

## OPINION 6

FRESH CHALLENGES AWAIT  
DEUBA IN THE HOT SEAT

## WORLD 8

UNPRECEDENTED FLOODS  
HIT CENTRAL CHINA

## SPORT 12

STOKES, BUTTLER, SAM  
BACK FOR INDIA TESTS

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY JULY 22, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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I IGNORE  
TROLLS :  
TANYA  
10 VIVACITY

# Lack of O<sub>2</sub>: Row over Govt claim of zero casualties

Opp targets  
Centre; Cong  
embarrassed  
by own States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A massive controversy has erupted over the Centre's claim in the Rajya Sabha that no one died due to lack of oxygen during the second Covid-19 wave. While the Opposition targeted the Centre, the Congress was left red-faced as three of the States where it has stakes, towed the Centre's line.

Chhattisgarh where the Congress is in full majority Government, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra where the party is part of the coalition Government also claimed that no one died of oxygen shortage.

While former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said the Government's response reflected lack of sensitivity, Chhattisgarh



Health Minister TS Singh Deo said it's true that no one died in the State due to lack of oxygen as "we are an oxygen-surplus State."

Similarly Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut said the people who lost their loved ones due to oxygen shortage should "take the Union Government to court", while it's coalition partner NCP in Maharashtra represented by Health Minister Rajesh Tope, too, clarified that there was no record in the State of any death due to shortage of oxygen during the two

waves of the pandemic.

"We have never said that because of shortage of oxygen a Covid-19 patient has died in any hospital in the State. There is no

record of any such case, nor have I made any statement to this effect. The fatalities that have occurred were due to co-morbidities or other medical ailments," Tope said, causing embarrassment to its major alliance partners Shiv Sena and the Congress which have been taking on the Narendra Modi Government over deaths due to lack of medical oxygen.

The Congress has accused Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar of misleading Parliament by giving "false information" that there were no deaths due to lack of oxygen during the second wave.

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# Six officials of Monsanto on snooping list: Report

Names of ULFA,  
AASU leaders  
also crop up in  
tapping scandal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More names have tumbled out in the Pegasus snooping scandal of those who may have been victims of telephone tapping between 2018 and 2019. As per the reports, the phone numbers of six senior officials of Mahyco Monsanto Biotech (India) Pvt. Ltd and Monsanto India were under surveillance in 2018. The



names of ULFA, AASU and Assam's ultra outfit leaders have also cropped up in the phone tapping scandal along with the names of many Aambedkarites, Dalit activists, and JNU student leaders involved in the anti-CAA protests.

Meanwhile, international publications like *Le Monde* and *The Washington Post* reported that

Presidents of many countries, including French President Emmanuel Macron and the Moroccan King, were also targeted by the Israeli spyware.

*The Wire* portal's report on Wednesday suggested that Monsanto was placed on the snooping list around the time the BJP-Shiv Sena Government in Maharashtra set up a special investigation team (SIT) to probe companies that were allegedly selling or releasing unapproved herbicide-tolerant (HT) transgenic cotton, or Bt cotton, seeds in the State. A few months prior to the formation of the SIT, in October 2017, the Prime Minister's Office had also set up the Field Inspection and Scientific Evaluation Committee (FISEC), under the Department of Biotechnology, to probe the proliferation of unlawful seeds, said the report.

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# Israeli inter-ministerial team, NSO to probe Pegasus affair

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Israel has set up a senior inter-ministerial team to "look into" proliferating allegations that spyware sold by a Israeli cyber firm has been abused on a global scale, news agency *Reuters* said on Wednesday quoting an Israeli source.

In another interesting development on Wednesday, NSO, the developer of spyware Pegasus said it will no longer

respond to media inquiries. It said that the expose by 17 news organisations across the world since Sunday was a "planned and well-orchestrated media campaign led by *Forbidden Stories* and pushed by special interest groups".

"NSO will thoroughly investigate any credible proof of misuse of its technologies, as we always had, and will shut down the system where necessary," a spokesperson said.

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# 'No State sent data on toll due to dearth of O<sub>2</sub>'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of the controversy over the Centre's reply in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that no death had occurred on account of oxygen shortage in the country, the BJP on Wednesday sought to defend the Government's conclusion saying "no State sent any data about patients dying due to oxygen shortage."

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra accused Opposition leaders, including Congress scion Rahul Gandhi and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, of doing politics on the matter, and said the States where these parties are in power have claimed that no one died there due to lack of oxygen.

The BJP leader said Opposition-ruled States claimed in courts that there was no death due to shortage of oxygen during the second Covid-19 wave and made sim-

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	3,12,56,793 (+41,637)
DEATHS:	4,19,021 (+510)
RECOVERED:	3,04,21,762 (+38,742)
ACTIVE:	4,03,610
MAHA:	62,37,755 (+8,159)
KERALA:	32,05,197 (+17,481)
K'TAKA:	28,88,341 (+1,639)
TN:	25,41,168 (+1,891)
DELHI:	14,35,671 (+62)

ilar assertions in their response to the Centre.

Continued on Page 2

# CGD: Fatalities 10 times more than Govt figures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of excess deaths in India during the Covid-19 pandemic could be as high as 49 lakh (4.9 million). A report titled "Three new estimates of India's all-cause excess mortality during the Covid-19 pandemic", said India's coronavirus death toll is ten times higher than the actual figure reported by the Union Health Ministry.

As per the Health Ministry, India's

cumulative death toll stands at 414,482 — the world's third-highest after the US' 6,09,000 fatalities and Brazil's 5,42,000 casualties. The report has been prepared by the Washington-based think tank Center for Global Development (CGD) and is co-authored by India's former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian, Abhishek Anand, from the Harvard University and Justin Sandefur, from the CGD.

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# Centre nixed bid to probe O<sub>2</sub> shortage deaths: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday said thousands of people lost their lives due to shortage of oxygen during the second wave of the pandemic in the national Capital and the Centre rejected the proposal of the Delhi Government to form a panel to investigate the deaths.

Addressing the media, Sisodia said: "The Delhi Government constituted a committee to investigate deaths caused by lack of oxygen with an aim to give an assistance of Rs 5 lakh to the aggrieved families but the Centre rejected the formation of this committee through an order by the Lieutenant-Governor.

Continued on Page 2



Following Covid norms: Jama Masjid wears a deserted look on Eid al-Adha during the ongoing pandemic in New Delhi on Wednesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

## CAPSULE

**JUNTA AGAIN SEEKS TO REPLACE ITS UN ENVOY**

**United Nations:** Myanmar's military rulers are again seeking to replace the country's ambassador to the United Nations, who opposed their February 1 ouster of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and takeover of the Government. **P8**

**3 CIVIL AVIATION ADVISORY GROUPS FORMED**

**New Delhi:** The Civil Aviation Ministry under Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has formed three advisory groups to look into challenges being faced by the sector. **P4**

**AIRTEL, INTEL ANNOUNCE COLLABORATION FOR 5G**

**New Delhi:** Bharti Airtel is collaborating with Intel for 5G network development by leveraging vRAN/O-RAN technologies. The collaboration is part of Airtel's 5G roadmap for India as it transforms its networks. **P9**

**'COVID RISK IN MUMBAI PRISON FOR NIRAV'**

**London:** Nirav Modi faces a "substantial risk" of suicide amid an "overwhelming" impact of Covid-19 at Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai, where he will be lodged on being extradited, the court in London was told during an extradition appeal hearing.

# Guj HC grants gift of motherhood to wife of critical Covid patient

**Ahmedabad:** The extent of human suffering brought on by the pandemic is immeasurable and there are many personal tragedies unfolding across the world. One such story is that of a young Gujarati couple. The husband who was suffering from multi-organ failure after getting the Covid infection and was on a life support system, has very slim chances of survival and his distraught wife is desperate to have his child.

However, when all her pleas to the Vadodara-based hospital for help in her endeavour to conceive through In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)/Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) procedure fell on deaf ears, the couple had no choice but to approach the Gujarat High Court (HC).

Playing safe, the hospital was not allowing the couple to get the IVF/ART procedure done unless the wife got a court order directing it to collect her husband's semen sample, her lawyer Nilay Patel said. Hence,



she approached the HC with an urgent plea, he said.

Thankfully, the HC understood the urgency and poignancy of the situation and directed the hospital to conduct the IVF/ART procedure for the collection of the semen sample of the critical patient.

Considering it as an "extraordinary urgent situation," Justice Ashutosh J Shastri directed the hospital to complete the procedure and keep the sample stored in an appropriate place as per medical advice and issued notices to the State Government and the hospital's director, and sought their response on July 23. **PNS**

# Husbands of native J&K women to get domicile certificates now

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) administration has finally removed the last bottleneck for the issuance of domicile certificates to spouses of Kashmiri women/men married outside the Union Territory (UT). So far, only the children of such women were entitled to receive domicile certificates.

Ever since the UT administration started preparing domicile certificates after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, women married outside the erstwhile State of J&K were facing piquant situations.

Initially, their children were included in the list and now, the UT administration has included spouses in the list of beneficiaries.

According to a notification issued by the General Administration department on Tuesday, "In exercise of the powers conferred by the proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution of India, read with Section 15 of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Act 2010, the Government



Couples and families walk at Mughal Garden Nishat Bagh in Srinagar

File photo

hereby directs in sub-rule (1) of rule 5 of the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Domicile Certificate Rules 220, after S.No./Clause 6, the following shall be added"

The spouse of a domicile certificate holder can get the certificate upon submission of certain documents, as a new clause has been added under the J&K Grant of Domicile Certificate (Procedure) Rules, 2020. The power to grant the category of domicile to the spouse of domicile has been conferred with the *tehsildar*.

The spouse is eligible to get a certificate upon showing - 1)

Domicile certificate of his/her spouse and 2) valid marriage proof.

The order modified the applicability of domicile conditions to all levels of jobs in the UT of J&K under the Jammu & Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment) Act.

Earlier, the J&K Government had barred the issuance of Permanent Resident Certificates (PRCs) to the husbands of all PRC women married outside J&K. In contrast to this, a PRC man married outside could confer PRC on his wife.

# Sink your differences to overthrow saffron regime: Didi to Opp

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a speech matching her national aspirations, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday urged the national leaders of all Opposition parties to sink their differences and mint an anti-BJP coalition ahead of the 2024 general elections to overthrow the "divisive, anti-poor and pro-rich" saffron Government.

"The BJP carries a bigger load of virus than the corona" that was aiming at finishing the three democratic pillars "elections, judiciary and media," she said.

"I ask all the national leaders from all the States to make a Front and start working on a plan well in advance to overthrow this anti-people Government from the Centre. ... there is no point starting late because calling the doctor after the disease has set in makes no sense," Banerjee said. She was



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee shows her taped phone while speaking on the Pegasus spyware row during virtual Sahid Divas in Kolkata

PTI

delivering a nationally-aired speech on the occasion of Trinamool Congress martyrs' day. Banerjee who was likely to go to Delhi later this week said she would appeal to the leaders like Sharad Pawar to arrange for meetings where all the parties could be taken on board.

Continued on Page 2



# Serum Institute seeks reforms in drug regulatory system

**New Delhi:** World's largest vaccine manufacturer by volume, Serum Institute of India (SII) has written to Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya suggesting reforms in the existing drug regulatory system, including allowing manufacturing and stockpiling of non-Covid vaccines while undergoing clinical trial.

According to official sources, Prakash Kumar Singh, Director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at Pune-based SII, in a letter, referred to a gazette notification by the Union Health Ministry on May 18, 2020.

He said it allowed manufacturing and stockpiling of Covid-19 vaccine under clinical trial for marketing authorization for sale or distribution.

"Because of this rule, it became possible for us to manufacture and stockpile the Covid-19 vaccine during clinical trial and we could make the vaccine available in such a short span of time period to protect millions of lives.

"It will be a big help for the vaccine industry if this rule is implemented for non-Covid-19 vaccines also," a source quoted Singh as having communicated in the letter to the minister.

Singh also sought permission to use the remaining quantities of batches of Covid and non-Covid vaccines for commercial purposes which have been used in clinical trial.

In this context, he said the Health Ministry had issued draft rules dated April 12, 2018, to allow remaining quantities of batches of vaccines which have been used in clinical trial for commercial use after granting of permission in form 46 (now it is form CT-23) and manufacturing licence in Form 28D.

"However, the gazette notification in this regard has not been issued so far for the implementation of the same," Singh said. He also sought the implementation of recommendations of a high-powered inter-ministerial committee for reforming the Drug Regulatory Systems in India.

The letter stated that on the directions of the prime minister, a high-powered Inter-Ministerial Committee for reforming the drug regulatory systems in India was formed under the chairmanship of then OSD, Rajesh Bhushan who is presently the health secretary.

"Recommendations of this inter-ministerial committee should be implemented immediately in line with 'ease of doing business'. The letter highlighted few other points also related to regulatory reforms and stated, "If few rules/regulatory provisions are amended, it will be a great help and encouragement for the vaccine industry to grow faster. We are putting forward the following points w.R.T. Reforms in the Drug Regulatory System for your kind consideration which will take the Vaccine Industry of our country to further new heights."

**PTI**

# SC junks Andhra's appeals against HC order quashing FIRs against private buyers of plots at Amravati

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court has dismissed six appeals filed by the Andhra Pradesh Government challenging the High Court order quashing FIRs against private buyers of plots at Amravati who were accused of cheating the sellers by not disclosing the fact that the state capital was to be established there.

Upholding the Andhra Pradesh High Court's decision, a bench of Justices Vineet Saran and Dinesh Maheshwari dismissed the appeals of the State Government and said all the transactions were between private individuals involving private lands.

The FIRs were lodged in 2020 on the basis of complaints alleging that the buyers were aware of the fact that the capital city of Andhra Pradesh was going to be established in the area where the land plots were situated.

Without disclosing this fact, the buyers purchased the land from the sellers in 2014-15 and, hence, cheated the sellers, as the value of such lands was likely to increase manifold, the FIRs alleged. Not accepting the contentions of the State Government, the bench said "the other part of submissions on the possibility of public officials being arraigned under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 after investigation in this case, suffice it to observe that all the transactions in question are between private individuals involving private lands and, as found by the High Court, the information about the likely location of the capital city was very much in public domain at the time of the transactions in question."

The High Court had quashed the FIRs lodged for the Indian Penal Code offences of cheating (Section 420), criminal breach of trust (Section 406), breach of trust by public servant (Section 409) and criminal conspiracy (Section 120B).

In its order, the apex court said, "there was also no question of loss being caused to the sellers or any cheating by the buyers because neither by law nor by a legal contract, the buyers were obliged to disclose the likelihood of the location of capital city, which facts were already in public domain."

# Maha deaths dip to 165

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

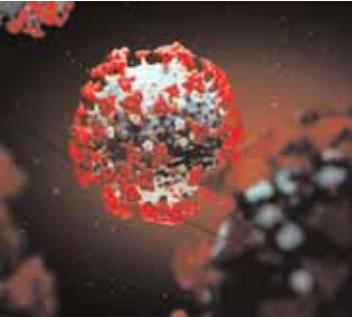
The daily Covid-19 deaths dipped to 165 and the infections dropped to 8,159 in Maharashtra on Wednesday, even as 7,839 patients were discharged after full recovery from various hospitals across the State.

A day after the state recorded 3,656 reconciled deaths – comprising 3,509 old and unaccounted and 147 new deaths—and 10,566 reconciled infections – comprising 6,910 daily infections and 2,479 old infections, the deaths dropped to 165 and infections came down to 8,159.

With 165 deaths reported on Wednesday, the total number of deaths increased from 1,27,097 to 1,30,753, while the infections – with 7,839 new cases – climbed from 62,29,596 to 62,37,755.

As 7839 were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 60,00,911 to 60,08,750. The recovery rate in the state stood static at 96.33 per cent.

The total "active cases" in the state increased marginally from 94,593 to 94,745. The fatality rate in the State stood static at 2.09 per cent



Mumbai recorded 13 deaths and 430 infections. As a result, the Covid-19 toll in the metropolis increased from 15,787 to 15,800, while the infected cases in Mumbai went up from 7,32,152 to 7,32,582.

Pune with 15,566 active cases emerged as the first in the state in terms of maximum number of "active cases" in the state, while Thane with 12,087 stood second, followed by Sangli (10,674), Mumbai (10,474) Kolhapur (10,049) and Satara (7512).

Of the 4,60,68,435 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 62,37,755 have tested positive (13.54 per cent) for Covid-19 until Wednesday.

Currently, 5,51,521 people are in home quarantine while 3,795 people are in institutional quarantine.

# Guj: Tribal couple tied to tree, thrashed with sticks for eloping; nine held

**Chhotaudepur (Guj):** A young tribal couple from a village in Gujarat's Chhotaudepur district was allegedly abducted, tied to a tree and thrashed with sticks as a punishment for eloping, police said on Wednesday.

The police have arrested nine men for the alleged attack that took place in Chhiliyavant village under the Rangpur police station in Chhotaudepur district on Tuesday, Deputy Superintendent of Police A V Katkad said.

A video of the incident, which surfaced on social media, showed some men taking turns to beat the couple, who were tied to a tree, with sticks in the presence of other villagers, the police said. On learning about the incident through the video, the police rushed to the village on Wednesday and arrested the accused on the charges of rioting, kidnapping and illegal confinement based on a complaint lodged by the victim girl, the official said.

"The couple had eloped on July 18 with an intention of getting married. However, angry villagers eventually traced them to a neighbouring village and brought them back to Chhiliyavant on Tuesday morning. The accused tied the duo to a tree and thrashed them with sticks," the DySP said.

The victim in her complaint has claimed that the accused were angry because a local tradition bars marriage of man and woman from the same village, it was stated.

**PTI**



A damaged road along a railway track after incessant rain, at Kalwa in Thane on Wednesday

PTI

# Around two dozen people still stranded after landslides in Uttarakhand's Champawat

**Dehradun:** Around two dozen people continued to be stranded on Wednesday after a series of landslides occurred along the Tanakpur-Ghat national highway in Uttarakhand's Champawat district following heavy rain, while Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited the cloudburst-hit villages of Uttarkashi district to assess the situation.

Traffic remained blocked at Vishramghat due to debris on the highway, prompting the district administration to make arrangements for the stay of the stranded people in Champawat, District Disaster Management Officer Manoj Pandey said.

Landslides occurred at eight points along the highway on Tuesday, bringing mounds of

debris onto the road and leaving around 150 people stranded at various places.

Though the debris was cleared at seven points by Tuesday evening, the rocks and boulders at Vishramghat could not be cleared till midnight despite efforts, Pandey said.

The efforts to clear the rubble on the road at Vishramghat were resumed on Wednesday morning with the help of five JCB machines, one Pokland machine and a loader, he added.

Though most of those who got stranded have been sent to Haldwani via Devidhura, around two dozen people are still waiting in Champawat for the road at Vishramghat to open, Pandey said.

**PTI**

# 4 more test +ve for Zika in Kerala: Min

**Thiruvananthapuram:** A fourth person tested positive for Zika virus in Kerala on Wednesday, taking the totalreported cases of the infection to 42. The latest case of Zika was reported fromKottayam -- the second instance of the virus infection from another district other than Thiruvananthapuram.

Earlier in the day, Kerala Health Minister Veena George said that three cases of the virus were reported from Thiruvananthapuram. The three were -- two residents of Anayara aged 26 years and 37 years and one person (25) from Pettah.

The first instance of a Zika infection being reported outside the state capital was on July 17 from Ernakulam of a health worker who was working in Thiruvananthapuram.

**PTI**

# Tharoor-led panel on...

**From Page 1**

Home Affairs, and Ministry of Communications (Department of Telecommunications) on the subject 'Citizens' data security and privacy', read the agenda of the meeting. Sources in the panel said the Pegasus phone tapping issue will definitely be raised in the meeting and details will be sought from the Government officials. This is not the first time the panel has taken up the issue of Israeli spyware. In 2019, after WhatsApp's vulnerabilities surfaced, the panel heard from the respective departments regarding the issue.

# CGD: Fatalities 10 times...

**From Page 1**

The study suggested that 34 to 47 lakh people had died from the virus from the start of the pandemic to June this year. The most critical finding of this report is that regardless of the source and estimates, the actual number of deaths during the pandemic are likely to have been much greater than the official count.

"True deaths are likely to be in the several millions not hundreds of thousands, making this arguably India's worst human tragedy since Partition and Independence," the report said. The report did not ascribe all the excess deaths to the pandemic.

The report was based on estimating "excess mortality," the number of extra people who died compared with pre-crisis figures. It is based on sero-surveys, household data and official data. It points towards a significant underreporting of deaths in the country. It acknowledges that there is considerable uncertainty within and across estimates. They range from about one million to six million deaths overall, with central estimates varying between 3.4 to 4.9 million deaths.

"We report excess mortality estimates from

three different data sources from the pandemic's start through June 2021. First, extrapolation of State-level civil registration from seven States suggests 3.4 million excess deaths. Second, applying international estimates of age-specific infection fatality rates (IFR) to Indian sero-prevalence data implies a higher toll of around four million," the authors said.

"Third, our analysis of the Consumer Pyramid Household Survey, a longitudinal panel of over 8,00,000 individuals across all States, yields an estimate of 4.9 million excess deaths. Each of these estimates has shortcomings and they also diverge in the pattern of deaths between the two waves of the pandemic," the authors added. The report states that the first wave of Covid-19 in India was spread out in time and space, unlike the sudden and concentrated surge of cases in the second wave. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Government has also been criticised for a messy vaccination campaign that many say contributed to the worsening of the second wave of infections. A World Health Organisation report in May said up to three times more people had died around the globe during the pandemic -- from coronavirus or other causes -- than indicated by official statistics.

# Centre nixed bid to...

**From Page 1**

They were afraid that their oxygen mismanagement and the truth of their inefficiency would become public knowledge through this committee," Sisodia added, "During the second Covid-19 wave, there was panic in the whole country due to the lack of oxygen. People were dying and all this was the result of the failed management system of the Central Government. Instead of taking responsibility, the Central Government shamelessly lied that there have been no deaths due to lack of oxygen in the entire country in the Parliament." The Deputy Chief Minister also charged the Centre with trying to "hide its fault" and alleged that its "mismanagement" and change in oxygen distribution policy after April 13 caused the shortage of the life-saving gas in hospitals across the country, leading to a "disaster."

Sisodia also said that the Kejriwal Government is still ready for an independent audit of each death due to oxygen shortage if the Centre allows it to form the committee, he added.

# 'No State sent...

**From Page 1**

A day before the Union Health Minister had told Rajya Sabha that no deaths due to lack of oxygen were specifically reported by States and UTs during the second Covid wave, drawing sharp criticism from Opposition leaders.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had then himself reviewed the progress regarding import of oxygen and installation of oxygen plants across the country.

Addressing a Press conference, Patra sought to pass on the burden of argument to the States saying that the Central Government's reply was based on the figures provided by States and UTs as health is a State subject.

No State sent any data about patients dying due to oxygen short-

age, he asserted. The BJP spokesperson did not say whether the Centre too has an independent view on people having died on account of oxygen shortage in the second-wave of the pandemic.

With the AAP also targeting the Modi Government over its reply in the Rajya Sabha, Patra noted that a Delhi Government committee had told the High Court that there was no evidence to suggest that around 21 people had died due to a shortage of oxygen in the Jaipur Golden Hospital on April 23-24 night after the hospital management reported the matter.

The Maharashtra Government also told the Bombay High Court that no one died due to the oxygen shortage and Chhattisgarh Health Minister TS Singh Deo has also made similar claims, the BJP spokesperson said.

# Israeli inter-ministerial...

**From Page 1**

Meanwhile, the Israeli Government's team is headed by Israel's National Security Council, which answers to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and has broader areas of expertise than the Defence Ministry, which oversees exports of the NSO Group's Pegasus software, the source said.

"This event is beyond the Defence Ministry's purview," the source said, referring to potential diplomatic blowback after prominent media reports this week of suspected abuses of Pegasus in France, Mexico, India, Morocco and Iraq. On Wednesday, French Prime Minister Jean Castex said French President Emmanuel Macron had called for a series of investigations to be carried out into the Pegasus spyware case.

Macron's phone was on a list of potential targets for possible surveillance on behalf of Morocco in the Pegasus case, reported French paper Le Monde on Tuesday.

The source, who has first-hand knowledge of the Israeli team and requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue, deemed it "doubtful" that new curbs would be placed on Pegasus exports.

Stopping short of describing the team's task as a formal investigation, the source said: "The objective is to find out what happened, to look into this issue and learn lessons."

NSO did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Bennett's office declined comment. Addressing a cyber conference on Wednesday, the Prime Minister did not mention the NSO affair.

NSO has said Pegasus is intended for use only by Government Intelligence and law enforcement agencies to fight terrorism and crime.

Such purposes are also what guide Israel's export policy, Defence Minister Benny Gantz said in a speech on Tuesday. But, in a reference to the allegations around Pegasus, he added: "We are currently studying the information published on the matter."

At the conference, Bennett said Israel has memorandums of understanding with dozens of countries about cyber security, which he wants to upgrade into a "global cyber defence shield".

# Six officials of Monsanto ...

**From Page 1**

All AASU leaders Samujjal Bhattacharjee, Lurinjyoti Gogoi and Dipanka Nath names were also found on the list of persons under surveillance. The leaked database of Pegasus also showed the name of ULFA leader Anup Chetia. Manipur writer Malem Ningthouja's number was also on the list.

The activists whose phone numbers figure among those whose phones may have been snooped upon include Ambedkarite activist Ashok Bharti; former Jawahar Lal Nehru University students Umar Khalid, Anirban Bhattacharya, and Banjyotsna Lahiri; academic and chronicle of life in Naxal-dominated regions Bela Bhatia; railway union leader Shiv Gopal Mishra; Delhi-based labour rights activist Anjani Kumar, anti-coal mining activist Alok Shukla; Delhi University professor Saroj Giri; Bastar-based peace activist Shubhranshu Choudhary; former BBC journalist and trade unionist Sandeep Kumar Rai "Rauzi" who publishes a labour rights media platform called Workers Unity; Rauzi's colleague Khalid Khan, and Jharkhand-based activist Ipsa Shatakshi.

The Washington Post and Le Monde have reported that telephone numbers linked to at least 14 heads of States and Governments, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa are among the 50,000 numbers on a leaked database that includes some people whose phones were targeted for hacking by Pegasus spyware.

The phone numbers on the leaked database include at least one king, Morocco's Mohammed VI, three presidents - France's Emmanuel Macron, Iraq's Barham Salih and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa - and three prime ministers - Pakistan's Imran Khan, Egypt's Mostafa Madbouly and Morocco's Saad-Eddine El Othmani - who are still in office, said Le Monde. There are seven former leaders who were selected when they were still in office. They include Lebanon's Saad Hariri, Uganda's Ruhakana Rugunda, Algeria's Noureddine Bedoui and Belgium's Charles Michel said the report.

# Sink your differences to...

**From Page 1**

Speaking about the alleged connection between the Pegasus spyware and the powers that be at the Centre, the Chief Minister said, "This Government has accumulated Rs 3.7 lakh crore by raising oil prices ... instead of using that money for the people of the country ... they are indulging in 'Spygiri'... they are changing India from a democratic State to a surveillance State ... this is not acceptable.

"They tapped the mobiles of PK (poll strategist Prashant Kishor), Abhishek (Banerjee) because I often needed to speak to them. I must assume that my mobile definitely gets entangled ... They are not only tapping the talks of the Opposition leaders, the judges, the media, but also taking the pictures through this software, Banerjee said appealing to the Judiciary to intervene and save the country.

"What is it that I cannot speak to Mr Chidambaram or Mr Pawar or the Delhi Chief Minister or Telangana and Odisha Chief Minister ... how is it that we cannot hold our private conversations for the fear that our phones are being tapped," she said.

"It is my humble appeal to

the Supreme Court to please take suo motu cognisance of the case ... Everything is being recorded...please save the country ... either by taking suo motu cognisance or setting up an SIT under judicial surveillance to get to the bottom of this all," Banerjee said adding "only judiciary can save the country because they are recording everyone's private talks and in the process they will blackmail them into silence."

The TMC had organised a country-wide airing of the Chief Minister's speech putting up giant screens in States like Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Punjab etc. Banerjee said a similar attempt in Tripura was, however, forcibly foiled by the BJP Government in that State. A special arrangement was made at the Constitution Club in Delhi for the national leaders of all the parties to assemble and listen to the speech. Among the leaders who attended the meeting in the Capital were Congress' P Chidambaram, NCP's Sharad Pawar, SP's Jaya Bacchhan, RJD's Manoj Jha, Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi. There were representatives from DML, TRS and AAP too.

# Lack of O2: Row over Govt claim of ...

**From Page 1**

Taking to Twitter, Rahul Gandhi wrote, "It wasn't just the lack of oxygen. Severe lack of sensitivity and truth — it was then, still is today."

Expressing shock at the Centre's remark, Raut wondered how the family members of those who died due to oxygen shortage would feel after hearing the Government's response.

Raut said it needs to be found out whether the people whose relatives died due to lack of oxygen supply believe in the Centre's response in Parliament over the issue.

"Many people have died due to oxygen shortage in several States. Those whose relatives (Covid-19 patients) died due to oxygen shortage should take the Union Government to court," Raut said.

AAP leader and Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said there have been many deaths due to oxygen shortage in Delhi and many other places across the country.

"If there was no shortage of oxygen, why did hospitals move court? Hospitals and the media had been flagging oxygen shortage issues daily. Television channels showed that how hospitals were running out of the life-saving gas. It is completely false to say that no one died due to oxygen shortage. There have been many deaths due to oxygen shortage in Delhi and many other places across the country," Jain said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also attacked the Centre over its statement that there were no deaths due to lack of oxygen. Hitting out at the Government, Priyanka tweeted, "No death due to lack of oxygen! Central Government. The deaths happened because -- in the pandemic year, the Government increased oxygen exports by about 700 per cent."

The Congress general secretary alleged that the deaths happened because the Government did not arrange tankers to transport oxygen and ignoring the advice of the empowered group and a parliamentary committee, no arrangement was made to provide oxygen.

Tamil Nadu Health Minister M. Subramaniam said that when the State faced shortage of oxygen, they informed the Centre and arranged the same. "There are no deaths due to oxygen shortage in Tamil Nadu. The State Government worked on a war footing to prevent this. When we faced a lack of oxygen, we came in touch with the Centre at once and procured oxygen from them. So we didn't face big effects here," he said.

"We heard about the oxygen shortage in some hospitals of Delhi and other States, but it is up to the Governments there how to report it. At least they (Centre) admitted that health is a State subject. Otherwise, it appeared as if they were taking everything under their control. They take credit for all good things and blame States for everything that is bad," TS Singh Deo said.



# SDMC issued 20k death certificates in April-June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) issued over 20,000 death certificates between April and June when the city was reeling under the second wave of Covid-19, municipal officials said.

According to data provided by the SDMC, it issued 3,351 death certificates in April, 10,209 in May and 6,832 in June.

Officials attributed the increase in death registrations to the second wave of Covid-19 and clearing of backlog of data.

"As compared to April, the number of death certificates is about 204% higher in May because of the Covid-19 second wave. While the figure in June is about 103% higher than that of April.

"The maximum number of deaths occurred either in May or in the last leg of April during the Covid second wave. So kin of most of the deceased who applied for death certificates got the documents in May and June," a senior SDMC official told PTI on condition of

anonymity.

Civic officials clarified that these death registrations also include normal deaths and they do not necessarily reflect the total death count due to Covid in that particular month.

Some civic officials also said that other than the Covid-19 second wave, there was backlog of data due to technical issues and it was cleared in May and June, leading to a rise in the numbers of death registrations.

In April-May, Delhi was hit by a brutal second wave of the pandemic, which claimed a number of lives every day, and oxygen supply shortage was reported at various hospitals.

Both daily cases and single-day death count had started spiralling up from April 19, with over 28,000 cases and 277 deaths recorded on April 20; rising to 306 fatalities on April 22. On May 3, the city registered a record 448 deaths, according to official data.

Even though the month of May saw the highest number of issuance of death certificates between April and June, the month witnessed the lowest number of allotment of birth

certificates in the corresponding period.

Municipal records show that only 4,656 birth certificates were issued in May, while the figure was 5,997 in April and 4,976 in June.

Officials suggested that the decline in birth certificates may be due to the reduction in institutional births such as those in hospitals, maternity centres because of the pandemic.

"During the second wave, people preferred not to visit hospitals for deliveries due to possibility of getting infected with Covid. This might have given rise to home births of babies and hence a drop in the birth registrations during the second wave," another SDMC official said.

However, the official predicted that the number of issuance of birth certificates might go up in coming months.

"Now when the COVID-19 cases have gone down drastically, people may come forward for birth registration of their child born during the second wave. So months like July and August might see an increase in the number of birth certificates issued," he added.

## COVID-19

### Over 95 lakh vaccine doses administered in Capital till now

**New Delhi:** Over 95 lakh Covid vaccine doses were administered in the national Capital till Wednesday, according to a bulletin issued here.

The bulletin said Delhi had less than a day's stock of vaccine doses left on Wednesday morning after administering over 71,000 doses on Tuesday.

The national Capital received 85,810 doses of Covishield on Tuesday, taking the total number of doses available in Delhi to 1,08,300. The total number of Covaxin doses available stands at 1,84,390. Only 20 per cent of Covaxin stock can be used for the first dose, since its stock is limited and has irregular delivery cycles.

A total of 71,997 beneficiaries were vaccinated on Tuesday, including 29,857 who were inoculated with the second dose, thereby making them fully vaccinated.

On Wednesday, 61,782 vaccine doses were administered, taking the cumulative vaccination tally to 95,18,167. Over 22.88 lakh second doses were administered till date, the bulletin said. A total of 54,74,804 men and 40,41,290 women have been inoculated.

As many as 46,15,762 people in the 18-44 age group have received at least one dose of the vaccine, while over 30.45 lakh in the 45-60 age group have been inoculated and more than 18.56 lakh people above 60 have been vaccinated.

PTI

### 62 cases, four deaths reported in last 24 hours

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 62 coronavirus cases were reported in the national Capital while four more patients succumbed to the disease on Wednesday.

According to a health bulletin issued by the Delhi Government, the positivity rate stands at 0.09 per cent while sixty-one patients recovered from the infection in the past 24 hours.

As per the bulletin, the total number of fatalities stands at 25,039, while the cumulative case tally has reached 14,35,671. "Out of 12586 available beds in hospitals, 322 are occupied as on Wednesday while the rest are vacant. At least 65811 tests, including 42,187 RTPCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests, were conducted in the last 24 hours," according to the bulletin issued by the health department.

As many as 14,10,066 people have either been discharged, have recovered or migrated out. The case fatality rate stands at 1.74 per cent, according to the bulletin.

The number of active cases stands at 566, a minor decline from 569 cases a day ago, while the number of containment zones has declined to 403 from 406 the previous day. A total of 65,811 tests were conducted a day ago, it said.

The national capital had reported five Covid fatalities and 44 cases at a positivity rate of 0.07 per cent, according to Tuesday's bulletin.

Delhi recorded 36 coronavirus cases, the lowest single-day rise in over a year, at a positivity rate of 0.06 per cent along with three fatalities, according to the health bulletin issued on Monday.

### Over 16 lakh people administered Covid jabs in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM:

Around 16,84,524 people in Gurugram have been administered the Covid-19 vaccine. Senior officials of the Health Department said the vaccination drive is being done in Government and private health facilities across the district.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Gurugram, Dr Virender Yadav said that more than 16 lakh people have been vaccinated in the Gurugram district.

"The Health Department is continuing to organise vaccination camp at multiple locations in Gurugram to vaccinate maximum people and avoid further Covid infection. Following this a team of the department is being asked to cover slum area to protect poor people from the virus," Yadav said.

Meanwhile, amid a decline in the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the district health department has also issued an alert about the delta plus variant of the virus



in Gurugram.

Though no case of the new variant has been reported yet in Gurugram, Yadav has issued an advisory to all the concerned officials and authorities about the new variant.

"To prevention and control of the delta plus variant of the Covid-19. A screening drive will run in the rural areas along with the urban areas of the district. Necessary directions have been issued to the concerned authorities," Yadav said.

The officials said So far, 17,21,779 covid tests have been conducted in Gurugram, of which 15,37,173 have come negative. In the last 24 hours around 3,784 tests were conducted in the district.

Apart from this, the Gurugram district on Wednesday recorded 12 fresh coronavirus cases. No death was also reported from the city. The district's COVID toll reached 919, officials said.

### IGIA police unit to get offs on birthdays, anniversaries

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) unit has granted duty leave to its men and officers on their birthday and wedding anniversaries.

Vikram Porwal, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP),

IGI unit in his order issued on July 20, stated that on the birthday and wedding anniversary of an individual officer posted in this unit, may be given duty rest on that day so that the official can celebrate/enjoy the day with family.

"All Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACsP), Station House Officer (SHOs), Inspectors, must comply with this order in true letter and spirit," DCP stated in his order.

"A register to this effect be maintained and necessary entry to be made in the register that the individual has given the desired duty rest," the DCP further stated in his order.



### L-G allows farmers to protest at Jantar Mantar till August 9

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G), Anil Bajjal on Wednesday gave special permission to the farmers for demonstrations by a maximum of 200 peasants till August 9. The farmers protesting against the Centre's farms law will be holding a stir at Jantar Mantar from Thursday under heavy security.

Sources in Delhi Police said that a group of 200 farmers will travel to Jantar Mantar from the Singhu border in buses with a police escort and hold protests there from 11 am to 5 pm.

Sources said the Samkyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmers' union, has been asked to give an undertaking that all Covid norms would be followed and the stir would be peaceful.

Although the SKM said that their protest at the Jantar Mantar will continue till the end if the Monsoon Session of Parliament on August 13, the L-G has given permission for protest till August 9.

This is the first time since the violence in the national capital during a tractor rally on January 26 that the authorities have granted permission to protesting farmer unions to hold a protest in the city.

According to an order



A farmer raises slogans during a protest against three farm laws, at Ghazipur border

PTI

issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, who is also DDMA's chairperson, has given approval for a staggered protest at Jantar Mantar by a maximum of 200 farmers every day from Thursday to August 9 between 11 am to 5 pm.

"They would be conveyed by designated buses and six members of one separate group by a designated SUV on a given route under police escort subject to strict observance of

Covid-appropriate behaviour (wearing of masks, maintaining social distancing, regular hand washing and use of sanitiser etc.) and compliance of all other guidelines/ instructions/SOPs issued by Government of India and Government of NCT of Delhi from time to time in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic," the order said.

Adequate security arrangements will be made at the Jantar Mantar, sources said.

### 3 held for duping man of ₹13 lakh on promise of trade

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Three persons were arrested for allegedly cheating a man of ₹13.5 lakh on the pretext of helping him make a huge profit through trade-in jatoba pods, police said on Wednesday. The accused have been identified as Perumal Stella (25), Chingerem Kalu (27) and Akinola Timothy Oluwasevan, all residents of Bangalore.

According to Urvija Goel, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), West district, a complaint was received in which the complainant alleged that he came across a woman Riona Cahil, who introduced herself as a resident of Austin, Texas, USA on a dating app in March.

"They both became friends and she informed him that she works for a company The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). The woman gave him a business proposal stating that her company used to buy a product called Jatoba Pods from India through one of her colleagues, who has now left the organisation," said the DCP.

"She allured him by saying that she used to buy Jatoba seeds at a cost of \$300-350 per 100 grams sachet and sell the same for an

amount of \$ 500 per sachet. She proposed him that she can introduce him to her company as the supplier of Jatoba Pods in India and if the deal succeeds, they can make good profit together," said the DCP.

"Later, she introduced him to one Ankitha as a supplier of Jatoba Pods in Bangalore. She gave him Ankitha's number. Ankitha quoted him a price of Rs 22,500 per 100 gm sachet and the complainant agreed with the proposal. The complainant received a call from a person who introduced himself as Dr Marshall Flint, the procurement head of PhRMA Austin, Texas and after their allurements, complainant made payment for 60 sachets of Jatob Seeds Rs 13,50,000," said the DCP.

"A case was registered under relevant sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Khyala police station and during investigation, the accused were identified through technical assistance. A police team was sent to Bangalore and on early morning of Friday, two raids were conducted and accused were arrested," said the DCP.

"Three laptops, 21 mobile phones, 24 sim cards etc. were recovered from the possession of the accused," the DCP added.

### Rock Python gets stuck inside AC unit, rescued

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A two-foot-long juvenile Indian rock python slithered into the air conditioner unit fitted at a house in Chattarpur and got stuck there. Upon realising their air conditioner wasn't functional, the family decided to investigate. To their surprise, a two-foot-long juvenile Indian Rock Python had slithered into the air-conditioning unit through the exhaust tube and was trapped inside.

A two-member team from the wildlife conservation NGO rushed to the location with rescue equipment and protective gear in hand. In the meantime, the rescuers instructed the family to lock the room so that the snake remained inside till they arrived.

In a tricky, complicated extraction that lasted 45 minutes, the team had to dismount the air conditioner from the wall and carefully disassemble the unit. The python was carefully extricated from the machine parts and transferred into a snake bag.

After a detailed examination for injuries, the snake was released back into the wild.

Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-Founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said, "People often panic



when they encounter snakes but contrary to popular belief they are non-confrontational but will react instinctually when provoked or threatened. We are very grateful to the family for contacting the Wildlife SOS Hotline and having faith in our team of qualified rescuers, instead of taking the matter into their own hands"

Wasim Akram, Deputy Director - Special Projects, Wildlife SOS, said, "Our team is dedicated to successfully fulfilling its mission of helping animals in distress. Much of our work in Delhi NCR sur-

rounds spreading awareness about urban wildlife including snakes, and we are very glad that it is showing results."

In another incident, a 5-foot-long Indian Rat snake was found entangled in synthetic garden netting at The National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR) near JNU.

The snake's futile attempts to break free had resulted in the wires to tighten its grip around the body. The Wildlife SOS rescuers carefully cut through the netting to free the distressed snake.

### Inter-state drug syndicate busted, 2 cousins held



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the arrest of two cousins, the Delhi Police on Wednesday claimed to have busted an inter-state drug syndicate involved in manufacturing and supplying heroin in the national Capital.

The accused have been identified as Sajid Khan (24), and Wajid Khan (28), both residents of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh (UP), were arrested from east Delhi's Gazipur area.

One kg heroin worth around ₹2 crore in international market has been seized, police said.

According to Chinmoy Biswal, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Crime Branch, Narcotics, on July 13, police received specific inputs that two persons, involved in supply of heroin, would come near Shamshan Ghat, Gazipur

to supply drugs.

"Following the inputs, a trap was laid and the accused were apprehended with two parcels of heroin," said the DCP.

"During interrogation, the accused persons disclosed that they are cousins and involved in drug trafficking for the last five to six years. In 2016, they were caught by Bareilly UP with heroin," said the DCP.

"The accused disclosed that they are experts of making heroin by using crude and chemicals. They used to purchase the crude (poppy head extracts) and chemicals from Bareilly and manufacture heroin," said the DCP.

"They also pointed out the place of making of the heroin, which was situated in the forest of the Village Bhaira on the banks of Ganga River," said the DCP adding that further investigation is underway.

### HC asks CBI to probe alleged murder of inmate in Tihar jail

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has handed over to CBI the probe into the case of alleged murder of an inmate in judicial custody in Tihar Jail and questioned the Delhi Police for not carrying out proper investigation.

Justice Mukta Gupta, who was hearing a plea by the family member of the deceased, noted that issues raised relating to the case were not properly investigated by the police despite lodging an FIR.

"The prime issue which now concerns this Court besides the manner in which the death of the inmate has been caused, is, why no proper investigation could be carried out despite the fact that a PCR call was made from a phone number from the jail and the said phone number is duly recorded in the PCR call," the judge said and added that "this Court finds it fit to transfer the investigation of the case FIR in question to CBI."

The high court said status report will be filed by the concerned SP, CBI after an investigation into the FIR in question well before the next date of hearing on September 29.

The deceased inmate was in judicial custody since June 2019 and died in May 2021, it noted.



As per the family members, represented by senior advocate Ramesh Singh, the dead body allegedly had "deep cut wounds on his thighs and hands" and that a day before the incident, the deceased had told his sister over a phone call that "he would be murdered by the jail officers".

The High Court was told that at the time of incident itself, a PCR call was received from jail, albeit not from the jail officers, that the deceased had been murdered.

It noted that the authorities in the status report said that four other inmates had beaten up the deceased with a cricket bat and at first the victim refused to go to the jail dispensary but later complained of trepidation and pain in the body and was subsequently taken to Safdarjung Hospital where he died.

Given the authorities stand that most of the old CCTVs installed in Tihar Jail had become non-functional, the

high court noted that it was evident that no CCTV footage of the incident was available.

The high court also noted that "claim of the sister of the deceased was that she received a phone call from the deceased himself a day prior to the incident from the jail, informing her that he would be murdered, however, there is no investigation on the said point nor has the mobile of the sister been taken nor have the call records been analysed which would have revealed something nor has any investigation been carried out from the call records of the mobile number from which PCR call was made."

While transferring the investigation of the case to CBI, the high court considered the stand of the jail authorities as well as that of the family members.

The jail authorities had said that there was no apparent injury on the deceased while the family sought an in-depth investigation into circumstances surrounding the death.



# CBSE extends deadline for Board results to July 25



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Wednesday extended the deadline for schools to prepare the Class 12th results to July 25. Earlier, the deadline was July 22.

This means, now both the Class 10th and 12th Board results, would be delayed as the time for declaration of Class 10th results by early this week has already passed.

Without indicating that there could be delay in declaration of the Board results, the CBSE said that along with University Grants Commission (UGC), it is looking into the interest of all the students and hence, the university regulator would be synchronising admis-

sion schedule based on the result of these students as it was done by the UGC in the last academic session.

CBSE examination controller Sanyam Bhardwaj noted that the teachers involved in the result preparation process are under stress and getting panicky.

“With the last date for finalising the results approaching fast, the teachers are panicky and committing mistakes and sending requests to CBSE to rectify these. CBSE is well aware about the constraints and problems faced by the schools and teachers,” Bhardwaj said in an official order.

“Accordingly, CBSE has decided to extend the last date from July 22 to 25.

Schools may continue to work towards compiling the result to avoid any last minute rush. In case, any school is left to complete the moderation of marks, the result of such schools will be declared separately,” he added.

With the board exams being cancelled in view of the aggressive second wave of Covid-19, schools have been tasked with tabulation of results using a separate alternative assessment policy announced by the CBSE for the two classes.

The CBSE, however, did not clarify whether extending the deadline for schools will cause a delay in declaration of results which are due to be declared latest by July 31.

The CBSE also announced that it will conduct exams for private category of candidates between August 16 and September 15 as per the policy framed by the Supreme Court and the conduct of examinations of this category has been necessitated because the students are enrolled directly with the Board for which no evaluation can be conducted as compared to school or open based system.

The delay would also be due to certain logistical problems as some of the States have cited problems arising out of floods and heavy rains.

# Scindia forms three panels to revive Covid-hit aviation sector



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia during a meeting in New Delhi.

Agency

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The new Civil Aviation Scindia on Wednesday formed three committees comprising airlines, airport operators, cargo carriers, ground handling companies, flying training organisations and maintenance, repair and overhaul companies to advise him on critical issues of the sector.

Scindia will himself chair the committees, which will meet once every month to sort out regulatory, financial or other issues. The committees comprise top officials from the Ministry and organisations like Airport Authority of India (AAI), Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA)

and key representatives from the private sector.

Taking to Twitter, the Ministry of Civil Aviation said: “Under the chairmanship of the Honourable Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has formed three advisory groups comprising airlines, airport operators and MRO, cargo carriers, FTOs and ground handling companies.”

The groups shall meet regularly to deliberate upon issues and resolve challenges facing each sector. Orders have been issued for the same,” it added.

According to the ministry, the airline group has among its members three promoters — IndiGo’s Rahul Bhatia, SpiceJet’s Ajay Singh and GoAir’s Ness Wadia;

CEO/CMDs — AirAsia India’s Sunil Bhaskaran, Vistara’s Bhaskar Bhat, Air India’s Rajiv Bansal and Alliance Air CEO. This group will advise on issues like how to enhance domestic and international connectivity, improve passenger experience and financial viability of airlines and on regulatory matters.

According to the Aviation Ministry’s order on July 20, the first group would advise the government on issues such as safeguarding the viability of airlines, enhancing the domestic and international connectivity, promotion of passenger and cargo services, manpower skilling in the aviation sector and development of India as a hub for passenger travel, cargo and MRO services.

The second group comprises top officials of major

Indian airport operators -- Airports Authority of India Chairman Sanjeev Kumar, GMR Group Business Chairman G B S Raju, Adani Group Vice President Jeet Adani and Bangalore International Airport Limited Chief Executive Officer Hari K Marar.

Another Aviation Ministry’s order stated that the second group would advise the government on issues including enhancing the airport capacity, infrastructure augmentation and modernisation, increasing passenger facilities and amenities at airports and regulatory issues concerning airports.

The group will be meeting every month to suggest steps required to enhance airport capacity, infrastructure modernisation and improving customer experience.

The third advisory group would comprise four sub-groups: one each on MRO, ground handling, cargo and FTO. Each of the sub-group would have four industry executives as members who work in that particular industry.

It will also spell out steps needed to be taken to expand this sector.

Scheduled domestic passenger traffic was suspended in India for about two months between March 25 and May 24 last year due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Since June 2020, the domestic traffic had been on a path of recovery when the second wave of the pandemic hit India during April and May this year.

# Three more Rafale jets arrive in India from France

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

A seventh batch of three more Rafale fighter jets arrived in India after flying non-stop for a distance of almost 8,000 km from France, in a further boost to the strike capability of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The new batch of the aircraft will be part of the IAF’s second squadron of the Rafale jets.

The aircraft were provided mid-air refuelling by the air force of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

“Three Rafale aircraft arrived in India a short while ago, after a direct ferry from #IstresAirBase, France. IAF deeply appreciates the support by UAE Air Force for in-flight refuelling during the non-stop ferry,” the IAF said in a tweet. Following the arrival of the new batch, the number of Rafale jets with the IAF went up to 24.

The new squadron of Rafale jets will be based in Hasimara airbase in West Bengal. The first Rafale squadron is based in the Ambala air force station.

A squadron comprises around 18 aircraft. India had signed an inter-governmental agreement with France in September 2016 for the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets at a cost of around ₹58,000 crore.

# CAA-NRC doesn’t stand to divide Hindus, Muslims: Mohan Bhagwat



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat along with Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and author Nani Gopal Mahanta, during the launch of Nanis book on NRC & CAA debate, in Guwahati on Wednesday

PTI

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Stating that after partition India took care of minorities but Pakistan did not do so, RSS head Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday said the CAA-NRC (Citizenship Amendment Act-National Register of Citizens) Is not against anyone and has nothing to do with Muslim citizens of India.

Bhagwat said "secularism" is a concept practised by Indian civilisation long before it was born in the modern sense of the term. He said some communities always want others to be like them whereas India from time immemorial respected diversity.

He said no one in India need to fear from the CAA-NRC .

“The CAA-NRC is not a law made against any Indian citizen. Muslim citizens of

India will not be harmed by the CAA. Some people have made it a Hindu-Muslim issue to take political benefits. For political gains, both subjects [CAA-NRC] have been made the subject of Hindu-Muslim. It is not the subject of Hindu-Muslim,” Bhagwat said.

The RSS leader was speak-

ing at the launch of a book titled, “Citizenship Debate over NRC and CAA, Assam and the Politics of History” authored by Nani Gopal Mahanta in Guwahati. The event was also attended by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Bhagwat said that after the partition of India, the new nations had promised to take care of their respective minority communities.

“We are following it till today. But Pakistan did not. All the people fought against the British with the dream that there would be an independent country.

Consent of [Indian] people was not taken at the time of partition of the country. If consensus had been sought at that time, the country would not have been partitioned. But the leaders took the decision and the public accepted it,” he said.

# BJP appoints Shazia Ilmi, Prem Shukla as party’s national spokesperson

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

BJP president JP Nadda on Wednesday appointed Prem Shukla and Shazia Ilmi as its national spokespersons. Both BJP members have been speaking for the party and defending it on various issues

in the media. Shukla is from Mumbai while Ilmi belongs to Delhi. The party currently has 25 national spokespersons, including its media department head and chief spokesperson Anil Baluni. Ilmi has been a former Aam Aadmi Party leader and an ex-

television anchor.

More changes and appointments are expected to be effected in the party following the July seven major rejig in the council of ministers and exit of Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar from the cabinet.

## Muslims will not face any loss due to the citizenship law: RSS

“A large number of people had to be evicted [from their homes] after the partition decision. Even today, these people are getting evicted. What is their fault? Who will think about them? It’s our moral duty to help those people,” Mohan Bhagwat said.

“We don’t have any problems with any religion, language or creed. The problem starts when someone with the intent of domination tries to impose uniformity,” said the RSS leader.

“The NRC is a method to know that who is the citizen of our country. It is not against any particular religion. In the politics of the country, it will be considered only according to the political mileage. Some people will bring this on communal lines. They make this a Hindu-Muslim issue, but this is not a Hindu-Muslim issue,” he said.

# DRDO successfully tests missile

**Fire and forget, anti-tank guided missile developed indigenously**



DRDO successfully flight-tests indigenously-developed MPATGM for minimum range

Agency

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Giving a boost to the prowess of the mechanised infantry soldiers in the battlefield, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully test fired an indigenously developed man-portable anti-tank guided missile.

The fire and forget missile can destroy enemy tank at a range of more three-four kms and just weighs 15-16 kilos. Giving details of the test, Defence Ministry officials said here the DRDO successfully flight-tested indigenously missile. It was launched from a man portable launcher integrated with thermal site and the target was mimicking a tank.

The missile hit the target in direct attack mode and destroyed it with precision.

Officials said the test has validated the minimum range successfully. All the mission objectives were met. The missile has already been successfully flight tested for the maximum range.

The missile is incorporated with state-of-the-art Miniaturised Infrared Imaging Seeker along with advanced avionics. The test brings the development of indigenous third generation man portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile close to completion. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO and the industry for the successful test.

In another test, the DRDO scientists successfully flight-



tested the New Generation Akash Missile (Akash-NG), a surface-to-air Missile from Integrated Test Range (ITR) off the coast of Odisha on Wednesday. The Akash missile can take down a hostile incoming target at a range of 25 to 30 km. The flight trial was conducted at around 12:45 PM from a land-based platform with all weapon system elements such as Multifunction Radar, Command, Control & Communication System and launcher participating in deployment configuration.

The missile system has been developed by Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories. The launch was witnessed by

the representatives of the IAF.

In order to capture flight data, ITR deployed a number of Range stations like, Electro Optical Tracking System, Radar and Telemetry. The flawless performance of the entire weapon system has been confirmed by complete flight data captured by these systems. During the test, the missile demonstrated high manoeuvrability required for neutralising fast and agile aerial threats.

Once deployed, the Akash-NG weapon system will prove to be a force multiplier for the air defence capability of the IAF. Production agencies Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) also participated in the trials.

# SJM seeks changes in consumer protection e-commerce rules

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) on Wednesday suggested a host of amendments to the proposed consumer protection e-commerce rules and said the Government must also make provisions for the protection of the traders and service providers associated with the e-commerce giants.

In its suggestions to the Department of Consumer Affairs, the SJM said there is a general impression that the rules are applicable to all the parties involved in e-commerce, “which is not true”, as the Consumer Protection Act does not apply to the traders and service providers.

“It is, therefore, suggested that this aspect must be clarified by way of clarification by the (consumer affairs) ministry, and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) must make suitable rules for the protection of traders and service providers who avail services through e-commerce for commercial purposes,” the outfit said.

“Small traders on Amazon, Flipkart-Walmart; drivers on Uber, Ola etc; small restaurants involved in Zomato etc.; hairdressers, carpenters, electricians and others on Urban Clap etc.; and many other workers are subject to severe hardships by these e-commerce giants, having no protection at all against exploitation,” it said. The SJM said there are many traders and service providers, which are not getting any protection under the law, due to the “inadequate or non-existent” e-commerce laws.

The SJM termed the provision for compulsory registration of e-commerce entities under the proposed rules as “a welcome step”, saying it will go a long way to regulate the e-commerce giants “for any wrongdoings by them.” “However, it is suggested, to avoid any hardship to e-commerce entities with a very small consumer base in India, a threshold may be prescribed for compulsory registration,” it said.

This would save the small e-commerce players from “avoidable compliances,” it said and suggested that the definition of

micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) “may be adopted” to define small e-commerce players in the proposed rules.

It also sought changes in the wordings of the rules for the registration of e-companies to bring under its ambit even those e-commerce entities that do not set up offices in India but still have “lots of revenue” being generated from the consumers located in the country.

The SJM suggested that the rules should provide for capacity building for inspection and enforcement of e-commerce transactions, unfair trade practices, manipulation of prices, search algorithm and other technical aspects of digital transactions with a consumer protection perspective. “E-courts may be established for the consumers’ grievances redressal,” it said.

The SJM noted that e-commerce companies under the proposed rules are required to appoint those as chief compliance officers, nodal contact persons and resident grievance officers who are residents and citizens of the country.

# Covid Delta variant found in 124 countries: WHO

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday the highly contagious Delta variant of Sars-Cov-2 has been identified in 124 countries and is expected to become the dominant strain worldwide within months. The rapid transmission of the ‘variant of concern’ first detected in India appears to be driven by multiple factors, including relaxation of social distancing measures and inequitable vaccine distribution around the world, the WHO said.

“It is expected that it will rapidly out-compete other variants and become the dominant circulating lineage over the coming months,” the UN health agency said in its weekly epidemiological update.

Of the three other coronavirus variants of concern (VOCs), Alpha, first detected in Britain, has been reported in 180 territories (up six from last week), Beta, first detected in South Africa, in 130 (up seven) and Gamma, first detected in Brazil, in 78 (up three).



According to SARS-CoV-2 sequences submitted to the GISAID global science initiative over the four weeks to July 20, the Delta variant is wreaking havoc across the globe and now accounts for more than 75 per cent of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) cases in several countries including India, Bangladesh, Australia, South Africa, Britain, Singapore, Indonesia, Russia, and China among others, as per the report.

The US health officials said on Tuesday that the variant of concern accounts for

about 83 per cent of cases in the United States, threatening the gains made through the massive vaccination drive.

“Growing evidence supports the increased transmissibility of the Delta variant as compared to non-VOCs. However, the exact mechanism for the increase in transmissibility remains unclear,” said the WHO.

The Geneva-based organisation said overall, 3.4 million new Covid-19 cases were reported in the week to July 18 -- up 12 per cent on the week before.

“At this rate, it is expected that the cumulative number of cases reported globally could exceed 200 million in the next three weeks,” said the WHO.

Over the past week, Indonesia reported the highest number of new Covid-19 cases, followed by Britain, Brazil, India, and the US. Despite a worrying rise in coronavirus cases per capita, the UK has removed virtually all restrictions, prompting experts to warn the country about the impending threat.

# Now, refresher course for CRPF medical officers to fight Covid pandemic

**RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI**

The CRPF has accorded approval for two months’ refresher course for its medical officers in 10 departments at the Safdarjung Hospital here in order to be upgraded and better equipped to handle various medical complications, including post-Covid complications, of its personnel.

The proposal of the Medical Directorate of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for imparting refresher course to the doctors has been approved by the parliamentary chief Kuldip Singh, officials said, adding the Safdarjung Hospital has also approved the course of the paramilitary doctors. CRPF doctors to be imparted the refresher course will cover the departments of medicine, orthopedics, nephrology, neurology, respiratory medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, radiology, cardiology and sports medicine.

The Inspector General (Medical) has invited nominations of two doctors each from various departments latest by July 26 for the fourth batch.

Three batches have already completed the refresher course, they said. “Refresher courses help the doctors in updating any advancement in their respective discipline. Safdarjung Hospital being a big medical establishment handles a large number of patients and also has elaborate departments in various subjects and the refresher course to the CRPF doctors will help in enriching and updating the subject knowledge,” a medical official of the paramilitary said.

As on July 18, the CRPF led the pack among various paramilitary forces with most number of coronavirus infections having a tally of 25,067 Covid-19-hit personnel out of which 24,732 patients have been cured and 127 personnel died due to viral disease, which the highest casualty figure for any paramilitary due to the pandemic.

As on July 18, the Force has 208 active cases. In addition to these serving personnel, a number of their dependents have also been said to be either infected with the disease or undergoing post-Covid treatment.



# Sexual assault plaint row shakes Kerala Govt

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M)-led Kerala Government has come under attack from a young woman in Kollam alleging that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was helping a member of his council of Ministers who misused his official position to hush up a sexual assault case.

A K Saseendran, Minister of forests and the lone representative of the NCP in the Kerala Government has been accused by the lady and her father of threatening them from going ahead with a sexual assault case against the former's friend, a business man.

The audio clip featuring the Minister's telephonic conversation with the lady and her father has been in circulation in the vernacular media for the

last two days. Saseendran is no stranger to such allegations because during the previous tenure of the Pinarayi Vijayan Government, he had to resign following charges of seeking sexual favours from another lady.

Saseendran was re-admitted to the council of Ministers following a settlement reached with the complainant. But this time, the charges are more serious as the minister's voice is discernible in the audio clip.

Though he dismissed the allegations, Saseendran admitted that he had tried to broker peace with both the parties as they were members of the NCP. P C Chacko, president of Kerala NCP, pooh poohed the opposition UDF's demand to oust Saseendran from the cabinet. "I held discussion with Saseendran about the incident

and I am fully convinced of his innocence in the case," Chacko, who had joined the NCP days before the April 6 Assembly election, told media persons.

Saseendran drove down to Chief Minister Vijayan's official bungalow on Wednesday morning and the duo was closeted for more than an hour. Later, speaking to reporters, Saseendran said that he had told whatever transpired during the telephonic conversation.

A Vijayaraghavan, acting secretary of the Kerala CPI(M), who also heads the liaison committee of the Left Democratic Front, said at Thiruvananthapuram that the full facts associated with the case are yet to reach the CPI(M). "We cannot take any action without studying the full details associated with the case," said Vijayaraghavan.

## EID ON LOC IN KASHMIR

# Indian, Pak troops exchange sweets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

As the National Investigation Agency (NIA) is still probing the recent terror attack using drone bombers on the Air Force Station, Jammu, the soldiers of the Indian Army and Border Security Force (BSF) on Wednesday exchanged sweets with their Pakistani counterparts at multiple locations on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu & Kashmir on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha celebrations.

The ceremonial exchange of sweets was put on hold amid escalating tensions between the two neighbouring countries after the Abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Ahead of the festival of Eid, the troops deployed along the LoC have been directed to remain in a state of high alert to foil fresh infiltration bids from across the border with Pakistan.

Intelligence agencies have



Indian, Pakistani armies exchange sweets along LoC in Kashmir on Eid-ul-Adha - PTI

also issued warnings following unusual movement of heavily armed terrorists camping across different launching pads inside Pakistan Occupied Jammu & Kashmir. According to a Srinagar based Defence Spokesman, "On the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha and as a gesture for promoting Peace, Harmony & Compassion in the true spirit of the festival, India and Pakistan armies held a flag meeting and exchanged sweets at Kaman Aman Setu, Uri &

Tithwal crossing on Kishanganga River in Tangdhar, Kupwara". "The event has been held when both the Armies have been strictly following the Ceasefire Agreement on the Line of Control". Similarly, sweets were exchanged between the troops of India and Pakistan at two locations in Poonch and Mendhar.

In Jammu, troops of BSF and Pakistan Rangers greeted each other and exchanged

sweets in Hira nager, Samba, Ramgarh, R S Pura, Arnai, Pargwal Sectors of the International Border of Jammu.

BSF spokesman said, "this is the first exchange of sweets between the two border guarding forces after the Pulwama incident. There was no Cross Border Shelling since long and farmers on both sides of the border have been able to carry out their farming activities peacefully".

## Assam orders probe into death of scores of birds in Barpeta

**Guwahati:** The Assam Forest Department has ordered a probe into the death of a large number of birds after consuming crops, which were allegedly sprayed with poison, in Barpeta district, an official said on Wednesday.

Scores of birds, including sparrows and cuckoos, died at Bohori Silgaon village on Monday after consuming crops in a paddy field, the PRO to the forest Minister said in a statement. "Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya has asked the chief wildlife warden and the principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife) to institute a probe into the incident and to submit the action taken report immediately," he said. The dead birds have been sent for post-mortem examinations and results are awaited to ascertain the exact cause of death, but forest officials visiting the place said it is a suspected case of poisoning. **PTI**

## Thampis from MRC Wellington add firepower to India's Olympics squad

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ NILGIRIS

Monsoon rain makes Wellington in the Nilgiris chilly. But Monsoon rain in 2021 has brought with it a fever, popularly known as Olympics fever.

Though soldiers in the Madras Regimental Centre here and the local population like sports and games, they are not obsessed with it. This time it is different because two sons of MRC Wellington, the oldest regiment of Indian Army, are in Tokyo donning the country's colours in the track and field events of the 2021 Summer Olympics.

It is after a long time jawans from MRC Wellington, popularly known as Thampis, have made it to the Indian contingent. Arokya Rajiv (30), a subedar hailing from Thiruchirappalli district and Kolothum Thudi Irfan (31), a naib subedar are the representatives of MRC who are expected to add power and strength to the Indian challenge in Tokyo.



Both the challengers from MRC are not just pushovers but seasoned athletes who have won many national and international titles, according to Hemand Raj, the Army coach who oversaw the training of the two Thampis. Rajiv is an Arjuna Awardee who has excelled in 400 meters race. He is a bronze medalist in the 2014 Asian Games held at South Korea. He will be contributing his might to the 4X400 meter relay team

Irfan has set the track in the iconic Thangaraj Stadium in Wellington ablaze, if coach Hemand Raj is to be believed. The Malappuram youth has become a cynosure in the high ranges with his scintillating style in the 20 km walk.



Hemand Raj and commander of the camp Brig Rajeswar Singh are hoping that the jawans would do India proud at Tokyo.

Age may not be on their side as the quality of Indian athletes would start showing a downward trend once they cross the age of 30.

"We are confident that the duo, laced with grit, determination and hard work would not let us down," said Brig Singh.

Peter Thangaraj, after whom the stadium has been named, was Asia's best goal keeper during the 1950s and 1960s. He was the member of the Indian team that narrowly

lost the bronze in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

This is the third time Thampis are featuring in the Olympics squad since 1960, according to the official spokesman of the MRC. Naib Subedar K Ganapathi had taken part in the 2016 Rio Olympics Games.

When Rajiv and Irfan take to the tracks in Japan, Nigiris would get reverberated with "Thampi Kaisa? Tiger Jaisa!" and "Veera Vell Vetri Vell!" (the Centre's centuries old war cry) would reverberate across the Hills. Special Poojas would be held in the names of the Thampis on the days they compete in the Olympics.

## Kundra scam gets murkier, details of porn film shoots, nude auditions emerge

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The investigations into the pornographic films racket involving businessman and actress Shilpa Shetty's husband Raj Kundra have thrown up lurid details of the porn film shoots held at private bungalows at Madh Island and "nude auditions" conducted by racketeers who circumvented the Indian laws, made the porn films and uploaded them on mobiles in the United Kingdom

Two days after Kundra's arrest, the Mumbai Crime branch sleuths have uncovered the conspiracy behind the making and streaming of pornographic videos through an app called "Hotshots" and also OTT platforms by putting up advertisements on social media platforms.

In another major development, the investigators are recovered the messages from as WhatsApp group run by Kundra to deal with money accrued from the porn movies produced by them. The group was named "H AAccounts" and had Kundra as its admin with four other members: Pradeep Bakshi, Rob Digital Marketing Hotshot, Raw Evans. They have found some incriminating messages relevant to the case being investigated by them.

The distribution and marketing strategy adopted by Kundra and team was to send the videos produced in Mumbai through an application to Kenrin Production in the UKs to avoid legal issues in India. Kenrin Production would edit and upload the pornographic films Hotshot. Kenrin was allegedly funding the porn film production through agents based in India.

Confirming the financial trial among the culprits behind the porn scam, Mumbai's Joint Commissioner of Police (crime) Milind Barambe said: "We have the details of the financial trials among them," said.

Meanwhile, in a new twist to the ongoing investigations into the sleazy porn film racket, a model and actress – whom Kundra's frontman Umesh Kamat had approached for a "nude audition" – came into the open, by claiming that she gave her audition over a video call. Much to the annoyance of Kamat, she claimed that she did not "undress" for the audition, but she did give the audition on the promise by Kamat that she would land a role in a web series.

Among other things, she claimed that Kundra was a "mere pawn" in the entire racket, in which she alleged several people were involved.

The model-cum-actress, who did not want to be identified but demanded stern action against Kundra and his associates, explained the modus operandi involved in the racket in which women who approached for roles would soon be involved in bikini shoots, bold shoots and eventually nude. In search of small roles in films, the women would not come into the open about things they were forced to do and some of them would end up prostitution.

Another ploy used by the racketeers was to lure women – coming from different parts of the country to make a career in Bollywood, with roles in web series. However, after the start of shooting, they would change the script to indulge in bold shoots and even nude shoots. If the women in question refused, the racketeers would force the women to pay up expenditure incurred on the preparations for the shoots, a threat would force the women to succumb to the dictates of the porn film makers.

Informed sources that a raid conducted on February 4 this year by the Malwani police on a private bungalow at picturesque Madh Island at Malad (west) in north Mumbai where a porn film was being shot, ripped the lid off a well-oiled racket. It was a tip-off from an appenditure woman who approached the police with her grievance that led to the raid.

After initial investigation, the Mumbai Police handed the case to the Property Cell of Crime Branch-CID for further probe during which the name of United Kingdom-based Pradeep Bakshi, the brother-in-law of Kundra, surfaced.

Kundra is the owner of Viaan Industries Ltd, jointly promoted by the couple, while Bakshi – a British citizen, who is married to Kundra's sister – is the Chairman of Kenrin Ltd., London.

The HotShots app – described as the "world's first 18+ app" showcasing some of the hottest models and celebs globally in exclusive photos, short films and hot videos (implying soft-to-hard porn) – was removed from mobile platforms. Similarly, Apple and Google have removed the app because of the pornographic content in it.

In all, eleven persons – including Kundra, his aide Ryan John Sharpe and Kamat, have been arrested in connection with the pornography racket. They are: TV actress Gehna Vashisht (32) Yasmin Baig Khan alias Rowa Khan (40) Monu Joshi (28) Pratibha Nalavade (33) Atif Ahmed (24), Shaan Banerjee alias Dipankar Khasnavis (38), Bhanusuryam Thakur (26) Tanvir Hashmi (40) and Umesh Kamat (39).

Model-actress Gehana Vashisth, while Yasmin Rowa Khan was the producer-director. Kamat was the frontman for Kundra. Pratibha was the graphic designer, Joshi was cameraman.

Gahna and Kamat were both involved in producing and shooting porn, writing scripts; they also sent copies of their scripts to Kundra.

In a related development, Gehna – who is currently on bail – has claimed that she was arrested wrongly in the case. "Those videos are just adult videos. They are of erotic nature. None of them falls under the category of porn," she said.

On their part, the investigators are examining call records on her phone and information on her laptop both of which they seized.

## Amid leadership change buzz, BSY asks supporters not to indulge in protests

**Bengaluru:** With voices growing in his support, amid speculation that his replacement was on the cards, Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday urged his supporters and well-wishers not to indulge in any kind of protests or indiscipline that is disrespectful and may embarrass the BJP.

The 78-year-old BJP veteran said the party is "like mother" for him.

"I am privileged to be a loyal worker of BJP. It is my utmost honour to serve the party with highest standards of ethics & behaviour. I urge everyone to act in accordance with party ethics & not indulge in protests/indiscipline that is disrespectful & embarrassing for the party," Yediyurappa tweeted.

Appealing to supporters not to give statements in his favour or indulge in protests, "based on the current political developments", Yediyurappa in a Kannada tweet said, "your goodwill should not exceed the boundaries of discipline. Party is like a mother to me and disrespecting it will cause pain to me. I believe that my true well-wishers will understand and respond to my feelings."

His statement came as support continued to pour in for him from Muttis, pontiffs, and political leaders.

Leaders and pontiffs, especially from the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community, also All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha, have declared support to Yediyurappa and have urged for his continuation as the Chief Minister, while also warning "bad consequences" for the BJP if he is replaced. Striking a discordant note, dissident BJP MLC A H Vishwanath asked the Lingayat seers whether they were "backing corruption" by rallying behind Yediyurappa.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, Vishwanath, who has been vocal against Yediyurappa, criticised them, claiming that they are setting a "wrong precedent" by backing the Chief Minister and his government "instead of standing with the people".

Some BJP leaders like MP G M Siddeshwara and former legislator B Suresh Gowda have also expressed confidence that he will continue as CM, as the high command has not asked him to step down. **PTI**

## Man marries minor girl, arrested for abduction and rape

**Ballia (UP):** A 23-year-old man was arrested on Wednesday in connection with a three-year-old case of abduction and rape, police said.

For the last three years, the accused and the girl had been living together after marriage. Station House Officer (SHO) Yogesh Yadav said, adding they have two children.

The man, a resident of Mau district, was arrested from Ibrahimipatti Nahar crossing on Wednesday following a tip-off.

On June 26, 2018, a case was registered at Bheempura police station against him under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act for abduction and rape of the 15-year-old girl on the complaint of her father. In the course of investigation, police attached his property and announced a cash reward of ₹25,000 for information leading to his arrest. **PTI**

## ‘Centre’s no Covid deaths due to lack of O2 claim akin to no one killed Jessica template’

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after the Centre told the Parliament that no Covid-19 deaths due to lack of Oxygen were specifically reported, The Organised Medicine Academic Guild (OMAG) on Wednesday dubbed Minister of State for Health Dr Bharti Pawar's statement in this regard was akin to the film 'No One Killed Jessica' template.

"The statement by the Minister is factually not incorrect. But her statement is akin to the movie 'No One Killed Jessica' OMAG secretary general Dr I S Gilada and president Dr Suneela Garg said in a joint press statement here.

They said that the global medical community was disillusioned by the minister's statement.

The OMAG, which is the federation of medical organisations, has appealed to the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), which has been at the helm of the affair since the pandemic began, "to clear the air so that the blame game stops and ensure that the blame is not shifted

to the medical community."

Dr Gilada said that there was no denying that "Detailed guidelines for reporting of deaths have been issued by the Union Health Ministry to all states/UTs" but what has been actually sent, was an eye-opener.

The ICMR-National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research (NCDIR) document "Guidance for appropriate recording of Covid-19 related deaths in India" at page 6 categorically mentions that Asphyxia, Respiratory arrest/Failure and Respiratory Failure among others cannot be mentioned as cause of death.

"The minister's statement that, "...no deaths due to lack of oxygen have been specifically reported by states/UTs" isn't incorrect either," Dr Gilada said. Following the national guidelines and state SOPs, no doctor will or can mention 'Hypoxia' or 'Respiratory Arrest' or 'Respiratory Failure' as cause of death. As doctors, we have been always told to avoid mentioning Mode of Dying as Cause of Death. Mode of dying merely tells you that death

has occurred and is not specifically related to the disease process.

"Doctors have to record the underlying cause of death in the Medical Certification of Cause of Death (MCCD) Form 4 (institutional deaths) / 4A (non-institutional deaths) which is submitted to the Office of Registrar General, India (ORGI). The ORGI records and collates data but cannot change it," he said.

"In any case, cause of death is never given as the patient died of 'fever due to lack of paracetamol' or 'respiratory failure due to lack of steroid' and similarly 'patient died due to lack of oxygen!'," Dr Gilada said.

The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) doesn't have code for lack of Oxygen or Hypoxia.

"Autopsy or post-mortem can help in cases when cause of death cannot be ascertained. However in Covid-19 hardly any autopsies are done due to the fear instilled since the pandemic began, once again due to ICMR guidelines on how dead bodies of Covid-19 patients should be disposed of," Dr Gilada averred.

## AIADMK slams K'taka for stand against Cauvery-Gundar scheme

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Opposition AIADMK on Wednesday slammed Karnataka for reportedly moving the Supreme Court against Tamil Nadu's Cauvery-Gundar interlinking scheme, alleging it was done in the context of the state's opposition to Mekedatu dam and was an expression of its "jealousy."

AIADMK Coordinator O Panneerselvam said the Cauvery-Gundar interlinking initiated by the previous party-led Government only entails diverting excess water to drier regions in Tamil Nadu and would not affect Karnataka.

The ₹14,400 crore, 262 km project is aimed at diverting 6,300 cubic ft of surplus water during flood times to drier areas in the state's southern districts and the then Chief Minister K Palaniswami had

laid the foundation stone for the first of the three-phase initiative in February this year.

Cauvery, South Vellar, Vaigai and Gundar rivers will be interlinked in this major intra-state water project.

Panneerselvam, citing reports of Karnataka moving the apex court against the project, said it came in the wake of Tamil Nadu's "stiff opposition" to that state's proposal to construct a balancing reservoir on river Cauvery at Mekedatu there to meet the twin objectives of meeting drinking water requirements and power generation.

Tamil Nadu was opposed to Karnataka's proposal to construct the dam since it was against the final award of a Cauvery tribunal, even as the matter was pending before the country's top court.

"It is unfair on part of Karnataka to have moved the Supreme Court against Tamil Nadu's irrigation schemes just because it did not give approval to the Mekedatu project," Panneerselvam said in a statement.

Karnataka had nothing to do with Tamil Nadu's intra-state project, he said.

Tamil Nadu was opposed to the Mekedatu dam only over fears of the reduction in its quantum of water from the inter-state Cauvery river and the state's delta region turning into a 'desert' should the project take shape, he added.

At the same time, the Cauvery-Gundar interlinking and related projects including construction of shutter dams would only help in utilising surplus water and "would not impact Karnataka," he added.



## Still opaque

Are the immunity of a fully vaccinated person and the antibodies in a recovered person equal?

The COVID-19 situation in India continues to be enigmatic as ever. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) says that two-thirds of the Indian population above six years has had SARS-CoV-2 infection and developed antibodies against the virus. The highest sero prevalence of 77.6 per cent has been found in the age group of 45-60 years. The lowest prevalence has been in the six- to nine-year category, of 57.2 per cent. The ICMR has said the results offer a ray of hope amid gnawing fears of a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Adding to the hope, the country is yet to report a spike in daily positive cases. The latest daily case figure stands at 41,279, of which a whopping 26,000 come from Kerala and Maharashtra. Leaving aside these two States, the overall situation is not yet alarming. Thirdly, India is going through a graded easing of lockdown restrictions. There is a general complaint of the casual approach of people and the States to respecting the safety protocols. Yet, there is also growing awareness among the States and the courts to prevent assembly of large crowds at tourist spots and religious events. Thousands of tourists have been turned away from hill stations while potential super-spreader events like the Char Dham Yatra and the Kanwar Yatra have been deferred. Do all these factors mean that the third wave need not be inevitable?

If the ICMR survey says over 66 per cent of the people have antibodies, should we be rushing to the conclusion that the country is at the threshold of herd immunity? Is it a scientific, rational assumption that the immunity of a fully vaccinated person and the antibodies present in a recovered person have the same potency to ward off future infections? Answers to these questions are necessary before either the States or the people jump to wrong conclusions and embrace complacency. The ICMR should have clarified this while revealing the sero survey details. At no point should there be a doubt in the mind of anyone that the antibodies can be a substitute for the vaccine. The vaccination drive, which has reportedly slowed down for want of doses, should not be allowed to slacken. In fact, a national campaign is necessary to drive home the point repeatedly that there is no alternative to full vaccination. There are reports coming from the United States that the new round of infection is being reported from the poorly vaccinated regions. The Indian COVID task force officials have named four things that can lead to a possible third wave; namely, lowered levels of immunity acquired in the first two waves, the possibility of a new variant that can bypass the acquired immunity, faster transmissibility of a new variant among the population and premature easing of COVID-19 restrictions. It is important to remember that 400 million Indians without antibodies are vulnerable while only 6.3 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated.



Devotees offer prayers on the occasion of Eid al-Adha at the Badi Masjid in Chennai

## Spoke in wheel

The Supreme Court has rightly pulled up the Kerala Govt over relaxing COVID restrictions for Eid

After ticking off the Uttar Pradesh Government over its reluctance to cancel the Kanwar Yatra this year, the Supreme Court has taken another similar, welcome step and castigated the Kerala Government over its ostensible appeasement policy in granting a three-day relaxation from COVID-19 restrictions ahead of the Eid al-Adha (Bakrid) festival. Hinting that its pliable stand emanated from the vote bank and economic concerns, the court stated that the State Government bowing to traders' pressure by granting the relaxations shows a "sorry state of affairs" and was "wholly uncalled for". Observing that the "pressure groups in the market" can't be allowed to affect the general public's right to health, the apex court lamented: "Can't quash the Kerala Government's notification. The horse has already bolted." However, the court didn't let the matter pass based on the time elapsed since the notification and, rightly pointing to its recent order passed in the Kanwar Yatra case, warned the State Government that it would invite strict

penal action if the relaxations so granted lead to another spurt in the cases of COVID-19 pandemic. It also stated categorically that pressure groups of all kinds, religious or otherwise, cannot in any manner interfere with the most precious "Right to life". Hearing the UP Kanwar Yatra matter on July 16, the top court had observed that all sentiments, including religious, were subservient to the right to life. For its part, the UP Government fully deserved the rap on the knuckles as it kept insisting that the restrictions be eased for the Kanwar Yatra, which had all the potential of turning into a super-spreader. Its neighbour, Uttarakhand, had prudently ordered against allowing the Kanwar Yatra and even halted the Char Dham Yatra this year, too, as it feared that the pilgrims and tourists arriving from other States could cause the number of COVID-19 positive cases in the hill State to shoot up. However, Uttar Pradesh, also ruled by the BJP, tried to cajole it into allowing its pilgrims to enter Uttarakhand for collecting holy water from the Ganga at Haridwar. Its exigency can be attributed to the fact that the State is headed for Assembly elections next year, so rather than jeopardising its chances at the hustings, it wanted to give these a boost. However, the Supreme Court has taken a sensible stand in both the cases and sided with the right to life.

# Fresh challenges await Deuba in the hot seat

It's as much about providing political stability and shoring up economy in Nepal as it is about undoing Oli's wrongs and repairing relations with India

After a series of thunderbolts hit Nepalese politics, Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba was appointed the 13th Prime Minister of the democracy on July 13. The Supreme Court had the previous day overturned the dissolution of the House of Representatives by former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on May 21 and ordered the appointment of Opposition leader Deuba within 24 hours under Article 76 (5) of the Constitution. Deuba managed to poll 165 votes in the 275-member House and secure clear majority. With Maoists and the Janata Samajbadi Party supporting the Government, a total of 22 members of the Nepal-Khanal faction of Oli's UML party voted in favour of Deuba, including eight Oli loyalists. It was another eye-opener for the arrogant Oli, who had been misusing the Constitution and the Office of the President to cling to power.

**Ensuring stability:** During his one-and-a-half-year term, Deuba will have to ensure political stability and address the challenges of economy and employment amidst COVID-19. Although a no-confidence motion can be moved against the Deuba Government for two years under the Constitution, he will also need to put his own house in order as three major parties are supporting the Government. While a five-member Cabinet has been appointed and significant portfolios awaiting a Minister, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deuba will have a tough time keeping the Maoists calm, especially Prachanda, who continues to aim for the top post. Noteworthy, Maoists had aligned with the UML for the 2017 parliamentary and local body elections despite being in the Government with the Nepali Congress. Therefore, power-sharing with Prachanda will be an important element to look for in the months to come.

**Rejuvenating ties with Delhi:** Soon after Deuba won the vote of confidence on July 19, a congratulatory message was tweeted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi added: "I look forward to working with you to enhance our unique partnership in all sectors further, and strengthen our deep-rooted people-to-people ties."



The tweet was followed by a telephonic conversation. For many in India, it is a good start for India to engage with Nepal as bilateral ties have seen the lowest point under Oli. In the last one year, Oli had used anti-India manoeuvring to his political benefit, including unilaterally adding sovereign territories of India in the Kalapani region into the official political map of Nepal. Even though Oli was claiming that issues with India have been resolved, the border dispute remains a contention, whether Deuba wishes or not. The Nepali Congress had supported the constitutional amendment moved by Oli to include Indian territories into Nepal's political map. Therefore, India will have to make its diplomatic endeavours in Nepal carefully as on the border row, the Nepali Congress does not differ from what Oli had stood for. Also, with anti-India ultra-nationalistic elements working as catalyst in influencing the political mandate in Nepalese politics, Deuba might be seen taking that road. Meanwhile, with Oli gone, India has every reason to celebrate. However, India's policy towards Nepal will need a more proactive

INDIA'S POLICY TOWARDS NEPAL WILL NEED A MORE PROACTIVE INSTANCE THAN MERELY NOTING THE EVENTS THERE. THE EXISTING TRADE DEFICIT HAS OFTEN WORKED AGAINST INDIA'S GOODWILL, AND A COMPETITIVE INVESTMENT ON A PAR OR MORE THAN CHINA WILL BE NEEDED

instance than merely noting the events there. The existing trade deficit has often worked against India's goodwill, and a competitive investment on a par or more than China will be needed. Interestingly, Modi has promised to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal during the telephonic conversation with Deuba. India had halted the vaccine supplies to Nepal after the second wave hit India in April. Thus, it should be seen as a welcome shift in India's policy towards Nepal during such challenging times. **Overcoming coalition compulsions:** Further, Deuba has a better chance to shed Chinese heavy-handedness into Nepal's political and foreign affairs and mend ties with India. Against the popular image of Oli befriending China to serve Beijing's interests in matters related to Tibet and India, Deuba does not come with the baggage of communist ideology. Therefore, he can work with India on the path to cooperation and development in Nepal. Meanwhile, his alliance partner Prachanda is known for his China leaning. It was a similar coalition in 2017 with Nepali Congress

when he persuaded Deuba to sign the Belt and Road Initiative, much to India's unhappiness. On July 6, Prachanda was seen making overtures to Xi Jinping and the Communist Party of China during the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties Summit to mark the 100 years of its establishment. Prachanda had given a clean chit to China, claiming it as the most generous nation in "contributing to global prosperity and peace as well" and an advocate of "rule-based international order, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and global equity and justice are highly commended by developing countries, including Nepal". Hence, Prime Minister Deuba has a challenging tenure to ensure political stability, keep Prachanda in confidence, mend bilateral ties with New Delhi, ensure a smooth arrival of vaccines from India and wither away Chinese elements in Nepal's internal politics. (The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU and Visiting Fellow at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### PEGASUS AS AN ALBATROSS FOR THE GOVT

Sir — An Israeli cyber surveillance company, NSO, whose Pegasus spyware enables the remote surveillance of smart phones, has come under heightened scrutiny after an international alliance of news outlets reported that the Indian Government used the software to target journalists, dissidents and Opposition politicians. No Indian is surprised to read the Modi Government's hand in the sordid affair. Don't forget, spying is an ancient concept in India; only the technology keeps changing. If we read Chanakya's 'Mudra Manjusha', we come across a number of plots and spying for installing Chandragupta. Moreover, phone tapping is an established "custom" the world over. As per the BJP's tradition, to help Modi save face, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar targeted the Congress and The Wire for trying to derail the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament. But who knows, with the help of the judicial system, it is likely that the Pegasus taint too will not stick to the Modi Government. **Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad**

### PREPARE BEFORE OPENING PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Sir — The suggestion made by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) that children can handle viral infections much better than adults though the antibody exposure is similar and, therefore, primary schools must be opened before secondary schools, can be done only after the teaching and non-teaching staffers are vaccinated as well as depending on the public health situation in any particular district. It has been seen that young children have fewer ACE2 receptors in their lung cells. However, the antibody exposure we have been seen in this sero survey among children is very similar to adults. According to the findings of the fourth national sero survey, over half the kids in 6-17 age group shows the presence of antibodies. The sero positivity was 57.2 per cent in the 6-9 age group, whereas 61.6 per cent in the 10-17 age group showed presence of antibodies.

## No deaths by oxygen shortage?

We were reminded of the Tamil saying "Muzhu pusanikkaaye chottil maraithal pole" (It is like trying to conceal a full pumpkin in rice on a plate) when the Union Government denied any COVID-19 death due to the lack of medical oxygen during the second wave of the pandemic. The claim that the Government took steps to enhance oxygen supply is not the same as the claim that nobody died for want of oxygen. The question for the Government to answer is whether it made available sufficient quantities of oxygen to save the lives of all those who needed oxygen for clinical treatment. And, it cannot answer in the affirmative. Anyone who kept his eyes open would bear witness to the frantic attempts of the fam-

ily members and friends of COVID-19 patients for oxygen in a desperate bid to save their loved ones. We saw with our own eyes how people were driven from pillar to post trying to arrange medical oxygen. The disturbing visuals of those days must be shown to the death deniers. Hospitals treating COVID-19 patients ran out of oxygen and doctors broke down when they had no oxygen to treat their gasping patients. In this context, it is worth mentioning that many COVID-19 deaths occurred in non-hospital settings where clinical care by using medical oxygen was simply non-existent. The only plausible explanation for the Government's denial of deaths due to oxygen shortage is its preoccupation with protecting its image, if need be by being economical with truth. Rubbing salt into the wounds of families that lost their loved ones by providing misleading information does the Government no great credit. Great leaders own up to their mistakes and make amends. But in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have a leader who whitewashes his reputation and there lies the rub. **G David Milton | Kanyakumari**

### NOT THAT EASY TO TOPPLE A GOVT

Sir — The allegations that spyware used to topple the Karnataka Government for installing a BJP-led Government is highly ridiculous. Had it been so easy to topple Governments, both Rajasthan and Maharashtra Governments would have been toppled long back. The Pegasus spyware controversy has snowballed without substance. The ruling party could easily

have compromised the fortunes of other Governments too in this manner to usurp power. Allegations and counter-allegations of this nature are very common without any proof and people need not take it seriously. After a few days, the matter will automatically die down. After all, the Opposition is only trying its best to upset the applecart at the Centre with such allegations. Previously, it was claimed that money power was used for horse-trading after complaining about EVMs and now it takes an altogether different turn. The Opposition is trying to buy time and make news only to gain the upper hand but the BJP Government is firmly saddled at the Centre and it's hardly possible to shake it away. **MR Jayanthi | Chennai**

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

Everything is recorded in the tears of those who lost their loved ones (farmers who died during agitation). #Farmersprotest

**Former Congress president** — Rahul Gandhi

The economic situation with which our country was confronted, has been changing now.

**Pakistan Prime Minister** — Imran Khan

I can't even WT\* this man was really luring people. We literally thought it was spam when he sent that DM to me.

**YouTube** — Puneet Kaur

Skateboarding teaches you to get up again after you have failed. It teaches you determination and perseverance.

**Germany's 14-year-old Olympian** — Lilly Steophasius

West Bengal has a tradition that when the ruling party fails to govern, it starts trying to become a national party.


**West Bengal BJP chief** — Dilip Ghosh



FIRST COLUMN

ECI AND PANDEMIC POLL BLAME

Is ECI alone to blame for holding elections during the pandemic?



ABHINAV NARAYAN JHA

ABHINAV K SHUKLA

It is over two months since the results for assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala were declared. The polls were conducted amidst the second wave of COVID-19. The Election Commission faced much criticism for holding the polls when the pandemic was at its peak. The Commission faced the worst criticism when the Madras High Court in course of the hearing on a writ on the elections orally observed that “the EC is the institution that is singularly responsible for the second wave of COVID-19” and that the EC “should be put up for murder charges”. These remarks, though not part of the order of the High Court, were reported in all media. Aggrieved by these observations of the Madras High Court, the Election Commission approached the Supreme Court through a Special Leave Petition seeking a gag on media reportage on the court’s oral observations. It is not against the law to hold elections during a pandemic. However, it cannot be the justification for thousands of people to gather and assemble at rallies or other political functions like road shows, without wearing masks and violating social distancing protocols.

The Madras High Court observed that the EC was “the most irresponsible over the last few months in not stopping political parties from wanton abuse of the COVID-19 protocol” and, to quote the media, said: “You should be put up on murder charges probably.” The court did not mean to charge the constitutional body with the offence of murder. According to section 300 of the Indian Penal Code, the offence of murder is committed if the act by which the death is caused is done to cause death or such bodily injury as the offender knows to be likely to cause the death or an act which is so imminently dangerous that it must, in all probability, cause death. In the given circumstance, the EC cannot be said to have committed any such intentional act which caused the death(s). The High Court made the comments metaphorically to make the EC realise the gravity of the situation and also to express its displeasure with its actions. The Supreme Court termed the High Court’s “murder charge” remarks against the Election Commission as “harsh” and the “metaphor inappropriate”. The Constitution of India and the Representation of Peoples Act empower the ECI to conduct free and fair elections for which the latter issues instructions under the Model Code of Conduct for political parties to follow. To its constitutional duty, the EC cannot become a ‘Super-Government’ by taking over the administration of law and order in a poll-bound state amid the pandemic. The commission is liable for issues related to the Model Code or the Prevention of Defacement of Properties but not for every remote mishap. Moreover, the current approach of the EC to conduct the assembly elections has to be analysed in consonance with the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The responsibility to handle the pandemic and ensure compliance with safety protocols lies with national and state Disaster Management Authorities and their associated departments and not solely on the Election Commission. Furthermore, in August 2020, the Government of India in consultation with also the EC had issued guidelines for the conduct of elections in COVID times. Moreover, the blame for the second wave’s severity lies not just with the government but the people as well. In current times when all news is magnified by the media, the high court judges may perhaps need to be extra cautious while making their observations concerning constitutional authorities in order also to preserve the sanctity of such authorities.

*(Abhinav Narayan Jha is a Law Scholar & Political Analyst. Abhinav Shukla is Assistant Professor of Law in HNLU, Raipur. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Indian black money in western white banks

## India’s financial fraudsters find a safe haven for their loot and sanctuary for themselves in Britain as its regime skilfully breaks international laws



PRASHANT TEWARI

Despite its traumatic past, India is the only country in the East that rejoices in having a “special relationship” with Britain. But the British have never adequately responded to the gesture.

British governments continue to traumatize India by offering a safe haven to the latter’s economic offenders. These fugitives have looted huge public money from Indian banks, siphoned off the funds to overseas destinations, and when the law enforcement agencies nailed them to get back the ill-begotten money, they ended up going to Britain to safely enjoy their looted wealth.

Fugitive billionaire Vijay Mallya of Kingfisher Airlines fame is a glaring instance. He remains on bail in Britain until and unless UK Home Secretary Priti Patel orders his extradition to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering. Mallya has applied to Secretary Patel for considering “another route” to be able to stay in the UK. This has raised widespread speculation that Mallya plans to seek asylum in that country.

Priti Patel has, however, done something big for India: She has approved the extradition of Nirav Modi, the billionaire diamondaire accused of bank fraud in India. Modi is being investigated by India’s Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for laundering money in the region of \$2 billion and involving loans from public sector Punjab National Bank (PNB). On February 25, Westminster Magistrates’ Court said there was prima facie evidence against Modi, and that there was no reason to suggest that the jeweller would not get justice in India if he was extradited. The judge said there were links between Modi and others conspirators, including PNB officials and top ruling elites in India.

There is another side to this story. It is that many in the present Indian Government and several Indian banks seeking to bring back the looters and prosecute them may be chasing a mirage because of the complexities in the UK legal system. The UK Government trumpets its human rights laws, but how fair is the British justice system? What about human rights and fair justice for Julian Assange? Why is he not out on bail and why does he not have the right legal team to represent his case against his extradition to the USA? The UK has over the years become the most preferred tax haven destination for economic offenders like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, murder-accused Indian music director Nadeem, Sanjay Bhandari, the Rana Kapoor family, the Sandesara family, just to name a few.

The Hinduja Brothers, one of India’s richest families and their Hinduja Group of Companies remain the most preferred Indian family in the UK, aided and promoted by various British governments in the past. The Hinduja Group is now facing



THE UK IS OFTEN CITED AS ‘THE MONEY LAUNDERING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD’, WITH AN ESTIMATED £100BILLION CLAIMED TO BE LAUNDERED THROUGH THE CITY OF LONDON EVERY YEAR, ACCORDING TO FIGURES FROM THE UK’S NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY. LONDON HAS NOT BECOME THE ‘GLOBAL CAPITAL OF MONEY LAUNDERING’ BY ACCIDENT

*(The writer is Editor-in-Chief, Opinion Express. (Inputs from Jo Birring, head of World Homeland Security based in London.) The views expressed are personal.)*



ing major legal problems in Switzerland in connection with a charge of forging a document at a bank. The Swiss authorities believed that there were enough grounds to proceed with their prosecution. The names of the three Hinduja brothers originally cropped up in the Bofors scam as the main middlemen but they managed to get British citizenship in the nick of time. It became a scandal in the UK at that time and a senior British minister had to resign over rumours he helped one of the brothers, Srichand Hinduja, acquire British citizenship.

Back in India, Aikant Bhatti, a minority shareholder in the Chennai-based Ashok Leyland company and in Hinduja Global Solutions, where Ashok P Hinduja is the Chairman Emeritus, claims that billions of rupees in company funds were used to benefit the promoters. Bhatti has already filed a complaint with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to intervene and probe the controversial activities in the Hinduja Group of Companies. Still, the British government continues to prefer to accord them preferential status.

The case of India’s biggest financial debtor, Anil Ambani’s Reliance Group, is not much different. The entire business has collapsed and the hard-earned taxpayer’s money has scandalously evaporated into thin air. A few months ago, Anil Ambani deposed before a UK court, in connection with a case filed by a Chinese banking consortium, that he has no money left. The UK Court had

earlier asked Anil Ambani to pay \$770 million to some Chinese banks for non-payment of loans. It is learned that after the London court’s order, Anil Ambani has limited his foreign travels fearing Chinese banks might seek the help of Interpol to issue red alerts for him in foreign airports.

The UK is often cited as “the money laundering capital of the world,” with an estimated £100billion claimed to be laundered through the City of London every year, according to figures from the UK’s National Crime Agency. London has not become the ‘global capital of money laundering’ by accident. Money launderers and those financing terrorist activities have two main requirements. The first, in a city crowded with financial transactions their wheelingdealings will easily go unnoticed. The second, it’s a country where the antecedents of businessmen offering to invest by setting up businesses and opening bank accounts are blissfully ignored. Maintaining the secrecy of the ownership of beneficial companies is the main criterion of money laundering. Contrary to what one might think, it is many times harder to obtain an untraceable shell company in tax havens than in rich, developed countries.

At the moment, the UK is a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which routinely publishes the list of countries considered a “danger to the international financial system” as well as a “high risk” where money launder-

ing is concerned. The UK, the US, and Switzerland have never been blacklisted. Instead, the usual pariahs of the west-Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and so on, regularly appear on that list along with small states such as Antigua, St Kitts, and Nevis.

These smaller countries are powerless to fight their inclusion on the blacklist. The Caribbean nations have, in the meantime, lost ties with many international banks. We prefer to think that the financial standing of the City of London owes its success to the skills of market wizards honed at the ancient British universities and not the banking brains of nouveau riche criminals.

The politicisation of the black-listed small islands has enabled London to become the global centre of money laundering. Clever British lawyers and corrupt bankers twist the truth to save criminals across the globe. The British offshore banking tax evasion is negating the infrastructural growth and prosperity of the countries in the East by facilitating the flight of illegal capital from East to West. Today, India is an emerging global superpower while the United Kingdom is a glorious story of the past. The Narendra Modi government must tell its British counterpart in clear terms that the human rights cover over financial deception will not be tolerated by India and shelter offered to fugitives who have looted billions of Indian taxpayer money will have serious consequences for bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

NO STATE SENT ANY DATA ABOUT PATIENTS DYING DUE TO OXYGEN SHORTAGE. THE CENTRE’S REPLY WAS BASED ON FIGURES SENT BY STATES AND UTs.

— BJP SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA





THERE WERE FLOODS OF COMPLAINTS FROM HOSPITALS, PATIENTS’ FAMILIES... REGARDING OXYGEN SHORTAGE.

— DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA

# Coming out of the shadows

## Adolescents across socio-economic groups are struggling to adjust to a life without the familiar environment that a traditional school day provides

Emerging from the waves of COVID-19, more than ever, we must prioritize the mental health of children and adolescents. Their well-being should be at the forefront of the preparations for dealing with future pandemic waves.

Generation Z is quietly perceiving the layers of changes in people’s lives since the virus encroached on their spaces in early 2020. Now, while the much-awaited return to school is exciting for many, there would be children anxious or even frightened to go back to regular school.

This is a time of the year when adolescents would have spent days at schools and colleges in the company of hundreds of others, but in the last one and a half years they have got used to a dreary, new nor-



SURAVI SHARMA KUMAR

*(The writer is a regular columnist with The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)*

mal of being home alone. The virus brought in many stressors to the psychological environment, the impact of which is yet to be played out in statistical data charts and graphs to analyze the repercussions on society and the upcoming generation. The pandemic control measures have definitely contributed to new mental health issues or a worsening of existing ones in all, but the impact ripples are far and wide or even beyond immediate comprehension.

Some children or youth may be grieving the loss of a parent or a loved one, others may be living in fear of the disease or losing a job. There are millions in our country who have actually dropped out of school for want of a digital device or internet connectivity.



Adolescents across all socio-economic groups are struggling to adjust to a life without the familiar environment that a traditional school day provides. Amid social isolation and lack of peer support, the need for personal or real-world connections is growing. The absence of the demands of school life and regular examinations to keep the learning minds occupied are affecting the psychological environment of every

child. The children of essential workers and homeless children are at an increased risk: the former confined to their homes without adult supervision and the latter lacking in basic amenities and security.

Across socio-economic situations, there are children trapped in dysfunctional homes suffering all types of abuse, even sexual, or resorting to substance abuse to escape the wrath of stressed-out adults. Growing cyber dependency is alarmingly on the rise.

With increasing stress comes an increased risk of developing mental health problems or re-emergence of dormant diseases at a time when fewer options to relieve stress are available. Early experience of such problems increases their risk of mortality or lifelong

morbidity. When schools begin to reopen, we will need to implement more formal structures for mental health screening. We must take precautionary measures against stigma and superstitions affecting care giving, and there should now be social laws in place to minimize the stigma around mental health conditions.

We all know the law is the most efficient tool for blunting the effects of prejudice and stigma by protecting the diseased person from the negative impact of societal ignorance. The authorities must propagate strong messages to create an inclusive environment for those needing psychiatric help. India’s mental healthcare system needs strengthening. The authorities should proactively implement the Mental Healthcare Act,

2017. This is also the time for an integrated mental healthcare policy covering all aspects of helping a sick mind.

We also need to enhance mental health awareness and stigma-busting programs in local dialects or languages through government and private sector initiatives. We should expand social-emotional learning programs to help build resilience in the growing minds. Capacity building for mental health management is an immediate must to meet a looming calamity, and suicide prevention programs should be revamped in preparation for a possible epidemic. There is a serious shortage of mental healthcare workers in India and it needs to be addressed. Tele-psychiatry may possibly be an immediate solution for the

patients living in less efficient conditions.

Authorities must support schools and behavioral health care agencies in working together to ensure that when schools reopen, students will have necessary mental health services on the campuses to provide screenings, interventions, and referrals.

Our young people are the future of our country. We must remember that the period between ages 10 to 25 is a critical time for brain development and maturation. Both the experiences our young people face today and the support they receive from us in coping with and navigating the challenges will have a profound impact on their ability to be successful adults, parents, and citizens in the years to come.



# Unprecedented floods hit China

## 25 killed, over 1m affected; President Xi calls in PLA

PTI ■ BEIJING

At least 25 people, including 12 subway passengers, were killed when the heaviest rainfall in 1,000 years hit China's central Henan province, prompting President Xi Jinping on Wednesday to deploy the Army to rescue those trapped in inundated subways, hotels and public places.

A total of 1.24 million (12.4 lakh) people were affected and 1,60,000 evacuated, state-run Global Times reported. The official media quoted local officials as saying that 25 people were killed and seven others listed missing in the massive floods.

Twelve people were killed and five others injured when subway stations were hit by the floods, the report said.

They died when their subway train was hit with rapidly rising floodwaters on Tuesday night, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. Two people were also killed when a wall collapsed.

The massive floods, described by meteorologists as a once-in-a-lifetime event, has resulted in apocalyptic scenes in the provincial capital Zhengzhou, a metropolis of 12.6 million, with its public avenues and subway tunnels getting submerged with surging waters. Videos posted on the Chinese social media showed petrified passengers trapped in subway trains clinging on to handlebars desperately waiting for help as floodwaters raised up to their necks.

Official media released videos of rescue workers helping people stuck in subway tunnels to safety.

Videos showed people trying to wade through floods in the downtown of the city while scores of cars and other vehicles washed away. Some videos also showed people falling into the massive cave-ins of the roads. Rainwater poured into the subway tunnel of the city's Line Five, trapping an unknown number of passengers aboard a subway train.

Xi ordered the deployment of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and said that authorities at all levels must give top priority to ensuring people's safety and property as massive floods ravaged the province and Zhengzhou city.

The PLA Central Theatre Command urgently dispatched troops to a county in rain-hit Henan where a dam is under threat of collapse due to serious damage caused by the rains, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The PLA, on its social media account on Sina Weibo, China's Twitter-like social media platform, said that a 20-meter-long crevasse had appeared in the dam in Yichuan county of Henan province, and could collapse any time.

The downtown area of Zhengzhou received an average precipitation of 457.5 mm within 24 hours on Tuesday, the highest daily rainfall since the weather record began, Xinhua reported. Henan is home to many cultural sites and a major base for industry and agriculture. Reports said that Shaolin Temple, known for its Buddhist monks' mastery of martial arts, was also severely hit by floods.

Heavy waterlogging has led to the virtual paralysis of the city's road traffic.



A man rides a bicycle through a flooded intersection in Zhengzhou in central China's Henan Province on Tuesday

AP

## China blasts dam to divert massive floods

AP ■ BEIJING

China's military has blasted a dam to release floodwaters threatening one of its most heavily populated provinces, as the death toll in widespread flooding rose to at least 25.

The dam operation was carried out late Tuesday night in the city of Luoyang, just as severe flooding overwhelmed the Henan provincial capital of

Zhengzhou, trapping residents in the subway system and stranding them at schools, apartments and offices.

Another seven people were reported missing, provincial officials said at a news conference.

A video posted on Twitter by news site The Paper showed subway passengers standing in chest-high muddy brown water as torrents raged in the tunnel

outside. Transport and work have been disrupted throughout the province, with rain turning streets into rapidly flowing rivers, washing away cars and rising into people's homes.

At least 10 trains carrying about 10,000 passengers were halted, including three for more than 40 hours, according to Caixin, a business news magazine.

## Myanmar's military again seeks to replace its UN Ambassador

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Myanmar's military rulers are again seeking to replace the country's ambassador to the United Nations, who opposed their February 1 ouster of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and takeover of the government.

Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin says in a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that he has appointed Aung Thurein, who left the military this year after 26 years, as Myanmar's UN ambassador. A copy of the letter was obtained on Tuesday by The Associated Press.

Lwin said in an accompanying letter that Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar's currently recognised UN ambassador, "has been terminated on February 27, 2021, due to abuses of his assigned duty and mandate". In a dramatic speech to a General Assembly meeting on Myanmar on February 26 — weeks after the military takeover — Tun appealed for



Protesters burn Myanmar Armed Forces' flags during a flash mob protest at Mingalar Taung Nyunt township in Yangon, Myanmar

File photo AP

"the strongest possible action from the international community" to restore democracy to the country. He also urged all countries to strongly condemn the coup, refuse to recognise the military regime, and ask the military leaders to respect the November 2020 elections won by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

"We will continue to fight

for a government which is of the people, by the people, for the people," Tun said in a speech that drew loud applause from diplomats in the assembly chamber who called it "powerful", "brave" and "courageous".

The military's previous attempt to oust Tun failed and there has been no reported action on the foreign minister's letter, which is dated May 12.

## UK irks EU with call to change post-Brexit trade rules

AP ■ LONDON

The British Government said Wednesday that post-Brexit trade rules it negotiated with the European Union "cannot go on" and need a major rewrite, straining already tense U.K.-EU relations. The Government said Britain would be justified in unilaterally suspending the legally binding Brexit agreement but had decided not to do so just yet.

Since the U.K. Left the

EU's economic embrace at the end of 2020, relations have soured over trade arrangements for Northern Ireland, the only part of the U.K. That has a land border with the 27-nation bloc.

The divorce deal the two sides agreed to before Britain's departure means customs and border checks must be conducted on some goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. The regulations are intended to keep an

open border between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland, a key pillar of Northern Ireland's peace process.

But they have angered Northern Ireland's British unionists, who say amount to a border in the Irish Sea and weaken ties with the rest of the U.K. Britain accuses the EU of taking a "purist" approach to the rules that is causing unnecessary red tape for businesses, and has called for the bloc to show "pragmatism."

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Unit No. 921, 9th Floor, Tower-B, Advant IT Park Pvt. Ltd, Plot No. - 007 Sec. - 142, Noida whose original allottee Alitain Tariq Soleja, S/o Sh. Mohd. Tariq Suleja, R/o 40/177, Marwama Bazar, Prad Kanpur, UP has executed a GPA (General Power of Attorney) on 19/06/2021 in favor of Mohd. Imran Ayub, S/o Late Mohammad Ayub Shamshi, Resident of 501 Gokul Apartment, Civil Line, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh which is duly certified in the office of Embassy Records of India and after that the said GPA (General Power of Attorney) has been registered in the office of Assistant Commissioner of Stamp, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, on dated 29/06/2021 by paying a stamp duty of Rs.100/- The Original Allottee of the above said Unit No. 921, 9th Floor, Tower-B Advant IT Park Pvt. Ltd. has not registered or unregistered any Agreement to Sale in the name of anyone. The Original Allottee has allowed the GPA holder to execute/sign the transfer/transfer deed/ document and other documents and the original allottee himself has given the said unit to Mrs. Payal Agarwal. It is informed through this notice that the transfer application has been submitted in favor of Mrs. Payal Agarwal, W/o Sh. Sudhanshu Agarwal on the basis of Unit No. 921 Tower-B Advant IT-Park Pvt Ltd, Plot No-007, Sector-142 Noida, U.P. through GPA. If any person has any objection in this regard, then please file your objection with all the evidence in the Institutional Department of Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this information, otherwise the said unit will be sent to Mrs. Payal Agarwal After that the Noida Authority will transfer as per its rules.

Imran Ayub

## Amid hectic lobbying for Cabinet berths

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's newly-appointed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on Wednesday discussed with former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' the common minimum programme for the remaining one-and-a-half-year term of the government even as coalition partners started hectic lobbying for Cabinet berths in lieu of the support they had extended during Sunday's trust vote in Parliament.

CPN-Maoist Centre Chair

Prachanda met Prime Minister Deuba, who is set to induct more ministers from the Nepali Congress and the CPN-Maoist Centre when he expands the Cabinet in the coming days. The Himalayan Times reported. Dahal's personal aide Bishnu Sapkota said that the two veteran leaders agreed to formulate a common programme on behalf of the five-party alliance, the report said, adding that coalition partner Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal will also join the government.

Dahal and Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal Co-chair Upendra Yadav also met CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. Leaders of the Nepali faction of the UML, the CPN-MC and the JSP-N had voted in favour of Deuba.

The Kathmandu Post reported that Deuba wants representation of all parties that stood by 75-year-old Deuba, President of the Nepali Congress.

"Discussions are going on with all the parties who supported us," Purna Bahadur Khadka, a Congress general secretary, told the Post.

Since all political parties have their own challenges, Deuba's Nepali Congress is no exception. The rival faction of the party, led by Ram Chandra Poudel, has demanded at least

one deputy prime minister post with the other General Secretary Shashanka Koirala, former vice-president Prakash Man Singh and senior leader Sujata Koirala vying for the post, the report said.

"But Deuba has made it clear that it is not possible and the Poudel faction will get just two portfolios in the Cabinet.

"One of the major reasons behind the delay in Cabinet formation is dynamics inside the Nepali Congress," a Nepali Congress leader close to Deuba said on condition of anonymity. Deuba has also assured one Cabinet portfolio to another camp of the party led by former general secretary Krishna Prasad Sitaula, he said. Nepal's Constitution allows only 25 Cabinet ministers.

Meanwhile, Deuba and Dahal also agreed to scrap all political appointments made by the previous K P Sharma Oli government, the report said.

The government has already scrapped the Oli government's recent decision to appoint ambassadors to some countries, it said.

Deuba, who was appointed as the prime minister for a record fifth time on July 12 following the Supreme Court's intervention, secured 165 votes in the 275-member House on Sunday.

## Haiti installs new leader as country mourns slain Prez

AP ■ PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI)

Haiti's government installed a new Prime Minister, while officials mourned assassinated President Jovenel Moise and arrested at least three police officers implicated in his killing.

Designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry was sworn in on Tuesday to replace interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who assumed leadership of Haiti with the backing of police and the military after the July 7 attack at Moise's private home, which also badly injured his wife and stunned the nation of more than 11 million people.



"The task that awaits us is complex and difficult," Henry said as he called for unity and promised to meet with various sectors in the upcoming days to build consensus. "I'm from a school that believes in dialogue."

He also thanked "sister nations" that he didn't identify for their solidarity and expertise in the ongoing investigation as he demanded that all

## Biden's 3rd trip to reddish Ohio pushes his economic agenda

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden just can't quit Ohio — even if it rejected him in last year's election.

The Democrat travels to Cincinnati on Wednesday to push his economic policies. It's the third visit of his presidency to Ohio, the only state he lost that he has visited multiple times.

Ohio was once an electoral prize that could decide who occupied the White House, but its embrace of Republicans

has tightened over the past decade. The visit is a testament to Biden's belief that going straight to voters will help cross a barbed political divide.

"Half of life is showing up, and Joe Biden shows up," said John Anzalone, Biden's presidential campaign pollster. "He's going to be a president for people who voted for him and people who voted against him."

Ohio Republicans, for their part, see the presidential attention as a chance to make the case against Democrats.

## US condemns Kabul attack

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States has condemned the firing of rockets near the presidential palace in Kabul and called for an accelerated path to a political settlement in Afghanistan to pave the way for the lasting peace that its people desire.

Addressing reporters at his daily news conference on Tuesday, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said Afghans have been suffering from "senseless violence" for far too long.

### GLOBE TROTTER

#### EX-PAK DIPLOMAT'S DAUGHTER MURDERED

**Islamabad:** A former Pakistani diplomat's daughter has been murdered here, according to a media report on Wednesday, just days after a diplomatic row broke out between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the alleged abduction of the daughter of Afghanistan's Ambassador to Islamabad. Noor Mukadam, 27, daughter of Shaukat Mukadam, was found dead in the capital's upscale Sector F-7/4 area on Tuesday, Dawn newspaper reported. Mukadam has in the past served as Pakistan's ambassador to South Korea and Kazakhstan.

#### S AFRICAN FIRM TO MAKE PFIZER VACCINE

**Johannesburg:** A South African firm will begin producing the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine, the first time that the shot will be produced in Africa, Pfizer announced Wednesday. The Biovac Institute based in Cape Town will manufacture the vaccine for distribution across Africa, in a move that should help address the continent's desperate need for more vaccine doses amid a recent surge of cases.

#### RUSSIA LAUNCHES LAB MODULE TO ISS

**Moscow:** Russia has successfully launched a long-delayed lab module for the International Space Station that is intended to provide more room for scientific experiments and space for the crew.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of all concerned that railways have decided to revised the timings of the following special trains :-

04046 Anand Vihar (T) - Madhupur Jn. Humsafar Superfast Express Special w.e.f. 22.07.2021
04045 Madhupur Jn. - Anand Vihar (T) Humsafar Superfast Express Special w.e.f. 23.07.2021
04050 Anand Vihar (T) - Ballia Superfast Express Special with effect from 24.07.2021
04057 Jaynagar - Anand Vihar (T) Garibrath Express Special with effect from 26.07.2021
04038 New Delhi - Silchar Express Special with effect from 22.07.2021
04037 Silchar - New Delhi Express Special with effect from 26.07.2021
04032 New Delhi - Guwahati Superfast Express Special with effect from 25.07.2021
04031 Guwahati - New Delhi Superfast Express Special with effect from 28.07.2021
02191 Jabalpur Jn. - Haridwar Express Special with immediate effect
02192 Haridwar - Jabalpur Jn. Express Special with effect from 22.07.2021

Passengers are therefore, advised to please check the detailed Time-Table of above trains through RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or the NTES App.

Passengers are advised to follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour at Railway Premises and in the running trains.

1643/21

RailMadad Helpline No. 139

Visit RailMadad website: [www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in) & Download Railmadad app.

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## WHO: 3.4m global Covid cases last week, up 12%

AP ■ GENEVA

The World Health Organisation says there were more than 3.4 million new global cases of the coronavirus last week, a 12% increase from the previous week.

The UN health agency says the number of deaths is continuing to decline, with about 57,000 in the last week.

"At this rate, it is expected that the cumulative number of cases reported globally could exceed 200 million in the next three weeks," WHO says. It notes the highest increases in COVID-19 cases were in the Western Pacific and European regions. In the past week,

WHO says the highest coronavirus infections were in Indonesia, Britain, Brazil, India and the US.

It says the increased transmission of the virus is driven by new variants, the relaxation of Covid-19 protocols and the large number of people still susceptible to the coronavirus, despite rising vaccination rates in some countries.

WHO has urged countries to commit to vaccinating at least 40% of every country's population by the end of the year. Of the more than 3 billion vaccine doses administered globally, only about 1% have gone to people in poorer nations.

## Hong Kong police arrest former Apple Daily editor

AP ■ HONG KONG

Hong Kong national security police on Wednesday arrested a former editor at the now-defunct *Apple Daily* pro-democracy newspaper, weeks after it was forced to close after authorities froze its assets.

Lam Man-chung, who was the executive editor-in-chief of *Apple Daily*, was arrested on suspicion of conspiring to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security, according to the South China Morning Post newspaper, which cited an unnamed source. He is the eighth person from the newspaper who has been arrested in recent weeks.

## Japan, US, South Korea reaffirm cooperation on North Korea

AP ■ TOKYO

The United States, Japan and South Korea on Wednesday reaffirmed their commitment to work together on North Korea's denuclearization and other regional threats but made no progress in bringing closer together the two U.S. Allies.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, who held talks in Tokyo with her counterparts, Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Takeo Mori and South Korea's Choi Jong-kun, said their alliance remains a "lynchpin of peace, security and prosperity."

The officials reaffirmed the importance of respecting international law, including

maintaining freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, and opposed any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and in the Taiwan Strait.

"When countries take actions that run counter to the United States' interests or that threaten our partners and allies, we will not let those challenges go unanswered," Sherman said.

The United States and Japan have raised concern about China pressing its claims to contested areas in the South China Sea and the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands, which China also claims and calls Diaoyu.



# IBBI amends regulations for insolvency process

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to enhance transparency in insolvency process, IBBI has amended regulations for corporate insolvency proceedings wherein a resolution professional will be required to provide details about his or her opinion about avoidance transactions pertaining to a corporate debtor.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations.

An official release on Wednesday said the amendments to the regulations are aimed at enhancing "the discipline, transparency, and accountability in corporate insolvency proceedings".

A resolution professional is duty-bound to find out if a Corporate Debtor (CD) has been subject to avoidance transactions, namely, preferential transactions, undervalued transactions, extortionate credit transactions, fraudulent trading and wrongful trading, and file applications with the adjudicating authority seeking appropriate relief.

This not only claws back the value lost in such transactions increasing the possibility of reorganisation of the CD through a resolution plan, but also disincentivises such transactions preventing stress to the CD.

"For effective monitoring, the amendment requires the RP to file Form CIRP 8 on the electronic platform of the Board, intimating details of his opinion and determination in respect of avoidance transactions," the release said.

The IBBI has put out the format of form CIRP 8 and it needs to be filed in respect of every CIRP ongoing or commencing on or after July 14.

With the amended regulations, an insolvency professional conducting CIRP will also have to disclose all former names and registered office address(es) so changed in the two years preceding the commencement of insolvency along with the current name and registered office address of the CD, in all its communications and records.

CIRP refers to the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process.

The amendment takes into account the possibility where a CD may have changed its name

or registered office address prior to commencement of insolvency process. In such cases, the stakeholders may find it difficult to relate to the new name or registered office address and consequently fail to participate in the CIRP.

Under the insolvency regulations, an interim resolution professional or a resolution professional may appoint any professional, including registered valuers, to assist him in discharge of his duties in conduct of the CIRP.

"The amendment provides that the IRP/RP may appoint a professional, other than registered valuers, if he is of the opinion that the services of such professional are required and such services are not available with the CD.

"Such appointments shall be made on an arm's length basis following an objective and transparent process. The invoice for fee shall be raised in the name of the professional and be paid into his bank account," the release said.

The amendments have come into effect from July 14.

The IBBI is a key institution in implementing the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

## CBIC: SC order on timeline limitation restricted only to filing of appeals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBIC has clarified that the extension of time limit for tax-related matters granted by the Supreme Court is restricted only to filing of appeals by taxpayers and would not apply to any other compliance or assessment under the GST Act.

In a letter to all Principal Chief Commissioners and Director Generals, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said it had sought legal opinion on the applicability of the Supreme Court order dated April 27, 2021, regarding limitations of timeline under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) law.

"The extension granted by Hon'ble Supreme Court order applies only to quasi-judicial and judicial matters relating to petitions/ applications/ suits/ appeals/ all other proceedings. Hon'ble Supreme Court has stepped in to grant extensions only with reference to judicial and quasi-judicial proceedings in the nature of appeals/ suits/ petitions etc. And has not extended it to every action or proceeding under the CGST Act," the CBIC said.

Various orders and extensions passed by the Supreme Court would apply only to acts and actions which are in



the nature of judicial, including quasi-judicial exercise of power and discretion, the CBIC added.

In cases where proceedings need to be initiated or compliances need to be done by the taxpayers, such actions would continue to be governed only by the statutory mechanism and the time limit provided/ extensions granted under the statute itself.

"Various orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court would not apply to the said proceedings/ compliances on part of the taxpayers," the CBIC added.

Similarly, tax authorities can continue to hear and dispose off proceedings like application for refund, application for revocation of cancellation of registration, adjudication proceedings of demand notices, etc, where they are performing the functions as quasi-judicial authority.

Similarly, appeals which are filed and are pending, can continue to be heard and disposed off and the same will be governed by those extensions of time granted by the statutes or notifications, the CBIC

## Fuel price cut relief may come soon as global oil softens

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer's bearing the brunt of rising fuel prices for more than a couple of months may expect some relief over the next few days as Oil marketing companies (OMC) have begun evaluating the fall in global oil prices and its resultant impact on fuel prices in the country.

The benchmark Brent crude that had risen to \$77 a barrel late last month has shed more than 10 per cent in the last fortnight to reach a level of \$68.85 a barrel now. If the price line remains below \$70 a barrel for a few more days, petrol and diesel prices could see a cut in the coming days.

Already the impact of softening of prices in the oil market is being seen in the fuel price movement in the country. On Wednesday, the OMCs kept the retail price of petrol and diesel unchanged. This is the fourth consecutive day, the longest period in weeks, when fuel prices have remained steady.

With Wednesday's pause, petrol continues to be sold for Rs 101.84 per litre, while diesel is also being sold at the



unchanged price of Rs 89.87 a litre.

The pump price of fuel has been static since Sunday. It rose on Saturday with petrol being revised upwards by 30 paise per litre while diesel price remained unchanged.

In the city of Mumbai, where petrol price crossed the Rs 100-mark for the first time ever on May 29, the fuel price is at Rs 107.83 per litre. Diesel price in the city is also at Rs 97.45, the highest among metros.

Petrol price in all metros have now crossed Rs 100 per litre-mark. But they have remained static the past four days.

Under daily price revision, OMCs revise petrol and diesel prices every morning, benchmarking retail fuel prices to a 15-day rolling average of global refined products' prices and dollar exchange rate. Once this 15 day cycle returns, petrol and diesel prices may fall.

## Majority of online consumers do not want Govt to ban heavy discounts by e-tailers: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

About 72 per cent of online consumers do not want the Government to ban or intervene in sales offered on e-commerce platforms, according to a survey.

Online purchasing has become mainstream in India with 49 per cent of consumers taking to this channel in the last 12 months, according to the survey conducted by community social media platform LocalCircles.

The survey received over 82,000 responses from consumers in 394 districts of India. Of which, 62 per cent of the participants were men, while the rest were women.

A sizable number of consumers have been using this channel increasingly because they have found it to be safe and convenient and it offers competitive prices with the ease of return, it added.

"The survey also brings clarity to the issue of sales, where 72 per cent of consumers do not want the government to ban or restrict or intervene in sales on e-commerce platforms," the survey said.

The reason being is that these sales make purchasing more affordable and allow them to save more, which is of

great importance during these difficult times, it noted.

The survey comes amid consumer concerns that the government's proposed amendments to the Consumer Protection (eCommerce) rules 2020 may restrict sales on online sites.

On June 21, the government had released draft e-commerce rules under which it banned the fraudulent flash sale and mis-selling of goods and services on e-commerce platforms, and also made registration of these entities mandatory with the Department for Promotion of Industry.

Among other findings, the survey said about 47 per cent of consumers expect COVID-19 uncertainty to last 6-12 months and it may have an impact on their household budget planning and therefore seek maximum value from every penny they spend.

The survey also found that about 43 per cent of consumers sought the 'country of origin' details while shopping online in the last six months.

However, consumers are split on whether 'country of origin' information must be displayed in text or image format on e-commerce platforms, it added.

## AAI committees find Adani in violation of branding, logo pacts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Three committees of the Centre-run Airports Authority of India (AAI) in January found the Adani group to be in violation of branding norms, prescribed in the concession agreements, at the airports in Ahmedabad, Mangaluru and Lucknow that the conglomerate took over last year.

Consequently, the Adani group companies -- which are operating these three airports -- have started making changes in brandings and displays in order to bring them in accordance with the concession agreements that they had signed with the AAI.

As on June 29, the changes in brandings and displays were in process at Lucknow and Mangaluru airports and had been completed at the Ahmedabad airport, the AAI stated.

PTI has accessed various documents related to this matter, including details received in response to RTI queries.

The Adani group won the bids to run the aforementioned three airports in February 2019. Its companies -- Adani Lucknow International Airport Limited (ALIAL), Adani Mangaluru International Airport Limited (AMIAL) and Adani Ahmedabad International Airport Limited (AAIAL) -- signed the concession agreements with the AAI

in February 2020. These companies then took charge of airports in October and November 2020.

The AAI in December 2020 found the brandings and displays at the three airports not in accordance with the concession agreements. Therefore, it wrote letters to ALIAL, AMIAL and AAIAL, asking them to take "corrective measures". However, these companies in late December responded that they have not violated the branding norms of the agreements.

A month later, the AAI formed three separate committees to carry out "joint survey" of all hoardings and displays at the three airports and check if they are in compliance with the concession agreements.

Each committee had four members: one executive of the Adani group company that is operating the airport, one official of the Centre-run Engineering Projects (India) Limited and two officials of the AAI.

In late January, the committee formed on the Lucknow airport submitted its report. It said, "The joint inspection committee found that airport name hoardings displayed by concessionaire (ALIAL) at the airport entrance and exit roads

has also got Adani Airports written on both sides of Lucknow International Airport hoardings, which is in violation of concession agreement no. 5.15.2."

The committee also found that the name and logo of the AAI was not equally and prominently displayed in other displays where the concessionaire intends to display its own name, which was again violation of the Article 5.15.2 of the concession agreement.

Clause 5.15.2 of the three concession agreements stated that the airports will be known, promoted, displayed, advertised and branded by their name only such as "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport", "Lucknow International Airport" and "Mangaluru International Airport".

The clause also stated that if the concessionaire intends to display its own name or its shareholders at the spots where other public notices are displayed for the users, the same will be preceded by the AAI's name.

In late January, the committee formed on the Mangaluru airport found similar violations of clause 5.15.2 by the concessionaire (AMIAL), as were observed by the Lucknow airport's committee.

At the same time, the committee formed on the Ahmedabad airport submitted its report. It also stated that the clause has been violated by the concessionaire (AAIAL) as the AAI's logo is not displayed before the logo of AAIAL and additionally, the size is not uniform.

## Airtel, Intel announce collaboration to accelerate 5G in India

IANIS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel is collaborating with Intel for 5G network development by leveraging vRAN/O-RAN technologies.

The collaboration is part of Airtel's 5G roadmap for India as it transforms its networks to allow its customers to reap the full possibilities of the hyper-connected world where Industry 4.0 to cloud gaming and virtual/augmented reality become an everyday experience.

Airtel is the first telecom operator in India to demonstrate 5G over a LIVE network and is conducting 5G trials in major cities.

Airtel will deploy Intel's latest third generation Xeon Scalable processors, FPGAs and eASICs, and Ethernet 800 series across its network to build a solid foundation for rolling out wide-scale 5G, mobile edge computing and network slicing.

As members of the O-RAN Alliance, Airtel and Intel will work closely for developing a range of Make in India 5G solutions and enabling world-class telecom infrastructure in India through local partners.

Open radio access network (O-RAN) will be an area of innovation and creativity in the coming years. These O-RAN platforms will leverage

Intel FlexRAN, a reference architecture with both software and hardware components, and enable software-based radio base stations that can run-on general-purpose servers located at the network edge.

Randeep Sekhon, CTO - Bharti Airtel said, "Airtel is delighted to have Intel as a part of its rapidly expanding partner ecosystem for 5G. Intel's cutting-edge technologies and experience will contribute immensely to Airtel's mission of serving India with world-class 5G services. We also look forward to working with Intel and home-grown companies to unlock India's potential as a global 5G hub."

Dan Rodriguez, Intel corporate vice president, Network Platforms Group said, "Being able to digitally power the vibrant population of India's connected users requires scalable and agile networks that can evolve to address the growing demands of its users. Airtel is delivering their next-generation enhanced network with a breadth of Intel technology".

## Property mkt to touch \$1 trillion by 2030: Housing secy

**New Delhi:** The Indian real estate market is estimated to touch \$ 1 trillion by 2030 driven by rising demand and various reforms in the past seven years like new realty law RERA, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Wednesday.

The number of people employed in the sector is also expected to rise to 7 crore in coming years, from 5.5 crore in 2019, he said while addressing a CII event on the real estate sector. The secretary further said that the states have been asked to soon implement the Model Tenancy Act, which was passed by the Union Cabinet in June this year.

Mishra also clarified that the law once implemented by the States will be prospective in nature and all disputes related to rent agreements will be dealt under the old laws of respective states.

He pointed out that the real estate sector suffered a "setback" during the first and second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic but said the housing demand has revived. **PTI**

## India's textile sector needs more support to arrest shrinking market share

IANIS ■ MUMBAI

India's share in global exports of cotton yarn shrunk 600 basis points to 23 per cent in calendar year 2020 (CY2020) from 29 per cent in CY2015, while in readymade garments (RMG), its share has stagnated at 3-4 per cent over the past decade.

Lack of free trade agreements (FTAs) and significant improvement in peer competitiveness are the main reasons for this fall.

Textiles is important to India's \$313 billion merchandise exports as it accounts for 11 per cent of the pie. The sector is also a significant employment generator.

Given its economic importance, the sector has seen a slew of measures from the government of late, including the textile parks announced in Union Budget 2021-22 and inclusion of the sector for allocations under the Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

While these are steps in the right direction, a CRISIL Research's analysis indicates more is needed to address the issues and spur a revival.

In cotton yarn, India has lost market share over the past

decade to Vietnam and China because of high cost and lack of FTAs amid intensifying competition.

In RMG, India has done well to maintain its share even as global trade in the segment contracted. But competitors such as Vietnam and Bangladesh have done much better - they capitalised on China's falling share in the past five fiscals, while India could not.

Further, Indian textiles players were pushed to the brink in 2020 as the Government of India reduced export incentives in line with guidelines of the World Trade Organization.

CRISIL Research does not expect any significant improvement in incentives with the launch of the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme, which aims to reduce tax burden of exporting entities. However, to revive the textile value chain, the government has announced additional structural reforms whose impact needs to be evaluated.

The recently announced PLI scheme for man-made fibres (MMF) and technical textiles is expected to improve

the potential of MMF-based RMG exports where India's share has been weak.

**Corrigendum No. Sr.DEE/GH/01 of 2021-22 dtd. 12-07-2021**

Corrigendum has been issued against the **Tender No.:** EL/GH/869, Dated: 08-07-2021 circulated vide **TENDER NOTICE No. Sr.DEE/GH/05 of 2021-22, Dt. 08-07-2021** in IREPS portal on technical ground. Details of corrigendum is available in IREPS portal [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

**Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer, Guwahati**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is informed to all concern that Sh. Dhirendravir Rastogi S/o Sh. V.V. Rastogi R/o 9/3 Sarpriya Vihar New Delhi-16 is the Owner of Plot No. D-34, Sector-55, Noida G.B. Nagar. He has executed Registered Agreement to sell and WILL, in favour of Sh. Bindhy Basin Rai S/o S.B. N. Rai Rio Village & Post Deoria Dist. Ghazipur U.P. dated 03/08/2001 in Book No. I volume No. 86 on page no. 1049 to 1060, Document No. 2832, at Sub. Registrar (III), Noida and Registered G P A in favour of Smt. Geeta Rai W/o Sh. R.K. Rai Rio Village & Post. Deoria Dist. Ghazipur UP dated 3-8-2001 in Book No. V Volume No. 161 on page No. 737 to 746, Document no. 766 at Sub. Registrar (III), Noida. Sh. Bindhy Basin Rai has expired in January 2013.

Now the said above Plot is going to be transferred through the said above registered G P A in favour of Sh. Rajesh Kumar Rai S/o Late Sh. B.B. Rai Rio A-98, II Floor, Madhuban, Delhi-110092. If anyone has/have any objection, he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of Noida Authority, Sector-8, Noida within the 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. **Rajesh Kumar Rai**

**KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD**  
(A Government of India Undertaking)  
Belapur Bhavan, Plot No.6, Sector-11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai - 400 614.  
**WALK-IN-INTERVIEW NOTIFICATION No.CO/P-R/04C/2021**  
Konkan Railway Corporation Limited requires candidates for the following posts in various construction projects for its works in connection with construction of Road, Tunnel & New Railway Line etc. on fixed term contract basis.

POST	VACANCY	DATE OF WALK-IN-INTERVIEW	VENUE
PROJECT ENGINEER	01	27.07.2021	KR Vihar, Konkan Railway Executive Club, Sector-40, Seawoods-West, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra - 400706.
SENIOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANT	05	29.07.2021	Reporting Time: 09.00 Hrs. to 12.00 Hrs.
JUNIOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANT	01		

Candidates may see the details of notification, eligibility criteria etc. on the KRCL website [www.konkanrailway.com](http://www.konkanrailway.com) at the link **Recruitment -----> Current Notification** and may report directly for walk-in-interview at the above mentioned venue.  
**Chief Personnel Officer**

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**



General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Simran**, D/o Phool Chand, R/o B-436, JJ Colony, Khyala, Delhi, **Age:** 15 years, **Height:** 5'1", **Built:** Normal, **Face:** Round, **Complexion:** Fair, **Wearing:** Yellow Colour Top, Black Jeans Pant and chappal in her feet has been missing from her home since **08.05.2021**. In this regard a **FIR No. 420/21, u/s 363 IPC** dated **09.05.2021** has been registered at **PS. Khyala, Delhi**.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this girl please inform undersigned.

**E-mail : [cic@cbi.gov.nic.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.nic.in)**  
**Ph.: 011-24368638,24368641**  
**Fax : 011-24368639**  
**DP/483/WD/2021**

**SHO**  
**P.S. Khyala, Delhi**  
**Ph.: 011-28335686, 8750871132**

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified male dead body namely **Unknown**, S/o: **Unknown**, R/o: **Unknown** was found on **07.07.2021** at **Opposite Church, Main Market, Chandni Chowk, Delhi**. In this regard **DD No. 27A** dated **07.07.2021** has been lodged at **Police Station Kotwali, Delhi**. Dead Body preserved for 72 Hrs. in Subzi Mandi Mortuary. Identification of unidentified dead body is as under:

**Name: Unknown, Age: 60-62 Yrs., Height: 5'6", Complexion: Shallow, Face: Long, Built: Thin, Wearing: Black & White Linedar Shirt and Grey pant.**

If anyone has any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

**SHO**  
**Police Station, Kotwali, Delhi**  
**DP/1354/N/2021** **Ph: 011-23953442, 875087121, 8743934160**







# TRIFED TO LEVERAGE 45,000 VAN DHAN VIKAS KENDRAS FOR VACCINATION

The Minister of Tribal Affairs, Arjun Munda, virtually launched 'COVID Teeka Sang Surakshit Van Dhan aur Uddyam' campaign to accelerate the pace of COVID vaccination among tribals in India. The campaign will leverage 45,000 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVK) of the Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), a national level cooperative body under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

The campaign will highlight the three key Js:

- ♦ **Jeevan** (life): Every life is precious so vaccination is the key.
- ♦ **Jeevika** (livelihood): You can continue with your Van Dhan Vikas Kendra and livelihood activities without any fear of contracting the virus if you are vaccinated. It also saves you from hospitalisation and other costs.
- ♦ **Jaagrookta** (awareness): Simplification of the process of registration for vaccination, place, accessibility to different audience and age groups, especially women and elderly population. Van Dhan Vikas Kendras collaborate and work with other stakeholders with service as a motto and with dedication and commitment that they have a key role to make panchayats and villages Covid-free.

Munda launched the campaign through video conferencing link-up with field camps in



Mandla in Madhya Pradesh and Bastar in Chhattisgarh. The Minister of State for Steel, Fagga Singh Kulaste, the Ministers of State for Tribal Affairs, Bishweswar Tudu and Renuka Singh, were also present virtually during the launch. Other dignitaries present during the launch were Pravir Krishna, MD, TRIFED; WHO representative Dr Roderico Ofrin; UNICEF India Representative Dr Yasmin Ali Haque; and Anupam Trivedi, ED, TRIFED.

On the occasion, Munda also launched the newly-prepared Digital Directory under TRIFED's Digital Connect Programme. TRIFED started a Digital Connect programme under which a two-way communication process is proposed to be established with all tribal beneficiaries associated with Van

Dhan Vikas Yojana and retail operations of TRIFED. Besides these, several other stakeholders interested in TRIFED activities are also being included to expand awareness about the schemes of TRIFED, and motivate them to be a part of these initiatives.

Launching the campaign, Munda said, "We have been able to overcome two challenging waves, gained experience and are determined to stop the third wave. We have a role to play in rebuilding a new society, free of COVID virus. The campaign hopes to make our Van Dhan Vikas Kendras and villages to be the first in respective states to be declared Covid-free."

Giving details about the vaccination progress in tribal areas, he said that majority of

the tribal districts are performing well in terms of vaccination coverage. "However, there is still hesitancy among certain groups due to fake news, myths, and rumours. Our campaign focusses on reassurance, pride and self-efficacy," Munda added.

UNICEF India Representative, Dr Yasmin Haque said, "COVID-19 has exacerbated issues of access to sanitation, nutrition and health services in the tribal areas, making the people more vulnerable. This campaign is aligned with UNICEF's equity approach to survival, growth and development of children. We are proud to be associated with this campaign, which focusses on vaccine equity and engages with communities that risk being left behind."



## ESIC felicitation ceremony held

The felicitation ceremony to acknowledge the support of various organisations, NGOs, and private citizens to ESIC Hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic was held at Shram Shakti Bhawan, New Delhi. Bhopender Yadav, Union Minister for Labour & Employment, Environment, Forest & Climate Change; and Rameswar Teli, Minister of State for Labour & Employment and Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India, felicitated the representatives of organisation, who contributed oxygen plants, oxygen cylinders, disposable kits, et al, to ESIC Hospitals. More than 100 donors across India have made donations of equipment, kits, disposables and more.

In his address, Yadav appreciated and conveyed his gratitude to the organisations, NGOs, private citizens, who worked for the society during the pandemic. He said that through coordinated efforts of the government, the country overcame the crisis caused by the second wave of Coronavirus.

He mentioned that the government is working on a three-tier approach — Tracking, Testing and Treatment — to stop the menace of Covid-19. He informed, "India is now among leading manufacturers of PPE kits and masks. Around 40,000 ventilators and 1,00,000 oxygen cylinders had been made available to treat the Covid-19 patients. Around 39 crore vaccinations have been done till date and by the end of this year, around 257 crore vaccinations will be completed." He also lauded the work



done by ESIC Hospitals during the second wave of Covid-19.

Yadav said that the government is dedicated to the welfare of poor and deprived people. Multiple measures including free treatment under PMJAY and Rural Electrification programme have been started for the betterment of the underprivileged ones. In the same line, code on social security has been enacted. Through this code, the workers from the unorganised sector and gig economy will now be able to get the social security cover under ESI Scheme.

Teli also addressed the gathering. While extending his greetings to the contributors, he spoke about the service delivery mechanism of ESI Corporation across the country and the workforce of the entire country being benefited out of it.

He praised the latest initiative of the ESI Corporation, the ESIC Covid-19 relief scheme, where periodic payment at 90 per cent of average wages of deceased insured workers is paid to the eligible dependents of the insured worker, who died due to the virus. To date, the periodic payments were payable only against the death of insured workers due to employment injury, but now death caused by Covid-19 has also been included.

Apurva Chandra, Secretary, Labour & Employment, Government of India and Mukhmeet S Bhatia, director-general, ESIC, welcomed the gathering. Chandra lauded the humanitarian approach and efforts of young entrepreneurs in serving society during the pandemic.

## NTPC achieves over 100 BUs

NTPC Group has achieved over 100 Billion Units (BUs) of cumulative generation in the current financial year, reinforcing the group's commitment towards excellence in operation. The group generation had crossed 100 BUs on August 7, 2020, indicating improved performance and an increase in demand for power in the current year. This is the fastest 100 BUs generated by NTPC.

NTPC recorded a generation of 85.8 BU in the first quarter from April to June 2021, registering an increase of 26.3 per cent from 67.9 BU generated in the corresponding quarter last year. On a standalone basis,

NTPC generation increased by 19.1 per cent to 71.7 BU in the first quarter from April to June 2021, compared to the 60.2 BU generated in the corresponding quarter last year.

NTPC Korba (2,600 MW) in Chattisgarh is the top-performing thermal power plant in India with 97.61 per cent Plant Load Factor (PLF) between April to June 2021, as per the data published by Central Electricity Authority (CEA). Further, NTPC Singrauli Unit 4 (200 MW) in Uttar Pradesh commissioned way back in January 1984 achieved 102.08 per cent PLF, the highest in the country, from April to June 2021. This demonstrates the

expertise of NTPC in the operation and maintenance of the power plants and the high levels of operational excellence.

With a total installed capacity of 66,085 MW, NTPC has 71 power stations including 29 renewable projects. NTPC has set a target to install 60 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy (RE) capacity by 2032.

The group has over 20 GW of capacity under construction, including five GW of renewable energy projects. Uninterrupted supply of electricity through environment-friendly energy projects at affordable prices has been the hallmark of NTPC.



Kavach Natural was launched in the presence of luminaries such as Padma Vibhushan Dr Sonal Mansingh, MP, Rajya Sabha and singer-songwriter Daler Mehndi.

## PNB adjudged best public sector bank

In a major achievement, Punjab National Bank (PNB) has been adjudged the best Public Sector Bank (PSB) in the country for its outstanding performance in the field of agriculture credit, microfinance, financial inclusion and technology adoption. The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) honoured PNB for its remarkable contribution to rural customers with a 'Special Commemorative Award'.

Speaking on the occasion, S S Mallikarjuna Rao, MD and CEO of PNB, said, "Despite the impact of the pandemic, PNB has been at the forefront of developing India's agriculture and MSME sectors. Last year, the bank ran the Village Contact Programme, a campaign that covered more than 30,000 villages across the country, thereby, identifying significant opportunities in agriculture and MSME credit. Further, the bank improved access to social security schemes like Pradhan Mantri

Jeevan Jyoti Yojna, Suraksha Bima Yojna and Atal Pension Yojna. One of the campaign objectives was to enhance digitisation to the last mile for financial inclusion, such as issuance of debit cards and bringing rural communities under the PNB One Mobile App, which has yielded great results. However, more work will be done in the coming months. Thus, this recognition will go a long way in motivating our entire workforce in the rural lending segment, which is critical for the country's GDP growth."

Celebrating the 40th Foundation Day, NABARD announced the awards on the sidelines of a webinar on 'Resilience of Indian Agriculture Amid The Pandemic'. The programme was graced by the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Thumar, chief economic advisor, Dr Krishnamurthy V Subramanian and NABARD chairman, GR Chinchala.

## Kolkata metro organises mobile vax camps

Kolkata metro has taken an initiative to inoculate all its staff and their beneficiaries at the earliest in the wake of the pandemic. As a part of this initiative, a mobile vaccination camp was organised by the Medical Department at Belgachia Railway Auditorium.

In this campaign, 109 people have been vaccinated including 17 employees, 89 railway beneficiaries and three contractual staff.

Manoj Joshi, GM of Kolkata metro, has expressed his satisfaction for organising the camp.



## LIC LAUNCHES NEW HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN



Life Insurance Corporation of India has introduced a new health insurance plan — Arogya Rakshak — which is a non-linked, non-participating, regular premium, individual, health insurance plan.

This plan provides fixed benefit insurance cover against certain specified health risks and provides timely support in case of medical emergencies. It helps the insured and his family to remain financially independent in difficult times.

An individual can insure himself/herself (as Principal Insured), his/her spouse, all the

children and parents under one policy. The plan is available for people between the ages of 18 to 65. The cover period is available for PI/spouse/parents up to age 80 years and for children up to 25 years.

It gives the following benefits under one policy:

- Flexible benefit limit to choose from.
- Flexible premium payment options.
- Valuable financial protection in case of hospitalisation, surgery et al.
- Lump-sum benefit irrespective of actual medical costs.

□ Auto step-up benefit and no claim benefit.

□ If more than one member is covered under a policy, a premium waiver for other insured(s) in case of unfortunate death of the original principal insured i.e. the policyholder at the inception of the policy.

□ Premium waiver benefit for one year in the event of any insured undergoing surgery falling under Category I or Category II for certain major surgical benefits.

□ Ambulance benefit.



## STF, DDA reviews progress of complaints

The 69th meeting of the Special Task Force, DDA, was attended by officers from all the local bodies and other concerned agencies. The progress of the complaints received up to June 30 was reviewed.

In total, 86,386 complaints have been received in STF till June 30, and action on 82,068 complaints has been initiated. Since the constitution of STF in 2018, 3,647 unauthorised constructions have been demolished and more than 2,454 properties have been sealed.

The chairman of STF directed the ULBs to take the matter of pendency seriously and expedite the action on the pending cases.

The 'Encroachment Removal Action' was under-

taken by NDMC at areas including Connaught Place, Palika Bazar, Gole Market, Janpath, Shankar Market, LBN, Sarojini Nagar and Chanakyaapuri, VIP area.

The drive was undertaken by SDMC at Bandh Road, Sangam Vihar, PVR Saket, Pramod Mahajan Road, Press Enclave Road, and Malviya Nagar Market, Hospital Road, School Road, Gol Chakkar.

DDA removed 23 illegal/unauthorised borewells behind Smritivan at Sarai Kale Khan to stop water extraction from Yamuna flood plains. Two joint demolition programmes were undertaken by North DMC and Revenue department in Burari. The area of land reclaimed is 7,500 sq m.



## Rotary honours SRM Group Chairman

The Rotary International - RI District 3231, The Rotary Club of Maraimalai Nagar, awarded the LifeTime Achievement Award to Ravi Pachmoorthy, chairman of SRM Group, pro chancellor (Administration), SRM Institute of Science and

Technology. The award was presented by Rotarian Babu Peram, Rotary District Governor (2018-2019) 3232 in the presence of Rotarian P A Elango, president of Rotary club Maraimalai Nagar, 3231.

The club has been show-

ing its goodwill during this pandemic. It recognised and appreciated people in the field of education, hospitality and dedicated medical service. The programme was conducted in the SIMS Conference Hall in Vadapalani, Chennai.



# ‘India responded like champions’

## Haseeb celebrates Test return with 112

PTI ■ COLOMBO

With its back to the wall, Team India responded like champions, said coach Rahul Dravid in an inspiring dressing room speech after his young side registered a series-clinching win in the second ODI against Sri Lanka here.

Chasing 276 for victory on Tuesday, India were reduced to 193 for seven in 36th over but Deepak Chahar (69) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (19) shared an unbroken 84-run stand to take the visitors home with three wickets in hand and five balls to spare.

“Obviously we finished on the right side of the result, which is incredible and fantastic but even if we didn’t finish on the right side of the result, it is the fight all the way through was absolutely brilliant, so well done to all of you,” Dravid said in a video posted on *bcci.tv*.

“We said they were going to respond, we knew we had to respect the opposition. The opposition was going to respond, they’re also an international team. They responded, and we responded back like a champion team.

“With our back to the wall, we found a way to break them. So really well done to all of you. Fantastic job.”

Bhuvneshwar (3/54) and Yuzvendra Chahal (3/50) snared three wickets each, while Chahar claimed two to restrict Sri Lanka to 275 for nine.

India found the going tough with Suryakumar Yadav anchoring the chase with a 44-ball 53 but once he was gone, the visitors slipped to 193 for seven.

However, Chahar smashed his maiden ODI fifty and in the company of Bhuvneshwar took the team home.

“It is not the right time to talk about individuals at this point, obviously there were some fantastic individual performances, especially towards the end,” said Dravid.



“We had talked about that, we acknowledge and recognise every player’s contribution in this game. If you look at the whole game, there were some very good team performances. “So many good performances in our bowling, batting, even at the start, fantastic team performances from all of you.”

The video also featured Suryakumar, Bhuvneshwar, and Chahar talking about their experience about the match.

“I don’t have words, I think it is one of the best games which I have been part of, I have seen Live... It is an unbelievable victory,” Suryakumar said.

“*Bhuvu*, our vintage man and DC, we have been talking

about his batting, and today he has proved himself, it was a complete team effort. It was something special from Deepak Chahar.”

### FORGOTTEN HOW TO WIN

Legendary spinner Muthiah Muralitharan feels the current Sri Lankan cricket team has forgotten how to win matches over the years, insisting that the sport is currently going through a tough phase in the island nation.

“I told you before, Sri Lanka didn’t know the winning ways, they have forgotten the winning ways for the last so many years. It has been tough for them because they have not (known) how to win a match,” Muralitharan told

## Dravid sir’s belief in my batting pushed me to perform: Chahar

Colombo: India pacer Deepak Chahar, who was an unexpected hero with the bat in the second ODI against Sri Lanka, said coach Rahul Dravid’s belief in his batting inspired him to produce a match-winning knock for his team.

“No better way to win the match for the country. Rahul sir told me to play all the balls. I’ve played a few innings with India A (when Dravid was coach) and I think he has belief in me.

“He told me he thinks I’m good enough to be a No 7 (but he batted at 8). He has belief in me. Hopefully in the coming matches I don’t have to bat. When we came under 50 that’s when I believed we can win. Before that it was ball by ball. I took some risks after,” said Chahar at the post match presentation.

Prior to this game, his highest scored in international cricket was 12.

“Only one thing that was going on in my mind: this is the kind of innings I’ve been dreaming of. No better way to win the match for the country,”



he said talking about his mind-set in the middle.

### ‘JUSTIFIED PROMOTION’

India vice-captain Bhuvneshwar Kumar said it was coach Rahul Dravid’s decision to send Deepak Chahar up the order and he justified it with an “amazing” knock.

“...Our aim was to play till the last ball, last over, so we wanted to take it as deep as possible, so we can score runs. The only plan was to play till the last, and the way Deepak batted was amazing,”

Bhuvneshwar said at the post-match virtual press conference.

“He has played under coach Rahul Dravid before in India A or some series and he had scored there as well. So, Dravid knew that he can bat and he can hit a few balls, so that was his Dravid’s call.

“And the way he batted, Chahar proved it right. We all know that he can bat, he has batted in Ranji Trophy many times, so it wasn’t a tough call but it is good to see the way he scored the runs.”

“The only chat and plan was to play till the end. We never said to each other that from here on, we can win. Even when we needed 1 run (3 runs), we were taking one ball at a time. Deepak never let the run rate go above six,” Bhuvneshwar said.

“He almost played risk-free shots, where he got few boundaries and brought the required rate to under six. At no stage did we think that we are going to win or lose. We were playing according to the situation and taking it ball by ball.” PTI



PTI ■ DURHAM

Young opener Haseeb Hameed celebrated his Test recall with a gritty hundred even as Umesh Yadav bowled a few incisive spells and was largely responsible in India bowling Select County XI out for 220 on the second day of the warm-up First-Class game.

Coming back into the England squad after nearly five years, right-handed opener Hameed lived up to his reputation of being called ‘Baby Boys’ for his dogged defensive game like former great Geoffrey Boycott with knock of 112 off 246 balls. His innings had 13 boundaries.

For India, Umesh was the stand-out bowler as he bowled in short spells and worked up a fair bit of pace with figures of 3/22 in 15 overs.

Mohamed Siraj (2/32 in 13 overs) certainly bowled the best delivery of the day, hurrying compatriot Washington Sundar (1), representing county side.

Umesh still might not make it to the playing XI in Nottingham but his performance will certainly keep the team management interested.

Jasprit Bumrah (1/29 in 15 overs) didn’t give away loose deliveries but save the wicket of Rob Yates, where the left-hander went for a non-existent cut-shot to a delivery reared up, he hardly troubled Hameed, who defended him comfortably most times.

Hameed looked the best against Ravindra Jadeja (15-3-55-1), who was punished for a few runs. His innings ended with an edge to KL Rahul off Shardul who had 1/31 in 14 overs.

## Stokes, Buttler, Bairstow, Sam back for India Tests

London: Star all-rounder Ben Stokes on Wednesday returned to the 17-member England squad for the first two Tests against India, along with pacer Ollie Robinson, who was earlier suspended for his seven-year-old racist tweets.

Opener Haseeb Hameed, whose last Test was against India in 2016, was also named in the squad.

The first Test starts in Nottingham on August 4 while the second match will be played at the Lord’s from August 12-16.

Jofra Archer, recuperating



from elbow surgery, and Chris Woakes, suffering from bruised heel, are still not match-fit to be

included.

Pacers Mark Wood and Sam Curran are the other fast bowlers in the line-up, apart from the veteran duo of James Anderson and Stuart Broad.

The seasoned keeper-batsmen Jonny Bairstow and Jos Buttler are back in the Joe rooted team after being rested for the Test series against New Zealand. The team also has Rory Burns, Ollie Pope, Zak Crawley, Dom Sibley and Dan Lawrence in the batting unit.

However, one of the notable comebacks is certainly that of 24-year-old

Lancashire opener Hameed, who is currently playing against India in the warm-up game at Durham.

Hameed was termed as ‘Baby Boys’ during his teenage years for his defensive game resembling Geoffrey Boycott’s dogged defence.

**Squad:** Joe Root (captain), James Anderson, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, Dom Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Sam Curran, Haseeb Hameed, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Dom Sibley, Mark Wood. PTI

## Sindhu will be among favourites for Gold in Tokyo: Gopichand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand expects Indian athletes to claim an unparalleled double digit medal haul at the Olympics and has declared world champion P V Sindhu as one of the favourites to win a Gold.

“I do believe that this time around, we would have, hopefully, India’s biggest medal tally till now. We could surpass what the Indian team did in London which is six medals and hopefully get to double digit is what I am hoping for,” Gopichand said.

“Whether it is shooting, wrestling, boxing or Mirabai Chanu in weightlifting, I think they have a lot of chances,” he said.

Gopichand, who had guided Saina Nehwal and Sindhu to a Bronze and Silver respectively in the last two Olympics, believes Indian badminton

players have a good opportunity to better their performance.

“In badminton, we have chances, definitely to better what we did in Rio and London. So I am hoping that Sindhu can pull off, she is definitely going to be one of the favourites in the Olympics

with the venue as well,” he said.

“And also Chirag and Satwik, although, have a tough draw but I do see them as potential hopefuls for a medal. For Sai Praneth, it is going to be tough. But he has done well at the World Championships and I hope he can repeat that performance.



## Starc Carey Oz to win

AFP ■ BARBADOS

Australia’s pacers demolished the West Indies batting line-up to claim a comprehensive 133-run victory by the DLS method in the rain-affected first ODI of the three-match series at Kensington Oval on Tuesday.

After stand-in captain Alex Carey led from the front with a topscore of 67 to lift his side to 252/9 batting first, only his Caribbean counterpart Kieron Pollard (56) stood firm against the tourists’ pacers as the home side were routed for 123 off 26.2 overs in reply.

Set a revised target of 257 in a match reduced to 49 overs per side, West Indies were reduced to 27/6 with opening bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood sharing the wickets. It took Mitchell Marsh to end a 67-run stand between Pollard and Alzarri Joseph.

That breakthrough opened the door for Starc to finish the job with a haul of 5/48 which earned him the Player of the Match award. Hazlewood had the impressive returns of three for 11 in his opening burst and was not required to return for a second spell.

## Brisbane picked to host 2032 Olympics

AFP ■ TOKYO

Brisbane was awarded the 2032 Olympics on Wednesday, triggering celebratory fireworks as it became the third Australian city to host the Summer Games after Melbourne and Sydney.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach confirmed the widely expected result after a vote at the IOC session in Tokyo.

“The International Olympic Committee has the honour to announce that the Games of the 35th Olympiad are awarded to Brisbane, Australia,” Bach said.

The announcement was greeted by cheers from the Brisbane delegates in Tokyo, while fireworks lit up the skies above the Australian city thousands of miles away.

Brisbane’s victory looked a certainty after it was unanimously proposed as the single candidate for 2032 by the IOC’s 15-strong executive board in June.



“It’s a historic day not just for Brisbane and Queensland, but for the entire country,” said Prime Minister Scott Morrison. “Only global cities can secure the Olympic Games, so this is fitting recognition for Brisbane’s standing across our region and the world.”

Australia has already hosted the Olympics twice, in Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000, widely considered one of the most successful Games in recent history.

Venues will be spread across Brisbane and nearby towns in Queensland state, including the Gold Coast which hosted the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

## Indian athletes’ participation in opening ceremony to be bare minimum

PTI ■ TOKYO

The participation of Indian athletes in the Olympic Games opening ceremony will be kept to a “bare minimum” in view of the Covid-19 threat, while only six officials from the contingent will be allowed to take part in the event on Friday.

The athletes who have competitions lined up the next day will be discouraged from attending the event, the country’s deputy chief-de-mission Prem Kumar Verma said on Wednesday.

Indian Olympic Association secretary general Rajeev Mehta, who is in the city, said not many will be there keeping in mind the risk of infection.

“We will try to have a bare minimum group out there. *Kam se kam athletes ko utara jaega*. The chief de mission and the deputy chief de mission will decide on the numbers tomorrow but our view is that the bare minimum should attend to ensure their safety in this crucial period,” Mehta said.



India is being represented by more than 120 athletes in the Games with the overall contingent size being 228, including officials, coaches, other support staff an alternate athletes in view of the Covid-19.

“Six officials (from every country) are allowed at the ceremony but there is no cap on athletes. However, we have advised the athletes who have events the next day to skip the ceremony and focus on their game,” Verma said after a meeting of the chief-de-missions here but did not specify which officials from India will be there at the event.

“The ceremony is likely to last till midnight so it is better

that they rest for their events the following day,” he added.

The likes of 10m air pistol shooters Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma, Apurvi Chandela and Elavenil Valarivan, who have events on the first competition day, will skip the ceremony along with Manu Bhaker, Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Deepak Kumar and Divyansh Singh Panwar will be shooting on the second day.

Chef-de-mission B P Baishya said a call on the number of Indian athletes who will participate will be taken on Thursday.

Boxers, archers and the men’s and women’s hockey teams are also scheduled to

## World leaders from 15 nations to attend Games opening

PTI ■ TOKYO

Leaders from around 15 countries are expected to attend Friday’s opening ceremony of the Covid-hit Tokyo Olympics.

Reports in Japan have suggested that those attending the ceremony in person could be as low as 1,000 due to the pandemic.

Around 70 cabinet-level officials are also set to visit

Japan, adding that there is still uncertainty over the number of VIPs attending the opening ceremony.

World leaders who have already promised their attendance in the opening ceremony are French President Emmanuel Macron, Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene and US first lady Jill Biden among others.

While Mary Kom is not scheduled to compete the next day, Manpreet will be leading the side out for the first Pool A game against New Zealand

on Saturday.

“Those who are quarantining are also not allowed,” Verma said about the athletes and officials, who have recently landed in the Japanese city.

On Wednesday, media reports came in that Britain will have no more than 30 athletes taking part in the ceremony due to Covid-19 fears. Great Britain has 376 athletes in fray at the Games.



England players pose for photo with the T20I series trophy after win

AP

spare.

“This win means a huge amount,” Morgan told *Sky Sports*. “This was the worst possible pitch for the way we play, and we have won on a wicket which is slow and spins so I am very proud.”

Pitches in the United Arab Emirates, the venue for October’s T20 World Cup, are renowned for taking turn but Morgan said: “I genuinely don’t think the ball will spin like that in UAE having played a full season in the IPL there last year, but we are ready for any surfaces that do spin.”

Pakistan captain Babar Azam, whose side also lost the preceding ODI series against England, was left lamenting a lack of runs.

“We were 10 to 15 runs short today,” he said. “The partnership between myself and Rizwan, if it had developed a bit better, maybe we would have the extra 10 or 15 runs.

“We need to do better against spinners, we haven’t struggled as much but haven’t batted as well as we could. Some days we have good days and some days we have bad days.”

## shortpasses

### BOXERS TRAINING AT VILLAGE

TOKYO: With the Olympics boxing venue ‘quite far’, Indian pugilists have decided to train at the facilities available at the Games Village to avoid exertion and Covid-19 risk.

### AUS EQUESTRIAN BANNED

TOKYO: Australian showjumper Jamie Kermond was provisionally suspended from the Tokyo Olympics on Wednesday after testing positive for cocaine.

### 3 +VES OUT OF OLYMPICS

TOKYO: Chilean Taekwondo player Fernanda Aguirre, Dutch skateboarder Candy Jacobs & Czech TT player Pavel Srnec were ruled out of the Olympics after testing Covid +ve.

### DD SPORTS TO BROADCAST

NEW DELHI: DD Sports will broadcast the Tokyo Olympics Live daily while other channels of Doordarshan and the All India Radio (AIR) will air special programmes.

### JHINGAN WINS TOP PRIZE

NEW DELHI: Defender Sandesh Jhingana on Wednesday was named the AIFF men’s Footballer of the Year, while midfielder Suresh Singh Wangjam was picked as the Emerging Player for 2020-21 season.

### SWEDEN STUN US

DUBAI: Stina Blackstenius scored a brace and Sweden once again stunned the US at the Olympics with a 3-0 victory Wednesday in the women’s football tourney. Agencies