorist act' cannot be permitted to be casually applied to criminal acts or omissions that fall squarely within the definition of conventional offences as defined inter alia under the IPC".

There is no denying the fact that mere grant of bail to Natasha, Kalita and Tanha does not amount to an exoneration of guilt, but it is definitely indicative of the fact that the prosecuting agencies have failed to make out a prima facie case even after completion of investigation in this case owing to perspective-based filing of charge-sheet and not fact-based one.

The kind of criminal jurisprudence we follow lays importance to presumption of innocence of an accused until proved guilty and pre-trial detention of protesters may lead to (as the court observed), "apart from militating against the presumption of innocence, pre-trial detention would lead to needless psychological and phys-

ical deprivations." The court also expressed liberal views about the nature of protests and extended leniency to the protesters and observed, "Protests against Governmental and Parliamentary actions are legitimate; and though such protests are expected to be peaceful and non-violent, it is not uncommon for protesters to push the limits permissible in law".

The essence of the court's order in Tanha's case lies in the fact that the State and prosecuting agencies should refrain from perspective or inference-based presumptions and usage of 'alarming and hyperbolic verbiage' in drafting charge-sheets while being inclined to resort to a cult of pre-trial arrest and detention of protesters and should, instead, go for fact-based evidence and strict application of law and rule of law prevails.

(The writer is a lawyer and public policy expert and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies at School of Mass Communication, KIIT University. He can be reached at sjyotiranjan3@gmail.com)

# Two new foot over-bridges on city NH



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Two foot over-bridges would be constructed on the National Highway in the Capital city, one near the Hotel Crown and another at Palasuni. This was informed by Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi on Sunday.

"I am glad that my requests for foot over-bridges near Hotel Crown and at Palasuni in Bhubaneswar have been allowed by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)," she said.

The two projects would be carried out at an estimated expenditure of Rs 1.25 crore each.

## MANN KI BAAT

# Modi praises Odisha YouTuber Isak Munda

35-year-old man famous for his video on Pakhala

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Mann Ki Baat programme this Sunday praised YouTuber Isak Munda of Babupali village under Jajmura block of Sambalpur district.

"Isak Munda ji hails from a village in Sambalpur district of Odisha. Isak ji once used to work as a daily wage but now he has become an internet sensation. He is earning a lot through his YouTube channel. In his videos, he shows prominently the local dishes, traditional ways of cooking, his village, his lifestyle, family and food habits. His journey as a YouTuber began in March 2020 when he posted a video relat-

ed to Pakhala, the famous local dish of Odisha. Since then, he has posted hundreds of videos. This effort of his is different for many reasons. Specially because through this, people living in cities get a chance to watch the lifestyle about which they don't know much. Isak Munda ji is celebrating by blending culture and cuisine equally and inspiring us too", Modi said.

It was March 26, 2020 when 35-year-old Isak Munda uploaded his first video on YouTube. Little did he know that the move would change his life and make him one of the most successful YouTubers in the country!

Munda's decision of creating his YouTube channel 'Isak



munda eating' was not an initiative to showcase any talent, as done by others. Rather, it was a desperate attempt to earn some money to make ends meet and ensure survival of his family members, his wife, an eight-year-old daughter, a six-year-old son, a five-year-old daughter and a three-year-old

daughter, at a time when he and the entire nation were reeling under job loss due to the pandemic situation. A Class-VII pass-out, Munda worked as a construction worker and was struggling for survival at that time due to lack of work amid nationwide lockdown.

He later came to know

about the process of uploading videos of YouTube and monetising those. With a savings of Rs 3,000 and a loan from a micro financing company, he bought a smartphone and started recording videos of his random day-to-day activities, especially food consumption.

The very first video uploaded by Munda was a clip of his having rice and sambhar at his house. As the video went viral and received overwhelming response with immense 'likes' and 'shares', it encouraged him to record more such videos and post them on YouTube.

A year later, Munda is now a lakhpati and a noted content creator on YouTube. "Three months after running the channel, I received Rs 37,000 in my bank account from YouTube. A month later, I got Rs 5 lakh," said Munda.

## Army-like uniform of VIMSAR guards protested

### Demo held by ex-Army personnel in Sambalpur

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

A group of retired defence officers of Sambalpur has demonstrated before the VIMSAR authorities to blacklist the Executive Security Agency deployed in VIMSAR Burla that was using the uniform alike Army.

Uniform apart, the security agency is involved in a lot of illegal activities in VIMSAR and Burla township, alleged the ex-Army officers. Led by Col. Pravat Kumar

Panda, the ex-army personnel went in a vast procession from Burla police station to the camp office of the security agency inside the hospital campus to ask them the reason behind using Army like uniform where they had a hot exchange of words.

The demonstrators warned them not to use the uniform of Army saying that the security staffs were not worth wearing them. They removed the stars from the dress of the security personnel and dragged them to the office of Medical Superintendent Dr LM Nayak. The Medical Superintendent also asked them not to use uniform having similarity with Army uniforms.

"We have sacrificed a lot for the country under many

difficult situations. Our uniform is our pride. But these people in the security agency who are involved in many nefarious activities are wearing uniforms similar to Army," lamented Col Panda. He alleged that the security agency deployed had a bad reputation and instances of many illegal activities including atrocity to women security guards were against it. Hence, the police and local administration need to take stringent action against it," he demanded.

When contacted, Superintendent of VIMSAR Dr Nayak said that such a sensitive issue was not under his knowledge. "But after knowing it, we asked the security agency to change the dress pattern and they also obliged instantly," he clarified.

## INBRIEF

### TRIBUTES PAID TO KALPATARU DAS ON DEATH ANNIV

Jajmura: The death anniversary of former Rajya Sabha member and former Dharmasala MLA Kalpataru Das was observed at Dharmasala on Sunday. Speakers recalled his various welfare and development projects carried out by Das in the Assembly constituency. Das' son and incumbent Dharmasala MLA Pranab Kumar Balabantary and others garlanded the statue. Plantation drives and six blood camps were held on the occasion. Total 1,026 units of blood were collected. Among the guests, MLAs Snehanigrahi Chhuria, Byamakesh Ray and Ashok Kumar Bal and Block Chairman Pravat Kumar Balabantary were present.



### NTPC DARLIPALI UNIT-II TRIAL OP HELD

Sundargarh: The trial operation of the second 800MW unit of NTPC Darlipali in Sundargarh district was successfully completed on July 21. Trial operation involves running the unit for 72 hours continuously at full load to demonstrate the capability of the unit. NTPC Darlipali Business Unit Head AK Samalaya appreciated the efforts of the employees and all stakeholders on the astounding achievement. With this, the total installed capacity of NTPC group has become 66,875 MW. The installed capacity of NTPC Darlipali is now 1,600MW.

### LOCAL TALENTS MAKE ALBUM 'TERE ANESE'

Sundabeda: A group of young talents from Koraput district have made a Hindi music album entitled 'Tere Anese' to entertain the people with local essence. The album has been uploaded in the YouTube. Many here have appreciated the efforts of the new budding musical group. While music has been composed by Soumya Ranjan, the album has been directed by Suman and choreographed by Nukul Nag.

# JSpur MLAs urge CM for M'nadi barrage at Santara

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

For the first time, all four MLAs of Jagatsinghpur district got united in a single platform on Thursday and raised a vital public issue pertaining to the management of Mahanadi water and its proper distribution across the district. They appealed to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to build a barrage across the river at Santara near Paradip.

The MLAs want diversion of Mahanadi water for useful purposes such as irrigation, industry, tourism, river transport, drinking water, flood management and storage of surplus water downstream.

The proposed barrage is estimated to cost Rs 560 crore. It would benefit the people of

Biridi, Raghnathpur, Balikunda, Erasama, Jagatsinghpur, Tiroli and Kusiting blocks in Jagatsinghpur district and Mahakalapada, Derabis, Gardapur, Nischintakoli and Salipur blocks in Kendrapada district, the MLAs petition to the CM stated.

The legislators point out that lakhs of cusecs of water flowing from the Mahanadi and its tributaries are discharged to sea as there is no barrage from Cuttack to Paradip for water storage, control and distribution.

Jagatsinghpur district's economy is important for the State for industry and agriculture. Paradip is known as an industrial hub and agriculture is the hereditary profession for people. Water is a vital com-

ponent for both industry and agriculture. Even though two major canals, Taladanda and Machhagagan, are flowing in the district, it is not sufficient to meet the irrigation requirement.

Industries in Paradeep are depending on water from the Taladanda Canal. Even the IOC oil refinery is bringing water from Cuttack making its own independent arrangements. Lakhs of cusecs of Mahanadi water is perennially going waste by flowing into sea.

Building a barrage and diversion of Mahanadi water for useful purposes had been first raised by late environmentalist Sankhananda Behera and late Kaibarta leader Govinda Tarai seven years ago. They had urged for a barrage

across the Mahanadi at Bhatumundi near Paradip and apprised the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister and the Central Water Resources Ministry.

Based on both leaders' demand, a Central team and State Water Resources Department engineers had visited the proposed barrage site several times but were of the opinion that building a new barrage over the Mahanadi near Paradip is technically unfeasible. The present demand by the MLAs for building a barrage at Santara is stated to renew the old one with a new location.

On a flip side of the issue, residents living in Zillanasi panchayat, villagers from Bhandana under Kujang block and people living in the Paika



delta area near Rahama are opposing the proposed barrage at Santara.

Zillanasi panchayat, an island of Kujang block, is likely to be submerged and a few villages located on the

## BJP meets Padmapur Sub-Collector

### Crop insurance fraud

PNS ■ BARGARH

A BJP delegation met Padmapur Sub-Collector Trilochan Patra on Saturday along with some farmers who have been victims of crop insurance fraud. They alleged that crop insurance money in the name of farmers was large-

ly bungled in the area. Sub Collector Patra promised to take necessary steps in consultation with the relevant officials.

Notably, Padmapur sub-division of Bargarh district is a drought-prone area, with the locals relying mainly on rainwater during cultivation. There is no irrigation facility and droughts occur every year due to low rainfall. The farmers in the area therefore suffer crop loss.

However, the irregularities in crop insurance money payment have triggered much discontent among them.

The BJP delegation included Rajbodasambar Block Chairman Kumar Mani Naik, Padmapur Nagar president Sunil Agrawal, Nagar general secretary lawyer Harishkar Singh, Block MP representative Srikant Panigrahi, Chinmay Kumar Panda, senior leader Subash Patra.

## In 1.5 months, 12 die of snakebite in Sundargarh

### Treatment facility in all health centers demanded

MALAY RAY ■ SUNDARGARH

At least 12 persons died in snakebite during the last one and a half months in Sundargarh district, raising a concern here. The deceased include five children, two minor children, three women and two male persons.

Social worker Santanu Kusum along with his associates met Sundargarh Additional District Magistrate Biswajit Mahapatra recently and demanded treatment facilities in all health centres in the district for snakebite.

He also demanded that necessary steps be taken to assess the death cases due to snakebite and ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh to each deceased be provided soon.

According to sources, on June 1, one Ankit Khadia (5), son of Kishore Khadia, a native of Phulbari Khadiapada under Bargaon block of district, died in snakebite. Similarly, on June 9, one woman identified as Sina

Munda, a resident of Bhanipalli village under Koirab block, died in snakebite and one Kartik Purnam (10) of Suidhi village under Lathikata block died for the same cause.

The other snakebite death cases were Bijay Majhi (11) of Udaruma Mahipada village under Kutra block (June 12); Pradeep Kumar of Nakebhal village under Kutra block (June 22); Sukmini Munda, a native of Karda village under Gurundia block (June 30); Angel (9 months old), daughter of Bhuben Oram of Madhupur village under Lahumpada block (July 7); Anima Sarapatia (8), daughter of Bhabasgar Sarapatia of Singarpada village under Bargaon block (July 8); Raju Induar of Kambhal Andhari village under Lathikata block (July 12); Aiyash (14) of Ganjutola village under Birsra (July 15); Sonali Mohanty (15) of Gopinathpur under Bonei block (July 16) and Sabita Tirkey of Mahadevpara under Badishkara block (July 16).

ADMS has directed the emergency section to take necessary steps for payment of financial assistance to the family members of the deceased.

# Ensure necessary protection to children through yoga



■ DINESH PRASAD SWAIN

Prolonged closure, for almost one and a half years, of education institutes throughout the country, has been the cruellest blow of this pandemic situation. It was totally unexpected and beyond the stretch of anybody's imagination.

Physical and interactive classes have been replaced by online classes. The students have to remain indoors, that is, confined within their homes. These do the exact opposite of contributing to the nurturing of their health and mind because it's common knowledge that a sound mind needs a sound health. Thus, the online classes have deprived the students of any type of physical activities; and it must be admitted that this is doing an irreparable damage to their physical and mental health. This apart, senior students at the colleges pass through various emo-



tional and physical problems which they can take care of through physical activity and yoga.

None can, however, predict

how long such a situation will continue. People are afraid of a third Covid wave. Therefore, it is likely that it will take a very long time for the situation to be

normal. Thus, it is necessary for people to be cautious and take requisite protection. Under these circumstances, the parents have certain responsibilities they must fulfil. They should not deprive their children of any type of physical activity. They can make them take the recourse to yoga which will be of immense advantage to them.

Following the yogic way of life may lead one to actualise the higher purpose of life with health and wellbeing. First of all, one should identify the strengths as well as the weaknesses in his personality. Then,

he needs to fulfil the basics of a healthy body to become harmonised and balanced in the current situation by demonstrating the yogic values and skills. Regular yoga practice has a very profound effect on the human body and mind and is, thus, a most useful tool for the yogic management of various disorders and maintenance of health. Developing the flexibility yogasanas or the physical postures increases the blood circulation with adequate nutrients to all the muscles and joints. Backward bending postures expand the chest and encourage inhalation and they

are associated with the attitude of embracing life. Forward bending postures are associated with chest compression and exhalation and they induce relaxation. Spinal twisting postures strongly influence the abdominal muscles, alter the body's stretching and compressing them as the body twists from one direction to the other. Inverted asanas improve health, reduce anxiety and stress and increase self-confidence. Then, Pranayama utilises breathing to influence the flow of vital energy in the psychic channels of the body. Its practice emphasises inhalation and exhalation

at the beginning in order to strengthen the lungs and balance the nervous system and improves brain power. Enhancing the vitality, it voluntarily regulates the breath and strengthens the immune system as well as helps the healing power. However, various principles of social as well as personal codes of conduct with proper food habit, intake of water, sufficient sleep or rest should be taken into care to attain perfection in every sphere of life.

(Dr Swain teaches in the Department of Yogic Science, Sri Sri University, Cuttack)

# 'Bharat Jodo Andolan' need of hour: Modi



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said there is need of a movement for "Bharat Jodo" on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's "Bharat Chhodo Andolan" as India enters the 75th year of its independence.

Addressing people in his monthly radio programme "mann ki baat", the Prime Minister touched on a range of issues including "khadi" and adapting new techniques and technologies to improve productivity and living conditions besides the "Kargil Divas".

Before signing off, he also said Covid-19 is still around and following protocol is the key to safety.

Modi started off with the Tokyo Olympics and complimented the sportspersons for reaching where they are after overcoming numerous hurdles in life. He appealed all to cheer up Indian olympic sportspersons on social media.

"Our Victory Punch Campaign for the support of Olympics sportspersons has begun. Do share your Victory Punch with your team... Cheer for India," said Prime Minister. Affirming that feeling of patriotism unites, Modi

reminded that Monday (July 26) is 'Kargil Vijay Diwas' as well.

"The Kargil War is a symbol of bravery and patience on part of India's Armed Forces which the whole world has watched. This time this pride-filled day will be celebrated amid Amrit Mahotsav. That is why this day becomes all the more special. I want you to read the enthralling saga of Kargil... let us all bow to the bravehearts of Kargil," he said.

The Prime Minister said to commemorate 75 years of freedom, 'Amrit Mahotsav' had commenced on March 12 from Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram and felt that there was a need for uniting India by connecting people.

"On this very day, Bapu's Dandi Yatra too was revived... since then, from Jammu-Kashmir to Puducherry; from Gujarat to the Northeast, programmes in connection with Amrit Mahotsav are being held across the country," he said.

The Prime Minister said "just the way the Quit India Movement (Bharat Chhodo Andolan) steered under Bapu's leadership, every citizen today has to lead a Bharat Jodo Andolan (United

## Khadi sale grew manifold across country since 2014

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Meanwhile, KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena has said that sale of Khadi products across the country has grown manifold since 2014, thanks to the repeated appeals by the Prime Minister to promote Khadi.

Since October 2016, the single-day sale at Khadi India's Flagship Outlet in Connaught Place, New Delhi, has crossed Rs 1 crore mark on 11 different occasions. This record performance of Khadi found a special mention in the latest episode of Prime Minister's radio program "Mann Ki Baat" aired on Sunday.

Saxena said what made this performance even more significant is the fact that Khadi's single-day sales exceeded ₹1 crore for 4 times

**The Kargil War is a symbol of bravery and patience, says PM**

in October - November 2020, despite the economic distress and the fear surrounding Corona pandemic. Earlier in 2018 also, the single-day sales at Khadi's CP outlet had crossed Rs 1 crore mark for 4 times.

On 2nd October 2019, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) registered the highest single-day sale of Rs 1.27 crore at the CP outlet which continues to be a record till date.

"It is because of the Hon'ble PM's appeals that a large number of people particularly youths have been inclined to buy Khadi. The growing buzz around 'Swadeshi' has significantly helped lakhs of village industries prosper even during the challenging times of Covid-19 pandemic," Saxena said.

India Movement)."

He said "It is our duty to ensure that our work helps in closely knitting and binding our India which is filled with diversity."

He again emphasized on the need for self-reliance and going "vocal for local."

"We can contribute to nation building even while performing our routine chores... such as 'Vocal for Local' Supporting local entrepreneurs, artists, craftsmen, weavers should come naturally to us. The National Handloom Day on the 7th of August is an occasion when we can strive to attempt that," he said.

The Prime Minister said the National Handloom Day has a remarkable historic background as on this very day in 1905, the Swadeshi Andolan had begun.

Modi pointed out that in the rural and tribal regions of the country, handloom is a major source of income. This is a sector that comprises lakhs of women, weavers and craftsmen.

Modi said that recent efforts on your part will give rise to a new hope in weavers," he said.

## India, US to discuss Afghanistan, Covid crisis during Blinken visit



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the USA will discuss the fast deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing fight against the coronavirus pandemic during the two-day visit of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken beginning Tuesday, July 27. During his talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, terrorism emanating from Pakistan funding of terror groups will also figure. Blinken will meet National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi too.

Given the growing strategic and defence ties over the past few years, the two sides are also likely to explore ways to further strengthen relations including exercises and transfer of technology. The two delegations will also do the groundwork for the 2+2 dialogue of defence and foreign ministers to be held in the US later this year.

Highlighting some of the key features of Blinken's visit, the first ever to India after assuming new charge, sources

said here on Sunday Jaishankar is in regular touch with him for the past few months through telephone conversations. The two leaders met when Jaishankar visited US in May and later on the sidelines of the G-7 and G-20 summits in UK and Italy respectively.

Indicating US President Joe Biden's keenness to have strong relations with India, the US Secretary of State is the third senior member of the Biden administration to visit India after defence secretary Lloyd Austin in March and special presidential envoy for climate John Kerry in April.

While the two sides are likely hold intensive review of

the situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban controlling major part of the country, India will also convey its concern about the instability in Afghanistan spilling over into the Indian subcontinent.

Moreover, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists now currently fighting alongside the Taliban may also target Kashmir, sources said.

They said the implications of the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, and the need for sustained pressure on Pakistan over terrorism financing and terror havens will be part of the agenda for talks between India and US.



As regards the ongoing campaign against the corona pandemic, they said the two leaders will focus on supply of vaccine raw materials, and economic recovery efforts.

India will continue to push for ensuring open and consistent supply chains for materials and items needed for vaccine production, as the country ramps up production for both domestic vaccination and global supply thereafter, sources said.

Also, the need for resilient supply chains for critical medicines and healthcare equipment will figure in the talks. India may also stress the need for gradual resumption of international travel while maintaining health protocols, especially easing the mobility of students, professionals and business travellers, and allowing travel for family reunions and humanitarian issues.

Having forged an alliance as part of the Quad, the two ministers will discuss ways to enhance engagement like the possibility of a meeting of foreign ministers of India, Australia, Japan and the US later this year.

The two sides will also take forward the Quad vaccine partnership, which was launched at the first virtual summit of the group in March, to enable the supply of made-in-India Covid-19 vaccines to countries in the Indo-Pacific from early 2022.

Jaishankar and Blinken are also likely to lay the groundwork for the Quad summit and bilateral meetings between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Joseph Biden due to be held in Washington later this year, sources said.

## PC seeks JPC probe into Pegasus snooping



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram on Sunday said the Government should either call for a joint parliamentary committee probe into the Pegasus snooping allegations or request the Supreme Court to appoint a sitting judge to investigate the matter even as he demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi make a statement in Parliament clarifying whether there had been surveillance or not.

The former home minister said he was not sure that one can go to the extent of saying that the entire electoral mandate of 2019 was tainted by "unlawful snooping" but added that it may have "helped" the BJP to score that victory which has been "tainted" by the allegations.

Chidambaram also said a probe by a JPC can be more effective than an investigation by the Parliamentary Standing



Committee on Information Technology, asserting that the former would be more empowered by Parliament.

Asked about Parliament IT panel head Shashi Tharoor's remarks that the subject is already on the mandate of his committee and a JPC is not required, Chidambaram expressed doubts whether the IT panel with a majority of BJP members will allow a full investigation into the matter.

"The parliamentary committee rules are rather strict. For example they cannot take evidence openly but a JPC can be empowered by Parliament to take evidence in public view, to cross examine witnesses and to summon documents. So I think a JPC

will have far more powers than a parliamentary committee," he said.

At the same time, he said he is not diminishing the role of the parliamentary committee to the extent it can probe the matter and is welcome to do so.

Posing questions for the government, he asked whether there was surveillance at all and whether snooping was done using Pegasus.

"If Pegasus spyware was used, who acquired it? Was it acquired by the government or by one of its agencies," he asked.

The Rajya Sabha member also asked the government to be more clear on the amount paid to acquire the spyware.

## RS member John Brittas seeks SC-monitored probe into spyware snooping

New Delhi: Rajya Sabha member John Brittas has moved the Supreme Court seeking a court-monitored probe into reports of alleged snooping of activists, politicians, journalists and constitutional functionaries using Israeli spyware Pegasus.

A massive political row has erupted after media reports claimed that Pegasus spyware was used to conduct surveillance on about 300 Indians, including ministers, political leaders, government officials and journalists.

Brittas, who has filed a public interest litigation in the Supreme Court, said that recent allegations of snooping had caused concern among a large section of people in India and that snooping would have a chilling effect on free speech and expression.

He has sought a court-monitored investigation into allegations of snooping using Pegasus spyware.

In a statement on Sunday, Brittas, who is a CPI-M member, said that despite the very serious nature, the central government had not called for an investigation into the allegations

involved in the issue but "made only a hopeful hope that the time tested processes in our country are well-established to ensure that unauthorised surveillance does not occur."

"Therefore, the queries were raised in the Indian Parliament with respect to this leakage. But the government has neither denied nor admitted the snooping by the spyware," he said.

Amid a row over the Pegasus spyware issue, the government had said that illegal surveillance was not possible with checks and balances in the country's laws and that the attempts were being made to malign the Indian democracy.

On July 19, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told the Lok Sabha that media reports on alleged snooping published a day before the start of the monsoon session of Parliament "cannot be a coincidence" and stressed that there is "no substance" behind the sensationalism.

However, the minister did not specify whether the Indian government was using Pegasus spyware. PTI

## CISF holds 'Plantation Festival'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Sunday observed the day as 'Plantation Festival' at all its 352 units across the country and planted about 2.33 lakh saplings. CISF Director General Sudhir Kumar Saxena, along with other senior officers and personnel, planted saplings of fruit bearing and endemic at the CISF campus at Shantipur Park here. Saxena emphasised that we all have to come forward and join the campaign for a green and clean India. He said, "Trees are the true treasures for us all and that by planting trees and nurturing them, we are contributing to environment, the generations to come."

"The trees for the plantation drive have been carefully chosen keeping the local topography in mind so that they may contribute to environment, sustenance and to supplement daily requirements. Thus, 50 per cent of the chosen variety of trees are of long life like Neem, Sheesham and Peepal among others, and 50 per cent are fruits bearing trees like mango, jamun, etc." the CISF said in a statement.

## Heavy rainfall, thunderstorm likely in MP, warns IMD



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued orange and yellow alerts forecasting heavy rainfall, thunderstorm and lightning in Madhya Pradesh, even as the monsoon fury continued to wreak havoc in Maharashtra where 113 people have died in rain-related incidents.

Several parts of Kerala in south India also witnessed heavy rainfall on Sunday, with the IMD issuing a yellow alert for several districts, including Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha and Ernakulam.

The 'orange alert' which asks authorities to be prepared for possible heavy rains and thunderstorms accompanied by lightning at isolated places, has been issued for 23 districts in Madhya Pradesh, namely Indore, Dhar, Alirajpur, Jabua, Khargone, Barwani, Khandwa, Burhanpur, Ujjain, Dewas, Ratlam, Shajapur, Agarwal, Mandla, Mandla, Neemli, Kottayam, Alappuzha and Ernakulam.

A yellow alert which advises authorities to "be updated" on the situation, warning likely heavy rains and thunderstorms accompanied by lightning at isolated places, was issued for Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Balaghat, Anuppur and Narsinghpur districts in the state.

Delhiites experienced a sultry Sunday with the maximum temperature setting at 37.3 degrees Celsius, three notches above the season's average. The minimum temperature was recorded at 27.6 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the year.

The IMD has issued a yellow alert for the city on Monday and forecast generally cloudy sky with moderate rain/thunder

**Delhiites experienced a sultry Sunday with the maximum temperature settling at 37.3 degrees Celsius**

showers towards the evening. An orange alert has been issued for Tuesday with the forecast of rain accompanied with gusty winds. Parts of Uttar Pradesh received light rain on Sunday. Agra was the hottest place in the state with the maximum temperature setting at 37 degrees Celsius.

According to the IMD, heavy rain is very likely at isolated places in the state on Monday while thunderstorms are likely at most places in the state on July 27 and July 28.

In rain-battered Maharashtra, the number of deaths due to flooding, landslides and other rain-related incidents reached 113 with one more casualty reported in the last 24 hours, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) said 89 bodies have been retrieved and 34 people are missing following landslides triggered by heavy rainfall in the coastal regions of Maharashtra.

According to the official data, NDRF rescuers have retrieved a total of 89 bodies with the highest number of 47 from the worst-hit Talaiya village under Mahad tehsil of Raigad. As many as 1,35,313 people have been shifted to safer places, including 78,111 in western Maharashtra's Sangli district, followed by 40,882 in Kolhapur district.

The Krishna river in Sangli and Panchganga in Kolhapur are in flood though the rains were reported to have subsided on Saturday.

## States, UTs, pvt hospitals have nearly 3.30 cr jabs available with them: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when several States are alleging vaccine supply shortage and have even temporarily called off vaccinations on this very ground, the Centre on Sunday claimed the States/UTs and private hospitals combined have nearly 3.30 crore vaccines available with them.

According to the health ministry, over 45.37 crore vaccine doses have been provided to the states and UTs so far through all sources and a further 11,79,01,000 doses are in the pipeline. Of this, the total consumption, including wastage, is 42,08,32,021 doses (as per data available at 8 am Sunday), the ministry said. More than 3.29 Cr (3,29,38,559) balance and unutilized doses are still available with the States/UTs and private hospitals to be administered, the Ministry said.

As part of the nationwide vaccination drive, the government has been supporting states and UTs by providing them COVID-19 vaccines free of cost. In the new phase of the universalisation of the vaccination drive, the Union government will procure and supply (free of cost) 75 per cent of the vaccines being produced by the manufacturers in the country to the states and UTs. The new phase of universalisation of COVID-19 vaccination commenced from June 21.

India has added 39,742 new cases of coronavirus infection taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,13,71,901, while the death toll rose to 4,20,551 with 535 fresh fatalities in the last 24 hours. The country is seventh among the most affected countries by active cases. The active cases have declined to 40,82,212 and comprise 1.30 per cent of the

total infections and the national COVID-19 recovery rate has been recorded at 97.36 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed. A decline of 765 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 30 lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

Overall, five states with the biggest 24-hour jump in total cases are Kerala (17,518), Maharashtra (6,753), Odisha (19,177), Tamil Nadu (18,300), and Andhra Pradesh (17,477).

## Govt urges community radio stations to bust vax myths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry drive against Covid-19. He also noted that sustained efforts of such radio stations by airing informative programs on Covid vaccination has trans-



lated into increased community participation in the ongoing vaccination drive.

The radio stations were urged to highlight community-led positive initiatives and role models to strengthen vaccine trust among communities that they cater to. The issue of mental health linked to COVID-19 was also focused upon, the ministry said in a statement.

Community radio programmes in regional language aimed at educating communities about importance of Covid-appropriate behaviour, addressing myths and misinformation linked to vaccines and creating awareness on vac-

cination progress is resulting in uptake of vaccination among many tribal districts of India, the ministry stated.

The collective responsibility to address mental health issues among communities through informative programming by engaging with subject experts from the state and national level was stressed on, it said.

The radio stations were asked to continuously remind listeners about the need to strictly follow Covid-appropriate behaviour as the second wave is still not over; the virus can strike back as soon as the society ignores health advisories and lowers its guard against Covid safety protocol, it said.

Joint Secretary Agarwal answered the queries and applauded their continued support to widen the net of authentic information in the regions.



# Maha rain: Death toll touches 149, CM visits flood-hit area

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The rain-flood ravaged Maharashtra mounted to 149 on Sunday, even as the number of people evacuated from the affected areas of the State climbed to 2,29,074 and the various agencies continued relief and rescue operations in the State.

A day after the rain-flood mishap casualties rose to 112, the various central and state agencies recovered 37 more bodies, taking the total number of people killed in landslides, house crashes, and various other rain-related incidents to 149.

While a maximum of 60 people were killed in Raigad district in Konkarn region, Satara district in western Maharashtra

accounted for 41 persons. The death tally in other places comprised: Ratnagiri-21, Thane-12, Kolhapur-7, Mumbai-4, Sindhudurg and Pune-2 each. Authorities pegged the number of injured persons at 50 and the killed cattle and other animals at 3249, while 64 persons were reported missing from various rain-flood affected areas of the State.

With the floods having not receded in most parts of the coastal Konkarn region, the relief and rescue agencies evacuated as many 2,29,074 people to safer places in western Maharashtra and Konkarn region. The worst flood-hit district of Sangli in western Maharashtra accounted for a maximum 1,69,998 evacuations, while 40,882 people were shifted to safer places in the neighbouring Kolhapur district.

The number of people evacuated in other affected districts is as follows: Satara-7530, Thane-6930, Ratnagiri-1200, Sindhudurg-1271, Raigad-1000 and Pune-263.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who visited flood-affected district of Ratnagiri, said merely for the sake of getting some publicity, he would not make any announcement about compensation to the affected people immediately, but would such an announcement after taking stock of the rain-flood situation in the entire State.

"The rain and the consequent floods wreaked havoc in places like Chiplun, Mahad and Khed. The people have suffered huge losses. The state government will do everything to ensure that you are back on your feet,"



Army personnel during a rescue operation at a flooded area after rain in Kolhapur

The Chief Minister said he had already spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. "The Centre has promised deployment of more teams of NDRF, Army and Indian Air Force (IAF) to tackle the flood in the affected areas in the State. Let's wait and see as to what kind of assistance we will get from the Centre."

"Let me complete my on ground assessment first. Then we will sit across, discuss things and make a realistic demand to the Centre... Because of Covid-19 pandemic, the economy is in

a bad shape. We all know about it. We would need Centre's help in long-term mitigation measures. On the basis of assistance that we will receive from the Centre that we will decide on, we will come out for the rain and flood people in the State," the chief minister said.

"The Army, Navy, Air Force are on the job, while the NDRF and Coast Guard are working 24x7... The SDRF and other State Government and district agencies are working round-the-clock," Uddhav said, while talking to media persons in flood-affected Chiplun town of Ratnagiri District.

In a related development, Union MSMEs Minister Narayan Rane assured the Maharashtra government that the Centre would provide necessary help to the State.

Rane, accompanied by former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition in Assembly Devendra Fadnis and his counterpart in Council Pravin Darekar visited landslide-affected Taliye village of Raigad district. "The Centre will surely help... the Prime Minister has asked me to visit the flood-affected areas. On return to New Delhi, I will submit a report to the Prime Minister," Rane said.

Replying to a question, Rane said: "It is not time to indulge in blame game... who would have ever thought that this kind of calamity would befall."

"It is a difficult situation for the state. Rane is a senior leader, he will table a report... definitely help will come from Centre," Fadnis said.

Meanwhile, the Navy, Army

and NDRF teams used helicopters and the Army used vehicles to rescue hundreds stranded people, while during personnel of NDRF moved in uncharted areas in orange rafts to rescue people and reach out relief to the people in the worst flood-hit districts of Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara in western Maharashtra.

Chief Minister Ajit Pawar is personally monitoring the situation in the three Western Maharashtra districts. Pawar also spoke to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and informed him of the ground situation in the region. "I am going to Satara today and tomorrow I will go to Sangli and Kolhapur. We are constantly in touch with Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg officials," Pawar said.

## TMC praises Cong for supporting Abhishek

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With the Congress airing a day ahead of the Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's strategic visit to Delhi—an open condemnation of the Narendra Modi Government for hacking senior Trinamool Congress MP and Chief Minister's nephew Abhishek Banerjee's telephone the State ruling out fit on Sunday showered praises on the Akbar Road saying it was a "positive sign towards a broad based unity against an autocratic rule."

Even as the pro-Trinamool critics in the State promptly saw in the Congress' gesture 'early signs of "national unity against Pegasus and all" senior TMC MP Saugata Roy said "we thank the Congress for showing the gesture" at a time when Mamata Banerjee had taken up the cause of uniting all the opposition line under one umbrella.

Another senior Trinamool Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien re-tweeted a loaded one-liner "Khela Hobey" a slogan that the Trinamool Congress successfully

used in the Bengal Assembly elections under Banerjee and the Chief Minister's visit to Delhi—she re-invoked at the national level in her bid to "work in advance and work fast" to unite anti-saffron forces in the country.

Earlier the Congress presented a life-size photograph of junior Banerjee—who is the official number two in the Trinamool line-up—on its social media handle writing "its PM Modi took the adage, 'keep your enemies closer' a little too far."

The Congress also wrote that Banerjee was targeted ahead of Bengal Assembly elections "because Government inscurities are endless." The TMC insiders promptly interpreted the remarks "as dropping sufficient hints of rapprochement" between the two tri-ocular outfits.

On whether the Congress social media "soft corner" for senior Banerjee carried a positive sign for the Trinamool Congress chief who had taken the lead in uniting rest of India against BJP apparently under her leadership, a senior Minister in the State Cabinet

said "Mamata Banerjee has proved her mettle as a national leader and should be allowed to lead the country against the communal forces... hope all the opposition parties including the Congress and the Left will understand that."

Congress MP from Bengal Pradip Bhattacharya however had said he saw much into the Congress social media "gesture" saying "this are times when the entire country has united against the BJP's Pegasus conspiracy and Mamata Banerjee is one of them... so the Congress has shown its support for the cause she like many others have taken up."

Earlier referring to the Chief Minister's announcement that she would call an all-India rally of opposition parties at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata Bhattacharya said "She had earlier too called a meeting at Brigade Parade ground and Mallikarjun Kharge had attended that meeting. She is doing that again... However... all opposition parties under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi should come together to fight against the BJP."

## Engineers, PGs apply for lab assistants' job in WB

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

To what could come as an egg on the face of the ruling Trinamool Congress—credited with introducing a number of pro-people schemes like free ration to free health—which has won the recently concluded Assembly elections by a huge thumping majority qualified engineers and postgraduates have swelled the ranks of 8,000 applicants for the posts of lab assistants popularly called "Doms" in the mortuary parlance.

According to reports about 100 engineers, 500 postgraduates and 2,200 graduates have applied for the job of so-called "lab assistants" in the Forensic Medicine and Toxicology Department of state-owned Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital, a senior official said adding out of the total number of applicants 784 people including 84 women had been called for written test scheduled on August 1.

"This is quite surprising because overqualified including engineers, postgraduates and graduates have applied for this post... whereas usually relatives of lab assistants who are used to do such jobs only apply for these posts... This has happened for the first time," the official said.

The authorities had last December issued a notification seeking application for the post of lab assistants entitled to a monthly remuneration of ₹15,000 per month.

The notification for the job-seekers was put at "at least class 8 pass" who had to be between 18 and 35 years old.

"Several applicants are overqualified for the job. It is quite a shock that engineers, postgraduates and graduates have applied for this post. This has happened for the first time. We generally get applications from people whose family members have been working as 'doms'," the official said.

When contacted one of these applicants said he had no other option but to apply for the job because he had to take care of his old parents and pay off the loans taken for studying engineering. "I have to pay the loan... there is no job for me here in Bengal... I am a mechanical engineer and had been working with a private bank's insurance department on commission basis... I earn roughly about ₹8,000 which has further dipped in corona times... I cannot go to Bangalore or elsewhere leaving my parents... so I had to apply for the post," said the candidate.

Another aspirant a postgraduate in Education said he was working in a private school for ₹2,500 per month "but now even that is gone because of on-line classes... I had been earning some money giving tuitions but that too has been stopped due to pandemic... There is no hope in getting scanty government jobs which are either sold or get entangled in court cases... what do I do... I have to feed my family."

## West Bengal Transport Department excludes Guv, CM, Speaker in list of VIPs who can use beacon lights

Kolkata: The West Bengal Transport Department has not included the Governor, Chief Minister, Assembly Speaker and Calcutta High Court Chief Justice in its fresh list of VIPs who can use beacon lights atop their vehicles.

State Transport Minister Firhad Hakim, however, justified it saying that the notification did not mention the four dignitaries as they are 'above such lists and will continue to use beacon lights'.

"The notification mentioned only those who are engaged in emergency or disaster management duties. The governor, chief minister, assembly speaker and Calcutta High Court chief justice will continue to use beacon lights as these VIPs are above such lists. There should not be any confusion on that," Hakim said.

In West Bengal, the four dignitaries have been allowed to use beacon lights despite the Centre's ban on the use of it by anyone other than those involved in emergency or disaster management duties. A senior transport official said that the new list was published after the arrests of several people posing as senior government officials and using blue beacon lights atop their vehicles to "gain exemption and advantages".

There is no scope for any controversy. We have published this list only to ensure that the rules are not violated by unauthorised people. It has the names of VVIPs and officials involved in emergency and disaster management duties.

## Kerala doctor has 'musical solution' to cancer

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The future cancer hospitals all over the world would feature musical instruments and libraries housing various categories of music instead of high-tech medical gadgets like scanners and radiation therapy machines.

The day is not far off when chemotherapy and radiation would find their way out from cancer clinics across the world. It has been proved that music, let it be western or Indian, Carnatic or Hindustani, has the potential to cure a series of medical disorders like cancer, epilepsy and even Alzheimer's disease," Dr Tara Rajendran, a young medical doctor from Kerala's Palakkad toll Pioneer.

Fresh from medical school

after completing her MBBS with distinction, Dr Rajendran got an opportunity to study in medical schools of Harvard and Stanford Universities. "Being a doctor, I was put in the cancer centres of these hospitals where I got hands-on experience in Music Therapy," said Dr Rajendran who has been giving Veena concerts across Kerala and Tamil Nadu since the age of 12.

Her passion for music and medicine became strong after she watched her grandmother Vijayalakshmi succumbing to blood cancer. "She suffered a lot and was yelling in pain most of the time. But when she played Carnatic Kritis, especially in Raaga Shanmughapriya and

Kalyani, it soothed her mind, her emotion to a great extent," said Dr Rajendran. But how music plays a role in alleviating pain and offering comfort to the patients? "Live music can create a mood of tranquility and improve the level of comfort. Listening to music while receiving chemotherapy can help patients distract themselves from the discomfort besides assisting them to get through the challenging phase of fear, stress and isolation," explained Dr Rajendran.

Recognition for her works in Music Therapy came recently when the Journal of the Science of Healing Outcomes, an international peer-reviewed medical journal published

"Music and Palliative Care", a research paper authored by Dr Rajendran.

Prof B M Hegde, who has been awarded Padma Vibhushan by the President of India for his comprehensive contribution to world of medicine and the role of music in the observations and conclusions by Dr Rajendran are important. "It is going to be the future as conventional medical methods are on their way out," said Prof Hegde.

Dr Rajendran opined that the National Medical Commission should seriously consider declaring Music Therapy as a diagnostic and curing process like what they have done in USA. "We have a vast repertoire of music in the subcontinent ranging from

Hindustani, Carnatic and even Lok Sangeetha. There were instances when patients undergoing chemotherapy told me that their anxiety, depression and tension reduced by more than 70 per cent when the process was accompanied by Music Therapy. While working in Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, I witnessed music therapists using interventions such as Gato box and Ocean disc for premature babies to stimulate the sound of maternal heartbeats and timbre of the whooshing amniotic fluid as how they would listen within the uterus," she said.

According to Dr Rajendran, these interventions along with parent-preferred lullabies, positively influence the infants' autonomic nervous responses and sucking reflexes.

## TN society moves SC, seeks benefits for linguistic minorities in running educational institutes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Tamil Nadu-based educational organisation has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to issue a notification to identify linguistic minorities, like religious ones, as units for granting benefits in running academic institutions.

Citizens Education Society, which runs schools for Malayalam-speaking linguistic minority students in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, has sought to intervene as a party in a pending PIL on grant of minority benefits to Hindu in 10 states including Punjab and Mizoram.

The apex court, in August last year, had issued notice to

the Centre on a PIL filed by lawyer and BJP leader Ashwini Upadhyay seeking directions for framing of guidelines identifying minorities at the state level claiming that the Hindus are a minority in 10 states and still they cannot avail benefits available to minorities like Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in running educational institutions.

"Direct the Respondent-Union of India to issue a notification under 2(f) of National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions Act, 2004 notifying linguistic and religious minority communities in respective states as a unit, in conformity with the law declared by this Hon'ble Court in case of in T.M.A. Pai

Foundation..." the Tamil Nadu-based society said in its plea.

Referring to the constitutional scheme of Article 30, the plea said that it, being the linguistic minority in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, should get the benefits available to religious minorities in these states.

"Article 30 of the Constitution protects the interests of minorities, based on religious minority in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, should get the benefits available to religious minorities in these states. "Article 30 of the Constitution protects the interests of minorities, based on religious minority in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, should get the benefits available to religious minorities in these states. It is well-settled that Article 30(1) cannot be read in a narrow and pedantic sense and giving a fundamental right, it should be given its widest amplitude," it said.

## No fresh Covid case in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Port Blair: The Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands did not record any new Covid-19 case in the last 24 hours, a health department official said on Saturday.

The Covid-19 tally in the archipelago remained at 7,525. The Union Territory now has 17 active Covid-19 cases of which 15 are in the South Andaman district and two in the North and Middle Andaman district. The Nicobar district is now Covid-19 free as it has no active case, he said. Two more persons recuperated from Covid-19 during the period, taking the total number of recoveries to 7,379, he said.

The Covid-19 death toll in the archipelago remained at 129 as no fresh fresh death due to the contagion was reported in the last 24 hours. The Andaman and Nicobar administration has so far tested 4,31,486 samples for Covid-19, and the positivity rate stands at 1.75 per cent, the health department official said.

A total of 2,72,312 people have been inoculated so far, of which 1,84,076 have been administered the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine and 88,236 have received both doses, he said, adding that the total population of the union territory is around 4 lakh.

## Kerala's Covid toll crosses 16,000-mark

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Covid-19 situation in Kerala continued to be critical on Sunday despite the two-day long local down during the weekend. By Sunday evening, the Health Minister's office said in a release that out of the 1.42 lakh samples tested in the course of the day, 17,466 new persons were diagnosed with Covid-19. The Test Positivity Rate (average) stood at 12.3 per cent.

Though there was a dip in the number of new patients reported on Sunday, the hike in TPR is a cause of concern, according to various doctors working in Government Hospitals in the State. On Sunday, 66 deaths were recorded from various places in Kerala and this took the death toll till date to 16,035.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who used to regularly brief the media every evening at 6 pm has chosen to stay away from briefing the reporters. No reason has been furnished by the Chief Minister's Office for the cancellation of the media briefing.

Malappuram with 2,684 patients topped the table of 14 districts in the State and was closely followed by Kozhikode (2,379), Thrissur (2,190), Ernakulam (1,687), Palakkad (1,552), Kollam (1,263) and Thiruvananthapuram (1,222).

## Gujarat sees 30 Covid-19 cases, 42 recoveries

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Gujarat's Covid-19 tally grew to 8,24,713 as 30 new cases were reported on Sunday, while the toll remained unchanged at 10,076 as no death was reported from the infection during the day, an official said.

Dahod and Surat districts led with six cases each, followed by five in Ahmedabad and four in Vadodra, among other

districts, he added. A release said 3,22,664 people were vaccinated against Covid-19 on Sunday, taking the total number of doses administered in the state so far to 3,16,30,218.

Neighbouring Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu reported no new cases, recoveries or deaths. Its tally is 10,609, recovery count is 10,560 and the active caseload is 45.

Gujarat's Covid-19 figures are as follows: Positive cases 8,24,713, new cases 30, death toll 10,076, discharged 8,14,307, active cases 330, people tested so far - figures not released.



A view of the Yamuna river flowing behind the Taj Mahal in Agra on Sunday

## CM Yogi reviews healthcare facilities in Ayodhya

PNS ■ AYODHYA

Ensuring presence of adequate medical resources to fight the anticipated third wave of Covid-19 with complete preparedness, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday reviewed the medical and health facilities in Ayodhya.

The chief minister visited the Raja Dashrath Medical College in Ayodhya and took stock of the facilities existing there for treatment of Covid-19 patients. He also went for on-ground inspection of the recently installed oxygen plant and reviewed the other healthcare facilities available for Covid-19 patients.

To firm up preventive measures in view of the anticipated third wave, the Chief Minister also asked the district administration to formulate a detailed action plan to check any further spread of the novel coronavirus.

"Medical colleges are important institutions for better, superior and special healthcare facilities. But in the last 70 years, the state had only 12 medical colleges. The present government, either built or sanctioned 32 medical colleges," the Chief Minister said while addressing the media,

adding that there were no medical colleges in 16 districts.

"We are planning to set up medical colleges in these districts on a public-private partnership (PPP) model before Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday reiterated the importance of double masking, distancing and hand hygiene and said that the masks should seal the air passage around the nose and mouth for proper protection.

Committed to strengthening the existing and expanding the health and medical infrastructure in the state, the chief minister said, "UP has made rampant progress from getting the first Covid test conducted from the lab at National Institute of Virology in Pune in 2020 to becoming the leader by conducting maximum number of Covid tests."

Emphasising that testing was the backbone for curbing the transmission of coronavirus as it helped in early detection of cases, their isolation and contact tracing, the chief minister asserted that the state government had been making its best efforts to expand the facilities to further enlarge the testing capacity which was already now nearly four lakh tests a day.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## No laxity

All signs say the third wave of COVID-19 is on its way; India must keep its guard up

The second wave of COVID-19 is supposed to be abating since June 25, but the sense of relief is not reflected in either the total number of cases or the observations of the anti-pandemic strategists. The national count of fresh cases is over 39,000 and rising. And the empowered strategy group tells the Government not to allow the count to cross 50,000 a day. Should this be taken as a warning to the Government that the third wave may well be on the way? Yes, it is. For the first time, the strategists have given an early alert. For the first time, too, the country's anti-COVID policy is being directed by scientific rather than administrative considerations. The earmarked limit sends two messages. One, that the second wave has abated as much as it can in the country though the surge is largely limited to two States — Kerala and Maharashtra. Two, the breach of the 50,000-case limit will mark the beginning of the stress on medical infrastructure. The strategists appear to be playing it safe and assuming that the peak of a future wave would see four-five lakh cases a day, nearly 10 times the new case limit. That should give the Union and the State Governments a clear picture of how much additional infrastructure they should organise in the next couple of months.



The example of the UK should show how they are dealing with a situation where the daily cases have crossed 50,000. People are testing positive at an alarming rate. Nearly 650,000 people are estimated to have tested positive in the second week of July. Admissions are rising in hospitals. And yet, the Government has eased all restrictions. Social distancing is no longer mandatory, face masks are no longer required by law, and the ban has been lifted on large gatherings of people. The British Government is facing criticism for the complete unlock, but its confidence perhaps stems from two sources. One, that over 46 million people in the UK or 87.6 per cent of the adults have received their first dose and 35.5 million, or 67.5 per cent, are fully vaccinated. The high number of vaccinations and the presence of antibodies in the infected unvaccinated is said to reduce the severity of infection and the need for hospitalisation, and lower the chances of death. Secondly, thousands of people using the NHS COVID App are receiving self-isolation alerts every day, informing them they have been in close contact with a positive case. The UK is highly vaccinated and has rid itself of safety protocols and the cases are growing. Indian vaccination levels are low and the protocols are violated more and the cases are growing. This goes on to show that an either-or attitude towards vaccination and safety measures is a sure-shot invite to a third wave of the pandemic. The mandatory requirement is a combination of both and that is what the Indian strategists should emphasise on.

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## PICTALK



A submerged Old Sangli area after the Krishna river's level rose following rainfall

PTI

## In a hurry?

The Delhi Govt allowing public transport to ply at 100% capacity raises a number of uncomfortable questions

Another step towards unlocking Delhi would take place today, Monday. Indeed, people will welcome it that buses are plying at full capacity though standing passengers would still not be allowed. Cinema halls are also opening after a long gap. The Delhi Metro would operate at 100 per cent capacity. This would truly bring Delhi closer to normalcy. The Capital has already suffered a great deal due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though Corona's second wave is ebbing and very few cases are being reported on a daily basis, the threat of the third wave is looming large. In this situation, going for almost complete unlock does not seem reasonable as the experts have warned that the third wave could be here sooner than later. It would have been better had the Delhi Government waited at least three more weeks, until August 15, to open up public transport and recreation centres. The Delhi Government officials say that the restrictions have been eased as the number of cases is falling. But we have seen even in the second wave that the scenario can



change very fast and cases can shoot up within a matter of days.

This is certainly not the time to take the pandemic lightly, especially since we are on the verge of defeating the virus. It would not at all be prudent to let the guard down. Apart from these concessions, 100 people will now be able to attend funerals instead of the earlier 20. A similar number of people can now attend weddings instead of the earlier 50. This would indeed expose people to risk. One can understand that people would welcome these steps but the Government should think beyond that. One can understand people's mounting economic hardships but totally unlocking Delhi might not be the solution. That must be dealt with at a different level. It defies logic why the Government is in a hurry to open cinemas, theatres and multiplexes in the national Capital. The Government's first and foremost responsibility is to save lives and, therefore, it should not put people's lives in danger by going for such-scale unlocking at this moment. Mercifully, the Delhi Government has not yet made plans to open schools and colleges, which may have serious consequences. The Government must work for people and should not play to the gallery, making policy decisions to win accolades and public support.

## China's 'friendship' must bother Putin

In 1969, China gained quite a few islands on Siberia's Ussuri river. Now, it has already started claiming the entire Siberia as its territory



PRAFULLA GORADIA

Late last month, Russia and China renewed their friendship treaty for a further five years. Comrade Putin appears to be making a dangerous mistake by ignoring the potential threat from China. He was only 17 when the Soviet Union fought a seven-month mini-war across the Ussuri river, which is located in Russia's Siberia (Sleeping Land). How big was Beijing's ambition one does not know, but the Soviets had to convey an implicit nuclear threat to the aggressor. To save face, Mao Zedong, through his Premier Zhou en Lai, threatened a "People's War", which meant that hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers would swarm Soviet tanks as they had done with the Americans in the Korean War in 1951-52. The Chinese leader's belief of convenience was the superiority of man over machine. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) did demonstrate its idea of warfare on one of the islands on the Ussuri by ambushing Soviet soldiers.

In the end, China gained quite a few islands on the river, which were a loss for the Soviet Union. Logically, more conflict lies ahead. China is a much bigger nuclear power than it was in 1969. Its ambitions have grown and, by current indications, it wishes to become a superpower. We have to remember that Siberia is over 13 million sq km with a sparse population, whereas China is bubbling with people but is short of arable land. Incidentally, the Yellow Giant gained several hundred islands in the midst of not only the Ussuri but also the Amur and Argun rivers. This gain by China and loss by the USSR were after decades of harrowing negotiations which ended in 2004.

With climate change and the earth getting warmer, Siberia will well become more hospitable. Today, the whole region is considered hostile due to its very low temperatures in winter. With global warming, Siberia is likely to become attractive for China to occupy. The region is rich in coal, natural gas, diamonds, iron ore, gold and aluminum. A possible scenario of China forcibly occupying Siberia can no longer be

looked upon as hypothetical or imaginary. Patrick Prinston, a Western columnist, informs us that a Chinese portal *Jinji Toutiao* published an article, the author of which calls Siberia "Chinese land". The Chinese media regularly praises Russian ruler Vladimir Putin and how cleverly he puts the West in its place. Simply, from the point of view of Beijing, Russia is not only a good friend but also has an excellent potential prize. "There are no countries around the world that are equally friendly or, conversely, always hostile to each other. In the past, Siberia was conquered by the Mongols and, therefore, in fact, is Chinese territory." This is increasingly becoming China's refrain.

Joe Burgess in *The New York Times* column "Why China Reclaiming Siberia" lays out a starker scenario: A land without people for a people without land, Burgess says. The land is as resource-rich and people-poor as China is the opposite. The weight of that logic should scare the Kremlin. Like love, a border is real only if both sides believe in it. And on both sides of the Sino-



CHINA IS A MUCH BIGGER NUCLEAR POWER THAN IT WAS IN 1969. ITS AMBITIONS HAVE GROWN. WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT SIBERIA IS OVER 13 MILLION SQ KM WITH A SPARSE POPULATION, WHEREAS CHINA IS BUBBLING WITH PEOPLE BUT IS SHORT OF ARABLE LAND

Russian border, that belief is wavering. Siberia — the Asian part of Russia, east of the Ural Mountains — is immense. It takes up three-quarters of Russia's land mass, the equivalent of the entire US and India put together.

The 1.35 billion Chinese people south of the border outnumber Russia's 144 million almost 10 to 1. The discrepancy is even starker for Siberia on its own, home to barely 38 million people, and especially the border area, where only six million Russians face over 90 million Chinese. With intermarriage, trade and investment across that border, Siberians have realised that, for better or for worse, Beijing is a lot closer than Moscow. The land is already providing China "the factory of the world", with much of its raw materials, especially oil, gas and timber. Increasingly, Chinese-owned factories in Siberia churn out finished goods as if the region already were a part of the Middle Kingdom's economy. Beijing could use Russia's own strategy: hand out passports to sympathisers in contested areas, and then move in militarily to "protect its citizens". If Beijing

chooses to take Siberia by force, the only way Moscow could stop it would be by using nuclear weapons.

In a meeting with the press on May 20 this year, Putin, using a bit of colourful language, threatened to "smash the teeth of anyone who tried to bite off even a piece of Siberia". He surely could not have been thinking of the US or the West. Chinese dictator Xi Jinping only last year described Putin as his "best friend".

But despite all the nice sounding rhetoric, the reality of the China-Russia relationship is a shallow one. The US and friendly countries have grown closer by a set of common values or structures like the Quad. There is nothing even remotely comparable in the case of Russia and China; in this partnership, which is purely transactional without any real political integration, Russia is very much the junior partner, with China eyeing its geographically vast, resource-rich but under-populated Eurasian neighbour.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## MIRABAI CHANU IS OUR NATION'S PRIDE

Sir — The sight of Mirabai Chanu lifting 87kg in snatch and 115kg in clean and jerk, an astonishing 202kg in total, in the 49-kg category at the Tokyo Olympics and the visuals of her standing on the podium showing the silver medal with a huge smile filled us with pride. Obviously, success in sports is a source of national pride. It was natural and legitimate for us to bask in the reflected glory of our compatriot bagging the silver medal.

Recognising the determined effort, dedication and hard work, we speak of her remarkable performance in glowing terms. The daughter of a humble Government employee and a street *samosa* vendor, Mirabai started her "career" with wood-lifting (she, like most children in her village, used to fetch firewood from nearby hills). We salute the gutsy weightlifter for opening India's medal account on Day 1 of the Games.

On a different note, considering our population and the potential for developing a medal-winning talent pool, we should send a bigger contingent to future Olympics and hope for even more medals than we do.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

## MONSOON FURY BATTERS MAHARASHTRA

Sir — Heavy rains in Maharashtra have delivered a heavy blow to those residing in the coastal areas. Incessant rains have triggered landslides and floods, leaving over 140 dead and thousands of people displaced. The destruction appears irreversible in cities, districts and villages. Districts like Raigad and Ratnagiri have been among the many worst-hit areas of Maharashtra, the coastal areas have been battered by torrential rains. Since the torrential rains started, 140 individuals died in tragic incidents in Maharashtra like floods, landslides and so forth. Satara in Maharashtra reported at least 21 deaths as a consequence of rain-related incidents and landslides.

The cities of Chiplun and Khed in Ratnagiri district have been devastated

## Rid the Ganga of pollution



In spite of the launch of the Ganga Action Plan (GAP), the river continues to be highly polluted. More impetus is required to rid the river from pollution which the Government targets to achieve by 2030. Rejuvenation of the Ganga project is now faced with a new challenge. A new study by Toxics Link has found that the Ganga is polluted with multiple kinds of plastic.

Plastic products and waste materials in the river break down to micro particles. The river transports this into the ocean. This brings into sharp focus the poor state of both solid and liquid waste management. As the river flows through densely populated cities, untreated sewage, industrial waste and religious offerings

after heavy rainfall and cut off from land routes, according to the State Disaster Management Authority. More than 25 NDRF groups are working on the ground or are on the standby mode, three teams each of the Indian Military and the Indian Coast Guard have been pressed into service, besides seven teams of the Indian Navy and one of the Indian Air Force. Apart from all these arrangements, the local authorities are engaged with the rescue operations nonstop for over 24 hours now. Maharashtra is in deep trouble due to the heavy rains.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

## HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT MUST END

Sir — India's high rate of urbanisation has caused a hasty expansion of human settlements into areas that were once exclusively wildlife habitats. With vaguely defined boundaries for fauna, human-

wrapped in non-degradable plastic add large pollutants. Micro plastics that get into our body are a serious health hazard. Plastic waste causes marine pollution with profound consequences for marine life and their habitats. It has been reported that over 663 species are badly affected by marine waste and 11 per cent of them are related to micro plastic. Micro plastics drained into the ocean cause serious imbalance in the marine ecosystem.

Micro plastic pollution in the Ganga has huge ramifications. The water from the river is used for various purposes. The river provides drinking water to several cities. Hence, micro plastic pollution has severe impact on the environment and human health. Implementation of plastic waste management must be strengthened. Single-use plastics must be banned. There must be more data and research on micro plastics and their impact on rivers. The threat of plastic on aquatic life must be addressed more realistically. Various stakeholders must join hands and work towards improving plastic waste management and reducing micro plastic pollution.

Venu GS | Kollam

## SOUNDBITE

I'm very happy to win the first medal for India... I don't belong to just Manipur, I belong to the whole country.

Olympic silver medalist — Saikhom Mirabai Chanu

The Opposition led by the Congress has got no issue to raise that is related to people. Therefore, they raise such issues (snookage).

BJP national president — JP Nadda

Latin American States should do something similar to the European Union, but attached to our history, our reality and our identities.

Mexican President — Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador

It is okay to be boxed. I am fine with it because eventually people will box you with what they see and like.

Stand-up comic and actor — Sunil Grover

I will come to Rajasthan on July 28 and 29. I will talk to each Congress MLA; we feel that the AICC should know the opinion of the MLAs.

Congress in-charge of Rajasthan — Ajay Maken



## FIRST COLUMN ADMINISTERING INDIA

The British administered India with the help of Indian Army and an institution called the ICS



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

India as an entity has existed for several millennia. The concept of a unified territory from the 'seas to the horizon' has been documented at least from the time of the Gupta Empire in the 4th century AD. India has seen different models of administration, including those of the Mauryan and Harshavardhana, the Cholas, the British. India came under the British Crown in 1857 and was known as 'British India'. The rule lasted 90 years. There is a notion that this imperial state unified India administratively. It is a myth. British India was initially ruled from Calcutta and then the capital moved to Delhi. Besides the territory under direct British rule, there were hundreds of princely states with various degrees of administrative and revenue autonomy: Travancore-Cochin, Baroda, Jammu and Kashmir being among them. The British withdrew from India with a strange notion that the princely states could secede to either of India and Pakistan. It was an attempt to restore the status quo ante to 1857.



The British administered India with the help of the Indian Army and an institution called 'The Indian Civil Service'. After Independence, the service metamorphosed into the Indian Administrative Service.

The story of Indian unity post-independence is a saga that many have testified to. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the chief architect of the merger of the princely states with India. Some territories also merged with Pakistan by a wafer-thin majority. The first few years of Indian independence were also spent on reorganising the Indian Union into linguistic states and the states into districts. The story still continues with new states emerging and the districts of the states being reorganised.

Two administrative reforms commissions have been set up since independence and their recommendations used to carry out administrative restructuring. Appraisal systems of IAS officers have been thoroughly revised and the writer has been involved with some of these efforts. It is not sufficiently recognised that every IAS officer does not automatically graduate to the level of Secretary to the Government of India. There are institutional filters, evaluations, barriers, and in-built learning opportunities.

After 1947, the nascent Indian Administrative Service, through special recruitment, spread across India. However, a few thousand civil servants, definitionally, could not fully administer all aspects of a nation's life. Their expansion no matter how planned was bound to leave gaps.

One of the first felt needs was for an 'Indian Foreign Service' which would handle external affairs. An all-India competitive examination was conceived and the Union Public Service Commission was entrusted with the task of holding it and selecting recruits depending on their need.

Administering India is not just a simple function of civil administration. The railways have to run, health and education need policy attention, information needs handling, etc. So, separate services like the Indian Railway Service and the Indian Information Service were created while IRS and IPS became essential collateral services of the Indian administration.

Over time, administrative groups were created, with IAS, IPS, and Indian Forest Service officials coming under Group A. However, because of their coordinating role, IAS officers remain *prima donnas*. Their perks and salary structures are also superior.

Gradually, the states developed their own civil service to look after their administrative needs. Provision is there for movement from state service cadre to central service cadre after due evaluation. Domain specialists began to occupy specialised administrative positions, especially in the departments of science and technology, biotechnology, taxation, and customs. The message is simple: the Indian Administrative Service, in its fullness, is amongst the powerful sections that administer India.

(The writer is founder Director, IIM-K and a management thinker and practitioner. The views expressed are personal.)

# Pegasus affair is an assault on privacy

Anyone defending this will be slipping down a steep slope of undermining the basic rights of an individual



PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI

In a sensational international news break last week, it was revealed that over 300 Indians were being surveilled through an Israeli spyware called Pegasus. This software had the ability to hack into phones and be able to access files, documents, voice calls, and videos of the hacked individual. Those on the list were journalists, opposition voices, activists, and cabinet ministers. Most of the names were anti-establishment and their investigative stories uncovered the various failures of the government.

The Pegasus scandal has once again opened the floodgates of the notion of privacy and to what extent can the state abuse privacy rights. While the history of snooping is not new in India, this is the first occasion of sophisticated technology meant for defence and national security purposes unethically used to get access to all the communication of those who are anti-government. Anyone defending this will be slipping down a steep slope of undermining the basic rights of an individual and also the democratic principles of the nation.

Ever since the controversy has broken, the IT Minister's only defence has been that there is a law in place to protect the privacy of individuals and for the government's need to surveil. The surveillance in India takes place under two laws - the Telegraph Act and the Information Technology Act. While the Telegraph Act deals with audio call records and interception, the IT Act deals with all electronic communication. However, loopholes exist in both Acts and they have not yet been addressed by the Centre and that gap is exactly what it uses for snooping and silencing opposition voices.

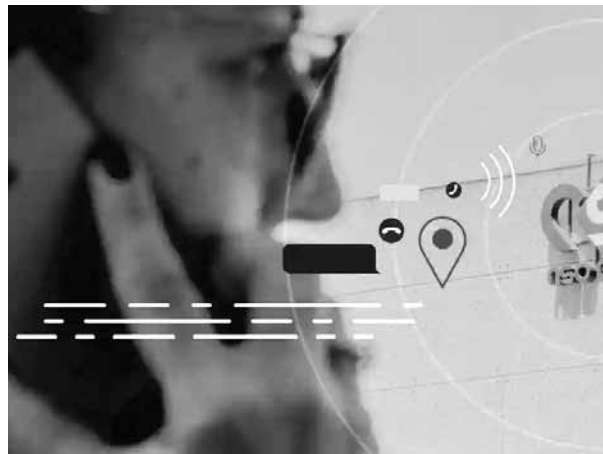
India is a democratic nation. At the heart of democracy are its people. When incidents like this (Pegasus snooping) happen, it infringes on the basic fundamental rights of the citizens. The right to privacy, though not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, is inherent under various provisions of the Constitution. The unanimous Supreme Court of India Judgement in 2017 recognised the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right despite the Union government asserting to the contrary. Article 21 of the Constitution of India includes the Right to Privacy which is mentioned in the Puttaswamy judgment as "the right of an individual to exercise control over his personal data and to be able to control his/her own life would encompass his right to control his/her own life and his/her existence on the internet".

In the surveillance issue, the absence of privacy impinges on the ideals of liberty and dignity as envisioned in the Constitution of India and hinders the growth of the individual as a citizen of this country. In these times of digital communication, the "zero detectable"



THE ISSUE HAS BECOME POLITICAL SINCE THE NAMES OF MANY OPPOSITION LEADERS CROPPED UP IN THE SURVEILLANCE INVESTIGATION AND ROCKED EVERY SINGLE DAY OF PARLIAMENT SINCE THE MONSOON SESSION BEGAN. THE GOVERNMENT, INSTEAD OF AGREEING TO LOOK INTO THESE CHARGES, IS BUSY REJECTING THE REPORT ALTOGETHER

(The writer is Deputy Leader of the Shiv Sena in the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)



form of surveillance has engulfed the notion of privacy. The Pegasus allegations threaten the very ideals of democracy our nation is based upon. It threatens the sovereignty of the nation and forms a grave concern for our nation since an accountable institutional framework and mechanism for the protection of citizen's data and privacy is absent. An absence of a credible, sovereign, and accountable framework puts the whole nation at the mercy of such cyber exposure. The Personal Data Protection Bill, which is supposed to be the framework designed to ensure accountability and bring in transparency, is marred by many discrepancies and is still under scrutiny by the Standing Committee.

As India has fast-tracked digital communication and businesses, smartphones have become a necessity rather than a privilege and Covid-19 has fast-forwarded the process of digitisation. The availability of almost everything at the mere touch of your finger makes it an absolute necessity for a sovereign nation to have a blanket institutional framework in place.

The idea of Digital India, with 900 million active internet users by 2025, is afflicted by the threat of cyber warfare weapons being unleashed by any foreign state. Therefore, it becomes pertinent

that the government comes up with stringent data protection and privacy laws and a framework that protects the very people that form the nation. With an increased population that is now using smartphones, we in India have no Data Protection Policy in place. With this very obvious loophole in the system there is no accountability on the issue of who owns the digital data. Imagine you living in the reality show Big Boss where your every movement is monitored and you haven't even signed up for it. Stripping people of their privacy and dignity is what this kind of data invasion does.

The issue has become political since the names of many opposition leaders also cropped up in the surveillance investigation and has rocked every single day of parliament since the monsoon session began. The government, in the interest of transparency, instead of agreeing to look into these charges, is busy rejecting the report, altogether and going so far as to say that this is an anti-India conspiracy. This is ridiculous, to say the least; while various countries named in the snooping investigation have launched an inquiry, France has initiated it while Israel has formed a senior inter-ministerial group to look into it but the Indian government continues to tie itself up in knots by defending it.

In governance, the principle of Caesar's wife should be above suspicion rule should apply. However, this government continues to confuse and obfuscate. This controversy is also a reality check of how a missing policy framework can be exploited by those in power to the hilt. Such disregard for constitutional norms will be up for misuse in times to come irrespective of who is in power.

As we find ourselves at the tipping point of losing our freedoms enshrined in the Constitution one by one, it is time to speak up aloud for defending our rights while following our duties. The government cannot shrug itself off all responsibilities, resorting to lies and subterfuge to avoid any accountability. The government should not forget that the seat of power is never permanent and if it bypasses all rules of democratic and constitutional governance, it gives others in power a chance to pay back in the same coin - the only ones who suffer in their power politics are the people of the country who helplessly see their freedoms being trampled upon bit by bit. For those who stay silent and defend even this assault on democracy, I would just repeat the quote of Benjamin Franklin: "They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT

VACCINATION IS AN ONGOING AND DYNAMIC PROCESS AND, THEREFORE, A FIXED TIMELINE CANNOT BE GIVEN FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE COVID-19 IMMUNISATION DRIVE.

— MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH  
BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR



PEOPLE'S LIVES ON THE LINE. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ADMITS NO TIMELINE. CLASSIC CASE OF MISSING SPINE. #WHEREAREVACCINES

— FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT  
RAHUL GANDHI

# Small businesses and wealth maximisation

Since surviving is the main goal of small businesses, they are more inclined towards profit maximisation by reducing costs

An organisation is an ongoing concern and has to make decisions, either big or small, daily. These decisions converge towards its overall goal. So, what should be the overarching goal of a firm from the point of view of financial management? Financial management is a critical branch of economics that makes profit maximization the main goal of any firm.

Profit, as an accounting term, is the excess of income generated by sales over the expenses incurred from the overall operation of a business. Any business is said to be in a loss if the expenses are consistently more than the income. And it is said to be profitable if the income is more than the expenses. Therefore, in the context of economics, the goal



HIMA BINDU KOTA

of a firm should be to maximize profits, or to say in simple terms, to realize a large amount of profit.

Profit maximization can be achieved in two ways: enhance revenue and minimize costs. Therefore, to maximize profits, many firms minimize their costs and boost their revenue. The problem, however, with such a goal is that it is short-term in nature and banks on extreme measures to reduce costs, like cutting down and paring advertisement budgets, employee training, development expenses, research and development expenditure, customer care budget, employee salary, or bonuses.

In some cases, firms, in an attempt to maximize profit, may also neglect the safety,



welfare, benefits of the environment, and their different stakeholders. These knee-jerk reactions are short-term in nature and can be efficient for the near future but in the long-run, these measures slow down the sales, which in turn diminishes the profits and dwindles the overall value of the firm. Therefore, the objective of profit maximization has a myopic outlook towards the long-term growth of the firm.

Over the years, when financial management became independent from economics

and became a branch on its own, the objective of the firm witnessed a steady shift from profit maximization to shareholders' wealth maximization. This is a comprehensive approach focusing on the long-term growth, profitability, and the value of the firm. This goal focuses on wider objectives and includes the welfare of employees, communities, and society at large. It is a fact that wealth or value is a long-term concept and for the firms, it is reflected in the market price of its shares that in turn depends on the success and expectations of the future success of a firm. Firms with higher performance receive a higher valuation from investors which is reflected in the increase in the share prices as compared to the initial listed value. Therefore,

the value of a firm is a dynamic function of the overall performance of the firm and the rationality of the firm's investment, financing, and dividend decisions.

In a way, shareholders' wealth maximization is also associated with intangible assets like goodwill, branding, good customer relations, a significant and loyal customer base, committed employees, and intellectual property rights. This concept also over-arches and includes community and social welfare. Therefore, firms are moving away from the goal of profit maximization that has a short-term approach, ignores any risk or uncertainty, and overlooks the timing of returns. In comparison, a long-term vision acknowl-

edges risks and uncertainty and considers the overall shareholders' wealth and not just profits.

This concept of shareholders' wealth maximization is mainly applicable to large firms where there are a large number of shareholders, including promoters, financial institutions like banks and mutual funds, foreign investors, and retail investors. The managers' actions should enhance the value of the firm to benefit all shareholders. But does this concept apply to small businesses, where the owners are the managers and there are no diverse set of shareholders, excepts family members or partners?

The situation for small businesses is also different as they are not listed on the

stock markets. In the absence of external shareholders, the objective of profit maximization appears to be the correct approach. For small businesses, the availability of funding or capital is difficult, which is not a constraint for many large firms and they can invest in other stakeholders and efficient business processes. This improves the overall value of the firm and increases the wealth of the shareholders. Since surviving is the main goal of small businesses, they are more inclined towards profit maximization by reducing costs or enhancing revenue. As and when these small businesses start to grow and achieve a sizable expansion, the concept of shareholders' wealth maximization should be the way to go forward.



# International Criminal Court investigating war crimes by Taliban

INANS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Criminal Court is currently investigating allegations of war crimes and serious human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict, including the Taliban. Taliban forces that have taken control of districts in Afghanistan's southern Kandahar province have detained hundreds of residents whom they accuse of association with the Government.

Human Rights Watch said the Taliban have reportedly killed some detainees, including relatives of provincial government officials and members of the police and army.

The watchdog body said that after Taliban forces took control of Kandahar's Spin Boldak border district, Pakistan on July 8, 2021, and the Spin Boldak district center

on July 16, they conducted searches to identify residents who have worked for the local government or security forces. Taliban forces that control areas around Kandahar city have carried out similar searches and have evicted some residents.

Taliban have taken more than 100 people into custody and have detained them in unidentified locations.

"There are grave concerns that Taliban forces in Kandahar may commit further atrocities to retaliate against the government and security forces," said Patricia Gossman, Associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Taliban leaders have denied responsibility for any abuses, but growing evidence of expulsions, arbitrary detention and security forces under their control are raising fears among the population."

Taliban commanders who knew or should have known about abuses by forces under their control and took no action to prevent or stop them are culpable as a matter of command responsibility.

"The UN, US, and other countries engaged in the peace talks should urgently call on the Taliban leadership to stop these killings and other abuses," Gossman said.

At Spin-Boldak, the Afghan officials found the dead bodies of over 100 civilians — while the fate of the around 300 others abducted was not known.

The Taliban have told members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), including police who have been the primary security force in Kandahar, to register with them to receive letters guaranteeing

their safety, a local activist reported.

Those who registered are required to report to the Taliban once a month. Taliban forces have gone to the homes of some ANDSF members who had registered, taken them into custody, and killed an unknown number of them. In one case, on July 9, the Taliban shot and killed a man named Nangiyali, in front of family members. He was a resident of Sarposu, Kandahar, who had previously worked with the police.

Media reported that on July 19, Taliban forces shot and killed two sons of a provincial council member, Fida Mohammad, who had reportedly had a close relationship with the late Kandahar police chief, General Abdul Raziq whom the Taliban killed in 2018.

## Afghanistan imposes night curfew in 31 provinces

INANS ■ KABUL

The Afghan Government announced that it has imposed a night-time curfew in 31 provinces except Kabul, Panjshir and Nangarhar, in the wake of unabated Taliban attacks across the war-torn country.

The night-time curfew will be effective between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., TOLO News quoted the Ministry of Interior as saying late Saturday.

The new measure comes

as the Government forces continue to fight the Taliban in 21 provinces of the country.

According to Radio Television of Afghanistan (RTA), the decision was made to check the infiltration of Taliban militants to provincial capitals, reports Xinhua news agency.

According to the statistics provided by the Afghan security agencies, the security forces have killed 262 Taliban fighters during past 24 hours and wounded 176 more.

## Afghan forces kill 81 militants in Balkh province

INANS ■ KABUL

A total of 81 militants were confirmed dead as the Afghan forces, backed by helicopters and fighter planes, launched airstrikes in the northern Balkh province, an army statement released here on Sunday said.

The sorties were launched on a global media consortium website, leaving 81 insur-

gents dead and injuring 43 others, reports Xinhua news agency.

A large number of arms and ammunition, as well as over two dozen vehicles and motorbikes of the militants, were also destroyed during the air raids, the statement added.

The Taliban militants have claimed to be fighting nearly 200 districts since early May across Afghanistan.

## UK parliamentary report finds bullying, harassment of women in military

PTI ■ LONDON

Sixty-four per cent of female overseas and 58 per cent of currently serving women reported experiencing bullying, harassment and discrimination (BHD) during their careers in the UK military, according to a new parliamentary report put out on Sunday.

The House of Commons Defence Sub-Committee on Women in the Armed Forces, in its report entitled 'Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life', said that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and military services are 'failing to protect female personnel and to help servicewomen achieve their full potential'.

While most servicewomen and female veterans that were consulted for the report, nearly 90 per cent of respondents to a survey, would recommend the Armed Forces as a career,

more than 3,000 (around 84 per cent) reported that female service personnel face additional challenges relative to their male counterparts.

"Women are integral to our military's success and our country's security, yet women in the Armed Forces carry additional burdens to that of their male colleagues," said Conservative Party MP Sarah Atherton, Chair of the Sub-Committee.

"Women face barriers to promotion, issues with families and childcare, abuse and inappropriate behaviours, and an overrepresentation in the Service Complaints system. Female veterans face distinctive challenges when transitioning into civilian life and have specific needs, different from their male colleagues," she said.

A female veteran herself, Atherton said the sto-

ries the committee heard "paint a difficult picture" for women in the military. Accounts of bullying, harassment, discrimination, "laddish" behaviour, and sometimes serious sexual assault and rape were among the complaints.

"The complaints system, as it stands, is woefully inadequate. It leaves most feeling unable to come forward. We also heard accusations of senior officers sweeping complaints under the rug to protect their own reputations and careers."

While many commanding officers want to do the right thing, it is clear that, too often, female service personnel are being let down by the chain of command," she added. The Sub-Committee recommends that the MoD create a specialised Defence Authority for handling BHD complaints and that the MoD better resource the Service Complaints Ombudsman and make their decisions binding.

## Global coronavirus caseload tops 193.6 mn

INANS ■ WASHINGTON

The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 193.6 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.15 million and vaccinations soared to over 3.81 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University. In its latest update on Sunday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and the total number of vaccine doses administered stood at 193,633,246, 4,151,311 and 3,815,028,866, respectively.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 34,426,844 and 610,833, respectively, according to the CSSE.

In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 31,332,159 cases. The other worst countries



with over 3 million cases are Brazil (19,670,534), France (6,041,146), Russia (6,025,698), the UK (5,694,163), Turkey (5,574,997), Argentina (4,839,109), Colombia (4,716,798), Italy (4,312,673), Spain (4,280,429), Germany (3,761,869), Iran (3,664,286) and Indonesia (3,127,826), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 549,448 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (230,016), Mexico (237,954), Peru (195,243), Russia (150,583), the UK (129,416), Italy (127,942), Colombia (118,538), France (111,800) and Argentina (103,584).

## French President Macron calls Israeli PM Bennett on allegations of snooping

French President Emmanuel Macron has spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on reports that Morocco's security forces may have used the Pegasus spyware to snoop on his cellphones, according to a media report.

A global media consortium last week reported that 50,000 cellphone numbers were being spied on using the Pegasus malware, which has been developed by Israeli cybersecurity company NSO Group. The mobile phones of French President Macron and 15 members of his government may have been among potential targets, according to a member of the media consortium.

Macron telephoned Bennett on Thursday and asked him to ensure that "the issue was being taken seriously", Israel's Channel 12 reported on Saturday evening.

The Israeli Prime Minister said that the allegations are from a period when he had not assumed office but gave an assurance that the required conclusions on the matter will be reached upon.

Macron had called an urgent national security meeting on Thursday to discuss the Pegasus spyware after reports about its misuse in France emerged. The Moroccan government has denied reports that the country's security forces used the spyware to eavesdrop on the French President. Similarly, the NSO Group has denied that the French President was targeted.

We can "specifically come out and say for sure that the President of France, Macron, was not a target," Chaim Gelfand, Chief Compliance Officer at NSO Group, told Israeli television network i24news on Wednesday.

## PoK holds polls to elect Assembly

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Voters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir went to the polls on Sunday to elect the legislative assembly.

There are over 3.2 million eligible voters who can elect 45 members of the assembly for a five-year term.

India has previously slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily occupied region has no legal basis.

The assembly has a total of 53 members but only 45 are directly elected, while five seats are reserved for women and three are meant for the technocrats. A tough triangular competition involving Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is expected.

The PTI has nominated candidates for all the 45 constituencies, while PML-N and PPP each issued tickets to can-

didates for 44 seats.

Tehreek-e-Labbaki Pakistan (TLP), the radical Islamist party which was banned in April by the Pakistan government for its violent activities, is contesting on 40 seats.

The TLP was not de-registered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) after the ban, enabling it to take part in the elections.

Thirty-three constituencies are located in PoK, while 12 seats are for refugees settled in different cities of Pakistan.

Apart from the ticket holders of different political parties, a total of 261 independent candidates are also in the race for the 33 constituencies in PoK, while 56 independents are vying for the 12 refugees' seats. Elaborate security measures have been taken and army troops deployed to maintain peace during the election.

Traditionally, the ruling party in the country wins the elections in PoK.

## Beijing sends supplies to flooded area, rebuilds barriers

AP ■ XINXIANG

Trucks carrying water and food on Sunday streamed into a Chinese city at the centre of flooding that killed at least 58 people, while soldiers laid sandbags to fill gaps in river dikes that left neighbourhoods under water.

Residents cleared away mud, wrecked cars and other debris after record rains that started Tuesday and flooded streets and disrupted train service. The rainfall subsided earlier in the week but some neighbourhoods still were waiting for water up to two metres (six feet) deep to drain.

Trucks dropped off instant noodles and other goods at a stadium in Xinxiang, 40 miles (65 km) north of the metropolis of Zhengzhou in Henan province. Volunteers shifted pallets of drinking water stacked higher than their heads onto other trucks for distribution.

The volunteers occasionally broke into cheers of, "Go,



Xinxiang!" Direct economic losses throughout Henan were estimated at 13.9 billion yuan (\$2 billion), according to the official Xinhua News Agency. It said a total of more than 3,800 houses collapsed across the province and 920,000 people were evacuated from their homes.

Emergency crews were trying to close gaps in flood dikes that flooded sections of some villages.

Soldiers and paramilitary police dumping stones and sandbags into a 100-metre-long (300-foot-long), eight-metre-deep (25-foot-deep) gap in a gap on the Weihe river in Xinxiang, the official newspaper. The Global Times reported.

On Saturday, authorities intentionally flooded parts of the nearby city of Hebi to lower water levels elsewhere, according to the Shanghai online news outlet The Paper.

## California's largest fire torches homes as blazes burn West

AP ■ BLY (US)

Flames racing through rugged terrain in Northern California destroyed multiple homes Saturday as the state's largest wildfire, the Dixie fire, after dark, it was burning in a remote area with limited access, hampering firefighters' efforts as it advanced eastward, fire officials said.

The blaze has charred more than 181,000 acres (73,200 hectares) in Plumas and Butte counties and prompted evacuation orders in several small communities and along the west shore of Lake Almanzo, a popular getaway. The fire was 20% contained as of Saturday night.

Meanwhile, the nation's largest wildfire, southern Oregon's Bootleg fire, was nearly halfway surrounded Saturday as more than 2,200 crew members worked to corral it in the heat and wind, fire officials said. The growth of the sprawling blaze had slowed, but thousands of homes remained threatened on its eastern side, authorities said.



"This fire is resistant to stopping at dozer lines," Jim Hanson, fire behaviour analyst, said in a news release from the Oregon Department of Forestry. "With the critically dry weather and fuels we are experiencing, firefighters are having to constantly reevaluate their control lines and look for

contingency options." In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom has declared a state of emergency for four northern counties because of wildfires that he said were causing "conditions of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property." The proclamation opened the way for more state support.

Such conditions are often from a combination of unusual random, short-term and natural weather patterns heightened by long-term, human-caused climate change. Global warming has made the West much warmer and drier in the past 30 years.

## French protesters reject virus passes, vaccine mandate

AP ■ PARIS

Some 160,000 people, including far-right activists and members of France's yellow vest movement, protested Saturday across the country against a bill requiring everyone to have a special virus pass to enter restaurants and mandating Covid-19 vaccinations for all health care workers.

Similar protests were held in neighbouring Italy.

Police fired water cannons and tear gas on rowdy protesters in Paris, although most gatherings were orderly.

Legislators in France's Senate were debating the virus bill Saturday after the lower house of parliament approved it on Friday, as virus infections are spiking and hospitalizations are rising.

to protect vulnerable people at hospitals, and avoid any new lockdown.

Most French adults are fully vaccinated and multiple polls indicate a majority of French people support the new measures. But not everyone.

Protesters, chanting "Liberty! Liberty!" gathered at Bastille plaza and marched through eastern Paris in one of several demonstrations Saturday around France. Thousands also joined a gathering across the Seine River from the Eiffel Tower organised by a former top official in Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration party.

While most protesters were calm, tensions erupted on the margins of the Bastille march. Riot police sprayed tear gas on marchers after someone threw a chair at an officer. Other projectiles were also thrown. Later

some protesters moved to the Arc de Triomphe and police used water cannon to disperse them.

Marchers included far-right politicians and activists as well as others angry at President Emmanuel Macron.

French "health pass" that is now required to enter museums, movie theaters and tourist sites. The bill under debate would expand the pass requirement to all restaurants and bars in France and some other venues.

To get the pass, people need to be fully vaccinated, have a recent negative test or have proof they recently recovered from the virus. French lawmakers are divided over how far to go in imposing health passes or mandatory vaccinations but infections are rising quickly.

## 5 sites in Saudi Arabia, Europe inscribed on world heritage list

INANS ■ PARIS

Five cultural sites in Saudi Arabia and Europe have been inscribed on the world heritage list, the Unesco announced in a statement.

According to the statement issued on Saturday, the decision was made during the Unesco World Heritage Committee's 44th session recently held online and chaired from Fuzhou, China, reports Xinhua news agency.

Hima Cultural Area in an arid, mountainous area of southwest Saudi Arabia won the status as it contains a substantial collection of rock art images depicting hunting, fauna, flora and lifestyles in a cultural continuity of 7,000 years, the statement said.

Travellers and armies camping on the site left a

wealth of rock inscriptions and petroglyphs through the ages and until the late 20th century, most of which are preserved in pristine condition.

The trans-national site, "The Great Spa Towns of Europe", comprises 11 towns located in seven European countries — Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy and the UK.

The spa buildings and facilities of this site are all integrated into an overall urban context that includes a carefully managed recreational and therapeutic environment in a picturesque landscape and "embody the significant inter-change of human values and developments in medicine, science and balneology," said the committee.

The other sites include the Lighthouse of Cordouan on a

shallow rocky plateau in the Atlantic Ocean in France built at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries as "a masterpiece of maritime signaling"; the Darmstadt Artists' Colony in west-central Germany, established in 1897 as a centre for emerging reform movements in architecture, arts and crafts and now "a testimony to early modern architecture, urban planning and landscape design."

In Italy's historic walled city of Padua, a selection of fresco cycles painted in the 14th century by different artists for different types of patron and within buildings of diverse functions, was inscribed because they "illustrate how, over the course of a century, fresco art developed along a new creative impetus and understanding of spatial representation."

## Tens of thousands march for LGBTQ rights at Berlin parade

AP ■ BERLIN

Around 65,000 revellers marched for LGBTQ rights at Berlin's annual Christopher Street Day celebration on Saturday, more than three times as many as expected.

It was the biggest demonstration in Berlin since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The parade started with a call from Klaus Lederer, Berlin's senator for culture, to make the city a "queer-free zone" in response to deteriorating safety for gays and lesbians in Hungary and neighbouring Poland.

"LGBT-free zones" have been declared in parts of Poland, while Hungary recently passed a law banning the depiction of homosexuality or gender reassignment to minors that has been denounced as discriminatory by human

rights groups.

Lederer said the situation in EU member states "sends shivers down my back." The senator also noted that the pandemic had been particularly hard for some gays and lesbians at home as shelters were closed. He said "there is still much work to be done."

Police spokesman Martin Dams initially told The Associated Press that an estimated 35,000 people were taking part in the parade, but this figure was revised upwards later Saturday. Organizers put the figure at 80,000.

They had been expecting around 20,000 people amid social distancing rules and a ban on alcohol to combat the risk of new coronavirus infections. There was no parade last year due to the pandemic so many people took advantage of the warm sunny weather.



## 28% Indians plan to travel in Aug-Sept; risk of 3rd Covid-19 wave set to rise: Report

announced in public notice is



## Futuristic building blocks

The Indian real estate and infrastructure sector are no longer exempt from the disruption of the new-age technologies. Traditional ways of construction are quickly being displaced as developers aim to become more agile to save time and cost by offering more robust and even smart real estate structures that stand the test of time and harsh conditions.

Technological trends like the Internet of Things (IoT) have actively shaped the Indian real estate and infrastructure sector in the last few years. The pandemic further intensified technology's penetration in the sector to ensure business continuity, hence bringing the existing developers under the umbrella of innovation and technology. This has resulted in real estate making inroads with a multitude of new-age technological developments and innovations that are bringing about some fundamental change that will reshape the industry forever.

**Necessity is the mother of innovation**  
 The current pandemic-induced recession has become a golden opportunity for Engineering, Construction and Infrastructure enterprises (ECI) to accelerate their digital transformation. Compared to other sectors globally, real estate has been lagging in productivity for decades now. Findings from McKinsey's annual report reflect that yearly productivity growth in engineering and construction has averaged just 1 per cent over the past two decades, compared with a 3.6

ASHOK VANI highlights how we need to make use of the space created by the pandemic to push for technological advancements in the construction process

per cent and 2.8 per cent growth rate for the manufacturing sector and the global economy, respectively. Another research in the US revealed that a tenth of material purchased for construction is wasted, 30 per cent of all construction is reworked, 90 per cent of projects are delayed, and 40 per cent of job site work is unproductive. This results in 40 per cent of projects going over budget. The scenario is not so different in India and is compelling developers and contractors to embrace technology. Technology enhances the survival of infrastructure players. The industry desperately needs to

go beyond the convention by employing modern technologies, including data-based 3D models, cloud-based on-site and off-site project coordination and communications, and constructible building information modelling (BIM) for planning and error-free construction. It is estimated that full-scale digitisation in non-residential construction alone could lead to annual savings of between \$700 billion and \$1.2 trillion. These savings will pump fresh blood into the struggling real estate sector resulting in higher wages to help nurture and retain human capital. Automation, IoT and robotics will also play a crucial role in reviving the



economy while ensuring an uninterrupted construction process. Greater adoption of digitised workflows across all stages of construction, from design and planning to engineering and onsite work, will be vital in overcoming the downturn most real estate firms are currently experiencing.

**The era of sustainable infrastructure development**  
 Global commitments to contain greenhouse emissions are compelling construction businesses to switch to more sustainable methods. Given that the global construction industry is estimated to emit 35 to 45 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere, it's high time the industry takes on the burden to combat climate change.

Construction development and logistics are the biggest contributors to this number. A conventional construction project typically sees a constant flow of vehicles for material delivery and collecting waste. Construction sites can systematically reduce this through a supply management system by scheduling their traffic. Harnessing subcontractor data to reduce vehicle frequency on multiple sites, avoid peak times, and reduce extra deliveries/double-handling will further enhance project sta-

bility while improving sustainability. Prefabricated construction is another way to cut wastage up to 90 per cent compared to traditional building methods. Modernised prefabricated elements and smart resource planning are designed to reduce wastage and enhance sustainability, using advanced data analytics to design homes with optimal storage and energy usage. Using materials that maintain a comfortable temperature also reduces excessive heating or cooling to ease climate change.

**Leveraging technology for safer construction**

The pandemic has created a critical need for safer, faster and more reliable construction workflows. Projects need controlled building sites with more structured supervision, which will create a safer environment and fulfil the necessary social distancing mandates.

Technology can be used to secure safe processes by analysing daily activities and worker movement. This system can be applied to separate individuals or groups of people. Digital technologies like GPS-enabled devices and geo-fencing can help monitor people across the sites and initiate alerts when people get too close or sites get clogged with workers.

Developers who have already jumped on the technology wagon are experiencing much ease and reaping the benefits, avoiding cost leakages and maintaining order in a relatively low economic activity. The labour-intensive construction sector will now have to shift its focus to automation without hampering construction work.

Before the pandemic, digital solutions were primarily used to ensure construction efficiency, meet deadlines, and enhance project profitability. However, the post-pandemic reality will push for digital transformation to resolve the particular challenges posed by COVID-19 and construct a smart future for the real estate industry.

(The author is the head of technology & innovation at Highbar Technocrat Limited, an end-to-end IT solutions provider for the infrastructure industry.)

## WEBBED



### MR CORMAN

The days and nights of fifth-grade teacher Josh Corman as he struggles with anxiety, loneliness, forfeited dreams of a music career, and the sinking suspicion that he sucks as a person. First episode of the series releases on August 6 on Apple TV+.



### SHERSHAHAH

The true story of a PVC awardee brave Indian soldier — Capt Vikram Batra — who shot to fame and became a household name during the Kargil War in 1999. The film releases on August 12 on Amazon Prime Video.



### MODERN LOVE S2

Love breaks all the rules. Each episode of this anthology series brings to life different stories of relationships, connections, betrayals and revelations — all inspired by true events. It releases on August 13 on Amazon Prime Video.

## Ladies leading the way

Five reasons why we love female characters crafted by screenwriter KANIKA DHILLON. By TEAM VIVA

Indian cinema has been observing a positive change in terms of the representation of women on screen. From merely being a love interest of the hero to crafting impactful female-led films, we have come a long way due to the efforts of many screenwriters and filmmakers. One of the leading voices of this change is Kanika Dhillon.

She has given many memorable, strong, and progressive female characters to the industry. From Rumi in *Mannmarziyan*, Bobby in *Judgemental Hai Kya*, Mandakini in *Kedarnath*, Nanki in *Gully to Rani in Hasen Dillrubu*, all of her female characters are simply real.

While the ace writer-producer is earning the lion's share of praise for her gripping storyline and powerful dialogues in *Hasen Dillrubu*, here's looking at five reasons why we love Kanika's female characters.

#### ♦ They are fearless and unapologetic

Whether it is Rumi or Rani, each of Kanika's characters is bold, opinionated, and unapologetic for their choices. The courage and persona of all these women made the audience instantly root for them.

#### ♦ They are flawed and real

Instead of stereotyping a woman as a figure of sacrifice, Kanika's ladies are flawed, messy, complex, and more than anything, they are real. Be it the struggle of Bobby from *Judgemental Hai Kya* or Nanki's unconventional

al way of surviving trauma, it was the substance portrayed by these characters that struck a chord with everyone.

#### ♦ They can do anything for love

All of Kanika's women find deep solace in love and are ready to proclaim it like no one else. While Mandakini from *Kedarnath* was least affected by the communal difference between her and Mansoor, both Rumi and Rani's passion in *Mannmarziyan* and *Hasen Dillrubu*, respectively, received roaring applause.

#### ♦ They voice important issues

Apart from crafting layered female characters, Kanika has a flair for raising important issues through her women on screen. From the #MeToo movement to love in the digital age to shedding light on mental health, her characters have a message to deliver, and we love to hear their voices.

#### ♦ They are decisive

Kanika's ladies are known to take charge of their lives and are courageous enough to live by their decisions. All the women in her films are powerful and lead lives on their terms. Rani from *Hasen Dillrubu* was ready to face the consequence of her choices and that is what made her fearless and desirable.



With so much information and misinformation out there, getting fit seems not only hard but also impractical sometimes. While we are often carried away with this information overload, it is important to remember that there is no magic potion or pill which can make us lose fat. Rather, small and achievable changes to our lifestyle are the key to reaching our goals.

If you are about to embark on, or in the middle of, your fitness journey, you should be aware of the following myths and facts to amp up your preparations.

#### □ CONSUMING FATS MAKE YOU FAT

**Myth:** If you consume fats such as butter, ghee or nuts, you will automatically gain weight. Excluding all kinds of fats will help you lose weight.

**Fact:** While it is true that fats are calorie-dense (a gram of any fatty ingredient contains nine calories while a gram of carbohydrate or protein has about four calories), consuming them in the right quantity will not lead to weight gain. They are an important macronutrient needed for carrying out functions such as producing hormones, aiding nutrient absorption, and many others. Eliminating them from your diet can lead to deficiencies and hormonal imbalances. Remember that no single food group causes fat gain. As long as your calories consumed are lower than the calories expended, you will lose fat.

#### □ FESTIVAL FOODS DON'T MAKE YOU FAT

**Myth:** You can eat shrikhand,

## Eyes on the prize

JITENDRA CHOUKEY reveals the reality concerning some prominent weight-loss myths



puri and other festival foods without worrying about gaining weight. Our ancestors were very wise and these regional food combinations are cleverly designed to provide us with nutrients and won't make us fat, especially on festivals and holidays.

**Fact:** All kinds of foods, festive or not, contain calories. In fact, festive foods are generally high in oil and sugar content. These foods are highly palatable and easy to over-consume. If you eat too many calories and do so over a sustained period, it will certainly result in weight gain. Your body doesn't understand the significance of festivals. It treats all calories equally, irrespective of

#### □ THE MYTH OF 'THE PERFECT DIET'

**Myth:** 'There is one perfect diet or there is a golden formula for weight loss'

**Fact:** The perfect diet does not exist. As everyone is different, the nutritional requirements also vary. What works for one person might not work for others. Moreover, a plan will work only if you follow it consistently along with a proper exercise routine and a healthy lifestyle. Select a nutrition plan that includes food that you enjoy and aim to keep a caloric balance. Follow this plan consistently and

with time, you will lose weight.

#### □ SUPPLEMENTS WILL HELP YOU LOSE WEIGHT

**Myth:** 'There is one perfect diet or there is a golden formula for weight loss'

**Fact:** The perfect diet does not exist. As everyone is different, the nutritional requirements also vary. What works for one person might not work for others. Moreover, a plan will work only if you follow it consistently along with a proper exercise routine and a healthy lifestyle. Select a nutrition plan that includes food that you enjoy and aim to keep a caloric balance. Follow this plan consistently and with time, you will lose weight.

#### □ YOU CAN'T LOSE WEIGHT BECAUSE YOU LACK WILLPOWER/MOTIVATION

**Myth:** You just need to stay motivated and things will fall into place. If you've been unable to lose weight, that just means you lack the will to lose weight. Fix your attitude and results will follow!

**Fact:** Several factors aid and hinder fat loss. While willpower is one such factor, there are several other important aspects such as food habits, immediate environment, genetics, and lifestyle choices that can affect our fat loss. The key is building consistency and being patient.

Now that you are aware of the facts, do not get misled by these myths again and derail your progress. Only a combination of an active lifestyle and a healthy diet can help you get fit.

(The author is the founder and CEO of Fitter, a fitness and nutrition community.)

## TRENDBLAZER

### OTT MAKING US UP OUR GAME: ASHISH

Veteran actor **ASHISH VIDYARTHI** says that OTT platforms have allowed people to access things when they want it, and because of an abundance of options available at a click, one's 'product has to be so much better.' 'It's in your hand when you want it — instant gratification. It is somewhat tricky, everything has its pros and cons. There's so much to choose from, and therefore your product has to be so much better. As far as I am concerned, at this moment, in this form, OTT is the go-to thing,' he shares.

### fairtalk

GOVINDA



'I remember during my first film, *Ilzaam*, I had to shoot a romantic song with Neelam and I just couldn't do it. The choreographer Saroj (Khan) approached me and inquired whether I had ever romanced a girl. I said 'no', and she immediately asked one of her assistant choreographers to teach me how to do the romantic steps, and it was quite something.'

### dailytalk

TANYA MANIKTALA



'I take a digital detox every third day of the week. Part of the detox involves uninstalling Instagram from my phone and being away from gadgets as much as possible. People who know me, are familiar with the fact that I am not a text person. I prefer face-to-face interactions more than any social media text or message.'

### 'WILL LET SON WATCH KILL BILL WHEN HE IS 7'

Hollywood filmmaker **QUENTIN TARANTINO** has shared that he is open to letting his 17-month-old son Leo, watch his movie *Kill Bill* when he turns five or six-years-old. When asked what age would he be comfortable letting his son watch his work, he replied, 'That depends on his interests as well. If I had to imagine, he would probably, as a little boy, be most attracted to *Kill Bill*, anywhere between five, six or seven.'



# SPILLING THE SECRET

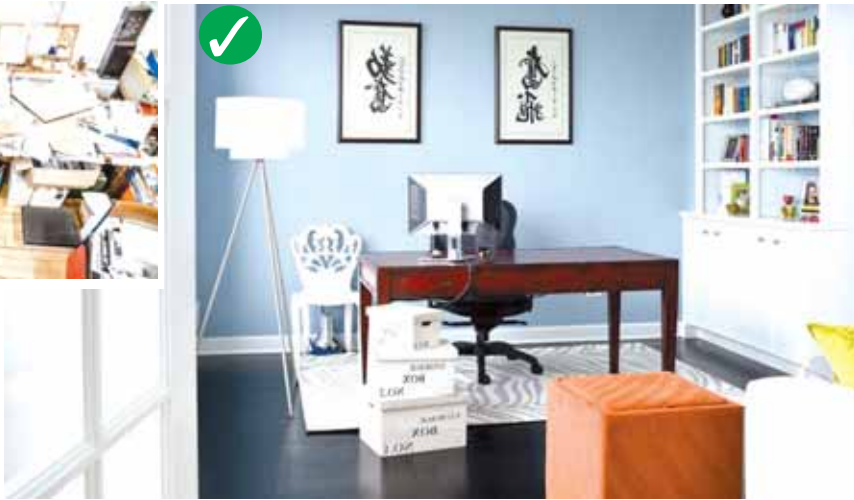
To maintain a balanced environment at your work-from-home set up, ensure productivity and attract positivity, it is important to follow Vastu guidelines, shares MANOJ SRIVASTAV



**D**uring the pandemic, working from home has become the new normal. Many software and consulting organisations have switched to work-from-home till the fourth quarter of this year. Even otherwise, due to several modern professions, there are a growing number of home-based professionals and entrepreneurs who now find working from home more productive. Many new mothers also switch to professions that can be conveniently managed from home.

Most work-from-home professionals choose to set up their workspace in a corner of their bedroom, on the dining room table, in the corner of a passage, or maybe even in the guest bedroom. However, to maintain a balanced environment, ensure productivity and attract positivity, it is important to follow some Vastu guidelines. Vastu energies are present subtly in a space that can be harnessed as a catalyst to our growth and progress. Here are a few simple steps which you can follow to ensure the benefits of good Vastu energies while working from home.

❖ Try to arrange your work desk such that there is a solid wall behind you. This helps in bringing stability to your work.



❖ Establish your work desk preferably in the Northeast, East, Southwest, or West corner of your home. To establish the directions stand at the approximate centre of your home with a compass and locate all the above directions. Then decide which is the best as per the other parameters suggested in this article.

❖ As per Vastu Shastra, the best productivity can be achieved when you sit facing North or West. If your job is related to software programming or software application operations it is best to sit facing East. If it involves a lot of financial decisions, such as these days a lot of people trade in stock

markets, then it is better to face the North. Those whose responsibility is to ensure project execution can sit facing South.

❖ You should not install figurines or paintings depicting Gods and Goddesses on the wall or cabinet behind you. If you want, you can place the idols in front of you either on your work desk or on the opposite wall.

❖ Preferably, do not set up your home office in your bedroom. The bedroom is designed to ensure good rest and sleep and having your home office will not do well to your productivity.

❖ The room used as a home office

should have bright vibrant colours. Even light shades of orange, blue and green are suitable for keeping you upbeat and focussed.

❖ One of the most important Vastu advice for a home office is to keep your desk and office room clutter-free. Your files and desk drawers should be properly arranged. Equal emphasis should be given to your computer files and desktop screen. Keep them arranged and neatly labeled. This will go a long way in increasing your productivity and focus.

❖ Do not put paintings depicting loneliness, sadness, darkness, storm, and tempest. Paintings that depict

nature and celebrations are the best. ❖ Do not place figurines or sculptures depicting war or fight in your home office set up. They should not be placed anywhere in your home but especially not in the home office.

❖ The worktable should be rectangular. Irregular and oval-shaped work desks are not recommended as per the tenets of Vastu.

Following these easy suggestions are sure to go a long way in your career growth even when you are working from home.

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



## Make the world a better place

Closer the man is to nature's benevolence, the more bountiful it becomes, says

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI

**A**round the globe, the five elements of nature are in revolt against human beings, unleashing their fury in the form of floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes and tsunamis. Despite having several warning systems in place today, no one is really sure about what they are going to wake up to. Hence, disaster management has come up as a major focus area in current years. But while we can gear up for any natural calamity within limits, it is almost impossible to stand up to the unprecedented high magnitude of nature's wrath that we have witnessed lately. Especially in the case of earthquakes, which are occurring so frequently. The question that, hence, emerges in everyone's minds is: What is the reason behind this drastic change in the temperament of nature, which has been revered for ages as the mother by mankind, from the most bountiful to the most merciless?

Though calamities were not unknown in the past few decades, their occurrence was rare. According to scientists all over the world, global warming, caused by the emission of carbon gases into the atmosphere as a result of greater mechanisation, industrialisation, and depletion of green cover, has brought us to the present predicament. They say that earth has been pushed with such great momentum to the brink that even a fall and immediate halt to these activities will not free us from the consequences. The root cause, however, is that man has violated natural laws and plundered resources recklessly to meet his greed, without restoring anything that he took away from nature. His nature, driven by selfishness and corrupted by the quest to exploit and profit from what is free for all, made him greedy and short-sighted, thereby inviting his downfall. Therefore, the corruption of man's nature has led to the degradation of natural resources and the environment. Man has founded the so-called modern world by going against the laws of nature and violated the lessons that nature taught him — to share, sustain and exist in harmony with others.

Through each of its five elements, known for their characteristic qualities, nature is a human being's best guide and teacher. Mother Earth nourishes every species and life on the planet. It is in its heart that seeds germinate and life is sustained. As much as it is known as a bountiful giver and nourisher, it is as much known for its strength and firmness. The element of water is known to keep a low profile all the time, flowing towards a low-lying surface. It is known to take the shape of whatever it is poured into, to meander its way through difficult terrains and to meet its final destination, the sea. Depending upon the temperature, it can change its form to water vapour or solidify into ice. It is said that a person who learns to master the art of adjustment and flexibility can never be subjected to the wrath of water, for he has befriended it.

The element of fire is known to have a unique capacity of burning away or finishing the unwanted. Unlike water that gets dirty while purifying the human body or belongings, or the air that becomes toxic on being subjected to pollution, fire detoxifies without losing its original nature. It is for this reason that ores are treated with it for purity, clothes are disinfected in the sun and rubbish is burnt away. The power of meditation is like the fire which finishes the past waste and negative traits of a soul and frees it completely of the bondage of karma.

Similarly, the air breathes life into everything on earth. It is a natural transporter and carrier. Temperamentally, it is known to soothe and lift spirits. It, along with the sky, or space as it is called, teaches the importance of the element of freedom. It is in the sky that the birds fly, that kites take soar and humans escape to for experiencing unbounded recreation. The vast expanse of sky holds the uncountable stars and their galaxies, planets, and satellites, which automatically and silently follow a cyclical pattern of revolutions and rotations.

The human body is the closest form of external nature. Our ancestors believed that the body of a person who has inhaled the lessons demonstrated by five elements of nature can never be hurt by the wrath of nature. This is so because the natural environment is an extension of our internal nature and the disturbance in the latter is finally replicated in the fury of nature. Natural disasters and upheavals are becoming common because humans have bypassed the lessons that it has to teach. So what we need to understand is that: Closer the man is to nature's benevolence, the more bountiful it becomes.



**T**he pandemic has revealed the importance of having smooth coordination between the Union, State, and local government bodies (Municipal Corporation and panchayats) in managing crucial tasks pertaining to disease control and shouldering the responsibility of making resources available to its people. At the village level, the local authorities are playing a vital role in fighting the battle against Covid-19 and executing the various support schemes launched by state and union governments. Last year, while observing National Panchayat Raj Day on April 24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually interacted with the sarpanches from across the country and emphasised how the progress of panchayats will eventually ensure the development of the nation, more so in times of Covid-19.

The leadership and guidance of sarpanches have certainly become a beacon of hope for villagers amid these struggling times. Providing treatment and testing facilities, creating awareness, and maintaining the protocols are undertaken under the directions of sarpanches. However, several villages in the country are surviving these times in absence of a leader. Around 15 Gram Panchayats in Maharashtra's Solapur district, which borders Karnataka to the south, are sailing in the same boat.

Although, on January 16, the elections for around 650 Gram Panchayats were held in Solapur district, and the results

## A battle without a leader

As we approach the possibility of a third wave of the pandemic, adequate preparation in villages is fundamental to minimising its impact, says SHIRISH KHARE

were announced on January 18. Given that many of the sarpanch seats in these panchayats were reserved and no representative from the reserved community contested the elections, many villages are without sarpanches today. Generally, the district administration is responsible for holding new elections within a month in such a situation, but due to Covid-19, re-election could not take place. Without a leader, the fight against Covid-19 has become even more difficult for the residents of these villages.

Out of these 15 villages, it had become the toughest for seven villages of Sangola Block to contain the spread of Covid-19's second wave, which included, Aglawadi, Burangewadi, Bopewadi, Khilarwadi, Nijampur, Hanmangon and Tarangewadi. Apart from these villages, the Gram Panchayats of Jahanpura in Baarshi Block, Khed in North Solapur Block, Bopale and Shergawadi in Mohol Block, Ganeswadi in Mangalwedha Block, Rajur and Takali in South Solapur Block, and Yelvi in Malshiras Block are also awaiting a sarpanch. As the cases were on a rise, the district administration was enforcing strict measures with the assistance



of sarpanches. However, the lack of institutional leadership in these 15 villages was causing issues ranging from protocol adherence to treatment provision.

Following the Covid-19 protocol, it is not advisable to conduct re-elections, as of now. However, once the situation improves, the decision to elect sarpanches will be made immediately, as their absence has undoubtedly hampered the district's fight against the virus,"

said Milind Shambarkar, the sarpanch of Solapur.

The Solapur district was one of the most vulnerable areas in the State as well as in the country during both the first and second waves. According to the government records, there were more than 20,000 active cases in the district, whereas on the ground, more than 1.5 lakh people were infected with Covid-19, and more than 3,500 deaths were recorded at the time of writing

this article. People from rural areas made a sizable portion of this population.

Reflecting on the importance of a sarpanch, Milind Kohli, a resident of Sangola Block in Solapur, stated that while the presence of sarpanches would not have eradicated the disease, proper measures would have been in place to prevent its spread. The sarpanches would have made efforts to plan to test and provide better and time-

ly treatment in coordination with the state government.

"There is currently no testing, treatment, or monitoring in place. If it had been the other way around, they would have urged their sarpanch to provide them with medicines and medical equipment such as oximeters and thermometers to monitor their health," shared Milind.

Sandeep Belvarkar, who has a chemist shop in Pandarpur town in Solapur, informed that the number of people affected by cold, cough, and fever was on the rise during the second wave. According to him, the lack of testing was leading to an increase in Covid-19 positive cases in rural areas. He believes it is during times like this that a sarpanch is needed the most. Without a sarpanch, there is no one to coordinate with the district administration to undertake the required tasks. "Several people were sick. Many members of the same family have died, but we do not know if these figures were recorded," Sandeep added.

As we approach the possibility of a third wave, strong preparation in cities and villages is fundamental. Thus, the administration should focus its attention on the urgency of the situation and take the best steps possible. Without sarpanches, the modus operandi to fight the third wave of Covid-19 appears bleak.

—Charikha Features

**Do one thing every day that scares you.**  
 —Eleanor Roosevelt

### NUMEROUS CATARACT ON THE RISE

**T**he number of cases of dry eyes and digital eye strain has gone up during the pandemic period, said a top official of Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital. The cases of digital eye strain and dry eyes seen a significant rise as a result of excessive exposure to light-emitting digital screens as people adapted to work-from-home and study-from-home scenarios, said Dr Amar Agarwal, Chairman.

According to him, the cases of matured cataracts surged from 10 per cent of the total cataract cases in the last quarter of 2019 to over 50 per cent during the same period in 2020. Citing an internal study conducted in 2020, he said that the delay in seeking medical interventions during the first wave of the pandemic — due to lockdown restrictions or fear of infection risks, had severely deteriorated the eye conditions of many patients. Hence, without ignoring any eye issue, patients should seek medical intervention at the earliest.



### GLOBAL WARMING MAY LIMIT SPREAD OF DENGUE

**G**lobal warming could limit the spread of dengue fever but could also affect Wolbachia as a biological control agent, according to new research. Researchers, at the Pennsylvania State University in the US, found that infection with the bacterium Wolbachia, which has recently been used to control viral infections in mosquitoes, also increases the thermal sensitivity of the insects. Wolbachia have been shown to prevent viruses, including dengue, from replicating inside mosquitoes. But future climate models point to increasing frequencies of extreme temperature events, making short exposures to high temperatures a threat to the survival of dengue and Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes, the researchers said.

"At lower temperatures, we know that dengue virus may fail to replicate fast enough to make it through the mosquito body and be transmitted, thereby reducing transmission risk," said Fhailon Ware-Gilmore, graduate student in the Department of Entomology at Penn State.



### HYPERTENSION, DIABETES AMONG TOP NCDs

**T**he Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), as part of its "Illness to Wellness" campaign, unveiled India's largest primary healthcare survey report on the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD). The report titled Non-Communicable Diseases in India covered 2,33,672 people and 673 public health offices in 21 states to analyse the rising cases of NCDs in the country and the social profile of suffering households. Report prepared by Thought Arbitrage Research Institute (TARI), the survey report observed that India's non-communicable disease burden is growing at an alarming rate with the average age for onset falling sharply. It reported that more than 2/3 of the individuals suffering from NCDs are in the most productive-life age groups i.e., between 26-59 years. This is an alarming trend and points to the grim reality.



### SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE OF PLASTIC IN GANGA

**T**he Ganga river is polluted with multiple kinds of plastic, with the highest concentration at Varanasi, and micro-plastics samples being found at Haridwar, Kanpur and Varanasi, a new study by Toxics Link has found. Micro-plastics are defined as plastics less than five mm in length and recognised as a major source of marine pollution due to their persistence, ubiquity and toxic potential. Plastic products and waste material released or dumped in the river break down and are eventually reduced to micro particles and the river finally transports significantly large quantities downstream into the ocean which is the ultimate sink of all plastics being used by humans. "Essentially all along micro-plastics are flowing into the river system. It does reflect or suggest a direct linkage between the poor state of both solid and liquid waste management; hence, it is critically important to initiate steps to remediate it," said Priti Mahesh, Chief Coordinator at Toxics Link.



### CUT DOWN STEROIDS TO AVOID BONE DENSITY

**I**ncreased use of steroids for the treatment of Covid-19 has resulted in many problems from black lungus or mucormycosis to bone tissue death in patients who recovered from the deadly infectious disease, say doctors. Many patients are reporting pain in joints, hip shoulder and knee — a condition medically known as avascular necrosis — months or upto a year after recovering from Covid-19. While the condition is not new and is treatable, the incidences are on the rise as a side effect in the patients, who had Covid. "The use of steroids during the treatment of Covid-19 which was a double-edged sword, is the subject behind this unnatural bone damage. The excessive use of steroids causes marrow oedema at bone ends and that cuts off its own blood supply," Orthopaedic & Robotic Joint Replacement Surgeon at Jalandhar's NHS Hospital, Dr Shubhang Aggarwal said.







## INDIA'S SCHEDULE ON JULY 26 (ALL TIMES IST)

TIME	EVENTS	ATHLETES
05:30 AM	<b>Fencing:</b> Women's Sabre Individual Table of 64	C Bhavani Devi
06:00 AM	<b>Archery:</b> Men's Team 1/8 Eliminations	Pravin Jadhav, Atanu Das & Tarundeep Rai
06:30 AM	<b>Shooting:</b> Men's Skeet Event Day 2	Mairaj Ahmad Khan & Angad Vir Bajwa
	<b>Table Tennis:</b> Men's Singles Round 2	Achanta Sharath Kamal
TBD	<b>Tennis:</b> Men's Single Second Round	Sumit Nagal
08:30 AM	<b>Table Tennis:</b> Women's Singles Round 2	Sutirtha Mukherjee
08:35 AM	<b>Sailing:</b> Men's Laser Race 2 & 3	Vishnu Saravanan
09:10 AM	<b>Badminton:</b> Men's Doubles Group Stage	Satwiksairaj & Chirag Shetty
10:15 AM	<b>Archery:</b> Men's Team Quarterfinal	
11:05 AM	<b>Sailing:</b> Women's Laser Radial Race	Nethra Kumanan
11:47 AM	<b>Archery:</b> Men's Team Semifinal	
12:00 PM	<b>Table Tennis:</b> Women's Single Round 3	Manika Batra
12:20 PM	<b>Shooting:</b> Skeet Men's Final	
12:45 PM	<b>Archery:</b> Men's Team Medal Rounds	
03:06 PM	<b>Boxing:</b> Men's 75kg - Round of 32	Ashish Kumar
03:50 PM	<b>Swimming:</b> Men's 200m Butterfly - Heat 2	Sajan Prakash
05:45 PM	<b>Hockey:</b> Women's Pool A	India vs Germany

LIVE ON SONY TEN & SIX NETWORK



Manika Batra competes during TT women's singles second round match

## Manika rises to the occasion

Tokyo: India's table tennis star Manika Batra made a stunning comeback against world number 32 Margaryta Pesotska to reach the women's singles third round but G Sathiyan succumbed to the pressure on his Olympic debut to exit the men's singles competition on Sunday. While the 26th seed Sathiyan was expected to beat world number 94 Hong Kong's Siu Hang Lam in his second round match after getting a first round bye, the same cannot be said about Manika, who took a gritty approach under pressure proved decisive after her higher-ranked opponent from Ukraine. Manika, ranked 62, made a remarkable comeback after losing the first two games to prevail 4-11, 4-11, 11-7, 12-10, 8-

11, 11-5, 11-7 in a second round match that lasted 57 minutes. She meets Austria's Sofia Polcanova on Monday for a place in the round of 16. If Manika manages another upset, it will be a significant achievement for the Indian in her second Olympics. Earlier, world number 38 Sathiyan had a commanding 3-1 lead but lost four games in a row to lose 3-4 to lower-ranked Lam from Hong Kong. "It is heartbreaking but I will come back stronger. I was playing really well initially. I was aggressive and serving well but after the fourth game he started to slow down the pace and started receiving better," Sathiyan said.

Tokyo: Arjun Lal Jait and Arvind Singh on Sunday produced the best-ever Olympic performance by Indian rowers as they cruised into the men's lightweight double sculls semifinals at the Tokyo Games. The Indian duo clocked 6:51.36 to finish third in the repechage round at the Sea Forest Waterway. "We followed exactly whatever he had been told to us by our coach. The coach told us that we should try to get the best position for India, the duo said. "It's (rowing) not a very popular sport in India. So our coach told us that getting to the semifinals is also a big motivation for us and we had to do our best."

While Arjun assumes the role of the bow, Arvind is the team's stroker. The two had finished fifth in their heats on Saturday. "Arvind and Arjun are now among the 12 semifinalists. It can be difficult to win a medal given they will be competing in the semifinals. There will be two semifinal races of six boats each and top three from each semifinal will reach the final," Rowing Federation of India President Rajkumar Singh Deo said. The event includes two rowers in a scull boat using two oars each. The long, narrow and broadly semi-circular in cross-section boats helps to reduce the drag. The maximum weight set

## Rowers Arjun, Arvind produce best-ever Indian performance



Indian rowers Arjun Lal Jait and Arvind Singh in action

for each male competitor is 72.5kg and the average weight cannot exceed 70 kg. The semifinals will be held on July 27. **NAYAK FAILS TO QUALIFY** India's lone gymnast at Tokyo Olympics, Pranati Nayak failed to qualify for the All Round final of Artistic Gymnastics competition. The 26-year-old from West Bengal recorded a total score of 42.565 over the four categories — floor exercise, vault, uneven bars and balance beam — at the Ariake Gymnastic centre. She is now ranked at 29th overall at the end of subdivision 2. There are a total of five sub-

making unforced errors. Sindhu entered the break with 11-5 lead. Soon, Sindhu was on a roll, grabbing 13 straight points. The Indian used her trademark straight and cross court smashes and drops to trouble the Israeli, who couldn't utilise the few opportunities that came her way. Sindhu sealed the first game in her favour when Polikarpova missed a shot. Polikarpova, who was playing with a strapped knee, continued to struggle with her strokes as Sindhu opened up a 9-3 lead in the second game and then entered the mid-interval with a massive seven-point advantage. It was business as usual after the break, with Sindhu riding on the errors of her opponent. Another wide shot from Polikarpova gave Sindhu 13 match points. The Indian squandered three of them before Polikarpova once again sent the shuttle out of the match. On her approach to playing a lower-ranked opponent, Sindhu said: "I think it's important to make sure that you play all of your strokes and get used to them."

"All of a sudden if you're playing with a higher-ranked player or a stronger opponent, it's not that you can just play that type of strokes, it's important to get used to the situations also."

**'WORK ON AGGRESSION'** In the post match Press conference Sindhu said she has worked on her aggression in the past five years and promised a very different version of herself after making a winning start. "Mentally, physically and experience-wise, a lot has changed. Coming to (Tokyo) 2020 is completely different. Back then there were no expectations," the reigning world champion said. "I know that I have worked hard and given all my heart all these years and I think it's time to show now. I've been working on my aggression and my technique and you will definitely see a different Sindhu."

## Mary's experience triumphs

Tokyo: Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg) powered into the Olympics' pre-quarterfinals with a superb tactical victory over Dominican Republic's Miguelina Hernandez Garcia but Manish Kaushtik's (63kg) Games debut ended in disappointment following a hard-fought opening-round loss on Sunday. The 38-year-old Mary Kom, who is a 2012 Olympic Bronze-medallist and a multiple-time Asian champion, prevailed 4-1 against a rival who is 15 years her junior and a Pan American Games Bronze-medallist.

But Manish, a Commonwealth Games Silver-medallist and a world championship Bronze-winner, went down 1-4 to Britain's Luke McCormack in an edge-of-the-seat clash. Mary Kom was the first to step into the ring and in a bout that was also exciting from start to finish, the Manipuri displayed some brilliant tactics to overcome the fight that Garcia put up. She will next be up against third-seeded Colombian Ingrid Valencia, who was a Bronze-medallist at the 2016 Rio Games. Mary has beaten the Colombian both times the two have faced, including the 2019 world championship quarterfinals. "I have all the medals in my hand. Olympic medal (Bronze) from 2012, Commonwealth Games Gold, six-time Gold at world championships. It's not easy to count them, but the difficult part is continuously winning and performing, it's not easy," she said. "...What is left is the Olympic Gold medal. That is what is driving me and making me carry on. I am trying my best. If I am able to get it then I will be so grateful, but if not then I will



still be so happy for all the medals I have won in the past," she added. On Monday, another Games debutant Ashish Kumar (75kg) will open his campaign against China's Erbieke Toubeta.

## Medal-winning athletes allowed 30-second smile for photo op

Tokyo: The medal-winning athletes at the Tokyo Olympics will now be able to sport a wide smile for the shutterbugs after the IOC updated its protocol on Sunday, allowing them to remove their masks for 30 seconds during the podium ceremony. The updated protocol, which allows athletes to remove masks briefly, came into effect on Monday morning. "It has been decided today, in line with the Tokyo 2020 Playbooks, to adapt the victory ceremony protocol in order



to allow athletes to have a physically distanced image on the podium without their masks on for 30 seconds, and a group photo with masks on the Gold medal step," said the IOC in a statement. "...The victory ceremony protocol has been adapted to allow athletes to have an image for the media that captures their faces and their emotions during a unique moment in their sporting career, as well as to celebrate the achievements of all the medalists together."

## Shooters disappoint, again

Tokyo: The fancied Indian shooting team drew a blank for the second day running in the Tokyo Olympics, with a major weapon malfunction leading to a heartbreaking exit for the young Manu Bhaker in the women's 10 air pistol event. Appearing in her maiden Olympics, the 19-year-old Manu finished a creditable 12th, despite losing nearly 20 minutes during the qualifications after the cocking lever in her pistol broke down, forcing her to go to a designated area for getting it fixed. Manu shot 575, while the cut-off was 577.

Yashaswini Singh Deswal, the other first-timer at the Games, recovered from a sub-par start to end 13th, with a total score of 574. In the men's 10 air rifle event, both the experienced Deepak Kumar and the teenaged Divyansh Singh Panwar finished a lowly 26th and 32nd respectively. Deswal aggregated 624.7 while Divyansh shot 622.8 over the six series, scores which were never going to be enough to make the final. India's Angad Vir Singh Bajwa missed two targets out of 75 to be placed 11th on



count back at the end of the third round in men's skeet qualifications. He looks to be in search of a top-six finals spot. Angad had scores of 25, 24, 24 in the first three series and will come back on Monday to shoot the final two series. Compatriot Mairaj Ahmad Khan shot 71 and was placed 25th out of the 30 shooters in fray. Taken together, the first two days' performance, or the lack of it, is certainly going to raise a few eyebrows within the Indian shooting fraternity, including the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), which has done its bit in preparing its athletes.

## Sania-Ankita pair knocked out



India women's doubles pair of Sania Mirza and Ankita Raina in action during their opening round match on Sunday

Tokyo: Sania Mirza and debutant Ankita Raina were knocked out of the Tokyo Olympics despite dominating a large part of their women's doubles opener against Ukrainian twin sisters Nadiia and Liudmyla Kichenok. Sania and Raina were running away with the contest after baggeling their opponents but in a dramatic turnaround, the Kichenok sisters came back from the dead to pull off a 0-6, 7-6(0), 10-8 win at court 11 of Ariake Tennis Centre. Sania was serving for the match at 5-3 in the second set

but perhaps nerves got the better of her and ended up dropping her serve. From there on, it was not the same match, in which the Ukrainians looked out of sort, struggling with their serves and returns. The Indians became the prey and Ukrainians pounced on them. Sania and Raina were down 1-8 in the Super Tie break but reeled off seven straight points to make it 8-8 but lost the next two points to make an exit from the Games.

No 1 Ashleigh Barty crashed out in the first round. Osaka defeated China's Zheng Saisai 6-1, 6-4 in her first match since taking an eight-week break for mental health reasons and is now the clear favourite for Gold after Barty, the reigning Wimbledon champion, dropped seven times in each set and made 55 unforced errors in a 6-4, 6-3 loss to Spain's 48th-ranked Sara Sorribes Tormo.

## Govt exempts Olympic returnees from RT-PCR test

Tokyo: Athletes, officials and media returning to the country from Tokyo Olympics will not be required to produce RT-PCR negative test reports for Covid-19 before their departure from Tokyo, the Government of India said on Sunday. The decision was announced in an official letter by Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare after the Indian Olympic President Narinder Batra had earlier in the day requested the Government to exempt returnees from the Tokyo Games to produce RT-PCR negative report before boarding their flights. The Health Ministry official, however, said that only those individuals who have returned negative in the saliva-based test prior to their departure to India will be allowed to board the flight. Besides, all those returning from Tokyo will be retested upon landing in India. The weightlifting contingent will depart for India from Tokyo on Monday after Mirabai Chanu won a historic silver in women's 49kg event. PTI

## Surya takes India to 164-5

PTI | COLOMBO  
Suryakumar Yadav continued his rich vein of form with another attractive half-century but Sri Lanka bowled well to restrict India to 164 for five in the first T20I here on Sunday. Surya's second T20I half-century was complemented by useful contributions from skipper Shikhar Dhawan (46 off 38 balls) along with Ishan Kishan (20 not out off 14 balls) at the back-end. Skipper Dhawan added 62 with Surya in eight overs to provide a solid launch-pad but the latter's dismissal surely cost India 20 extra runs. But looking at the partnership, it was evident that the junior partner was batting in a more assured manner, having already sealed his place in the T20 World Cup team while the skipper is still fighting what looks like a losing battle to jostle inside that jam-packed top-order in the main squad. There was a six over deep mid-wicket off Akila Dananjaya but the innings did lack the



punch despite four more boundaries. It was Surya's five fours and a six that really helped Kishan and Hardik to launch the final assault. At the start, Prithvi Shaw had a forgettable T20I debut as Dushmantha Chameera's (2/24 in 4 overs) outsider found the edge of his bat off the very first delivery of the match. Sanju Samson (27 off 20 balls) hit his customary six while batting like a millionaire before Wanindu Hasaranga (2/28 in 4 overs) trapped him with a googly. Surya as usual was in his free-flowing self, hitting those whiplash on-drives, cover drives and ramp shots which is a sight to watch both against pacers and spinners. However what was exhilarating was how Surya picked all those back-of-the-hand slow deliveries from seamers Isuru Udana and Chamika Karunaratne.

## MI-CSK to kickoff IPL 2021 UAE leg

New Delhi: Defending champions Mumbai Indians will meet Chennai Super Kings in Dubai on September 19 when the IPL resumes in the United Arab Emirates, the BCCI announced on Sunday. The tournament was suspended in May after multiple Covid-19 cases were reported in its bio-bubble. A total number of 31 matches will be played in the duration of 27 days including seven double headers. After the CSK-MI clash, the action will shift to Abu Dhabi where the Kolkata Knight Riders will square off against Royal Challengers Bangalore. Sharjah will host its first game on September 24 when RCB take on CSK. In all, 13 matches will be held in Dubai, 10 in Sharjah and 8 in Abu Dhabi. The first Qualifier will be played in Dubai on October 10, the Eliminator and Qualifier 2 will be played in Sharjah on October 11 and 13 respectively with Dubai hosting the final on October 15. PNS