

OPINION 8
CHINA'S 'FRIENDSHIP'
MUST BOTHER PUTIN**WORLD 11**
GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS
CASELOAD TOPS 193.6M**SPORT 14**
MI-CSK TO KICKOFF
IPL 2021 UAE LEG

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12 VIVACITY

BSY waits for 'orders' as exit looms large

BJP mulls
Lingayat
strongman's
replacement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa visits flooded areas in Belgaum district on Sunday

PTI

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

Be that as it may, a change of guard seems inevitable with the BJP top leadership short-listing the names of frontrunners for the Chief Minister's

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

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

the RSS; BJP general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh (Brahmin); Union Minister Pralhad Joshi (Brahmin) and BJP general secretary CT Ravi (Vokkaliga).

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

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India tightens its border security belt

Police stations
on frontiers to
form 2nd line
of defence

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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

Typically, the Central paramilitary forces designated for the various border security roles are also known as border guarding forces like the BSF and the ITBP among others, and act as the first line of defence. The border guarding forces are also designated as the Lead Intelligence Agency on their respective operational frontier. While the ITBP secures the frontier with China, the BSF is deployed along the borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Sashastra Seema Bal secures the borders with Nepal and Bhutan. The Assam Rifles is deployed along the border with Myanmar.



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

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

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

programmes and gather ground level intelligence.

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

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

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

CAPSULE

PEGASUS ISSUE: RS MP MOVES SC SEEKING PROBE

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

MAHA MONSOON FURY: 113 DEAD, 100 MISSING

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

28% PLAN TO TRAVEL: 3RD WAVE SET TO RISE

Mumbai: With as many as 28 per cent Indians planning to travel in August-September, which is also the time for some of the major festivals in the country, the risk of the third wave of the pandemic is set to rise, according to a survey. In a statement, online platform Local Circles also said its survey on April 12 had outlined the immediate second wave risk.

RAMAPPA TEMPLE BAGS UNESCO HERITAGE TAG

New Delhi: The Ramappa temple at Palampet in Telangana's Warangal has been conferred the tag of UNESCO World Heritage site, the Culture Ministry said on Sunday. "It gives me immense pleasure to share that @UNESCO has conferred the World Heritage tag to Ramappa Temple, Warangal, Telangana."

Holiday turns nightmare as landslide kills nine

Three hurt as
boulders fall
on vehicle in
Himachal

PNS ■ SHIMLA

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

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

A terrifying video footage of the landslide showed large



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

PTI

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

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

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

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

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Troubleshooting begins in Raj Cong; bid to pacify Pilot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

After resolving the Punjab political crisis, the Congress high command is now taking steps to address the simmering tension in Rajasthan by suitably rehabilitating Sachin Pilot.

The Central leadership of the Congress on Sunday convened a meeting of party MLAs and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot to reach for an amicable solution to resolve the 18-month-long political turmoil in the State.

The Congress is taking steps to resolve the internal crisis in several States, including Punjab, Uttarakhand, Assam and Manipur.

In the meeting at Jaipur chaired by AICC General Secretary Organisation KC Venugopal and AICC in-charge Ajay Maken, all the party MLAs were instructed to be present in Jaipur as the Cabinet expansion is likely to take place on Wednesday. Pilot too was



Senior Congress leader Ajay Maken with Rajasthan Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra and KC Venugopal speak to media persons at Pradesh Congress Committee Headquarters in Jaipur on Sunday

PTI

present in the meeting.

Both the AICC leaders had met Gehlot on Saturday and discussed the expansion and the significant role to be given to Pilot and his side of MLAs. One meeting also took place between them on Saturday and a separate meeting with Pilot was also conducted.

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After Punjab PCC change of guard, Cabinet rejig likely

All eyes on Capt who is expected to reshuffle his Ministers' Council

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

After witnessing a change of Aguard in the Punjab Congress unit with the appointment of Navjot Singh Sidhu on the apex post, all eyes are now fixed on Chief Minister Amarinder Singh who is expected to reshuffle his Cabinet soon.

Amid the changing political equations not only in Punjab but also within the Congress State unit, Captain Amarinder is expected to replace a couple of his Ministers by inducting new faces in his Council of Ministers.

Available information suggests that the names of Vidhan Sabha Speaker Rana KP Singh and senior MLA Raj Kumar Verka are in the reckoning.



While Rana KP is an OBC leader, Verka hails from the Dalit community.

Sources within the Congress Party also informed *The Pioneer* that the Chief Minister may also drop some of his Ministers. For the same, the names of Revenue Minister Gurpreet Singh Kangar and Technical Education Minister Charanjit Singh Channi are doing the rounds.

It has also been learnt that Channi, if removed from the Cabinet, may be appointed as the Vidhan Sabha Speaker. Notably, Channi had all along

been strongly backing Sidhu's elevation to the Punjab Congress' top post.

Channi was also among the few party leaders, including Ministers, who have openly questioned the Chief Minister and the State Government over several issues, including sacrilege.

At the same time, it would be interesting to see if the Chief Minister would take the party high command into confidence before making changes in his Cabinet. On the other hand, the newly-appointed party president, who completely enjoys the high command's backing, may also make an attempt to intervene in the Cabinet reshuffling process.

Notably, the party high command appointed Sidhu as Punjab Congress president along with four working presidents — Kuljit Singh Nagra, Sangat Singh Gilzian, Sukhwinder Singh Danny, and Pawan Goel — on July 18 brushing aside all opposition by Amarinder.

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Zero medals but woman power on display

Mary, Manika,
Sindhu shine

PTI ■ TOKYO

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

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

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



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

AP

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

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

the woman power of the contingent.

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

Continued on Page 4

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

PTI ■ TOKYO

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

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

Australia looked dominant and were in complete control from the onset, scoring goals



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

AP

through Daniel Beale (10th minute), Joshua Beltz (26th), Andrew Flynn Ogilvie (23rd), Jeremy Hayward (21st), Blake

Govers (40th, 42nd) and Tim Brand (51st) to secure the easy win.

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

CM Yogi reviews healthcare facilities in Ayodhya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ensuring presence of adequate medical resources to fight the anticipated third wave of COVID-19 with complete preparedness, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday reviewed the medical and health facilities in Ayodhya. The chief minister visited the Raja Dashrath Medical College in Ayodhya and took stock of the facilities available there for treatment of COVID-19 patients. He also went for on-ground inspection of the recently installed oxygen plant and reviewed the other healthcare facilities available for COVID-19 patients.

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

"Medical colleges are important institutions for better, superior and special healthcare facilities. But in the last 70 years, the state had only 12 medical colleges. The present government either built or sanctioned 32 medical colleges," the chief minister said while addressing the media, adding that there were no medical colleges in 16 districts.

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

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

Emphasising that testing was the backbone for curbing the transmission of coronavirus as it helped in early detection



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath interacting with a patient during his visit to Raja Dashrath Medical College in Ayodhya on Sunday

of cases, their isolation and contact tracing, the chief minister asserted that the state government had been making its best efforts to expand the facilities to further enlarge the testing capacity which was already now nearly four lakh tests a day.

'AYODHYA TO SHINE GLOBALLY'

Stating that both the Central and state governments were committed to restoring Ayodhya to its ancient glory and importance, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said widespread development was being carried out in the city and directed the authorities to expedite the work.

While reviewing presentations on the work being done to transform the city into a tourism hub, the chief minister said those coming to Ayodhya should receive world-class facilities.

"Ramnagari offers an amalgamation of spirituality and tourism and the state government is working dedicatedly for its development. Ayodhya will shine globally as lakhs of devotees and pilgrims will visit the city in the coming time," he added.

The chief minister arrived in Ayodhya

in the afternoon and also visited the Ram Janmabhoomi site to inspect the progress in the construction of the temple and also performed 'aarti' at the Hanuman Garhi temple.

YOGI PAYS TRIBUTES TO MAJOR PANKAJ PANDEY

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday paid tributes to the bravery and valour of Army Major Pankaj Kumar Pandey, a native of Hardoi district, who attained martyrdom in the line of duty in Arunachal Pradesh.

The chief minister announced a financial assistance of Rs 50 lakh to the kin of the martyr. He has also announced to give a government job to a member of the martyr's family and name a road in the district after martyr Pankaj Kumar Pandey.

Expressing his condolences, the chief minister said that the state government was with the bereaved family in this hour of mourning. He said the state government would provide all possible help to the martyr's family.

Kalyan Singh's condition still critical

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The health condition of Uttar Pradesh's former chief minister Kalyan Singh who is admitted in Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences here is still critical.

On Sunday, SGPGIMS Director Prof RK Dhiman said that the condition of Kalyan Singh had remained critical for the past several days due to which he was still kept on the life-saving support system. Doctors of many departments were monitoring his health condition round the clock, he said.

Former Governor of Rajasthan, Kalyan Singh, was admitted to the CCM of the SGPGIMS on July 4 in a critical condition. His condition gradually improved but on July 17 he was put on non-invasive ventilation after breathing problems. He was put on a life-saving support system as the condition worsened.

Prof Dhiman said that all his parameters were being closely monitored and CCM Cardiology, Nephrology, Neurology and Endocrinology was keeping a close watch on all aspects related to his health.

Senior leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party have been constantly inquiring about the health of Kalyan Singh. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has also visited him three times and is continuously taking information about his health.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi too talked to Kalyan Singh's son and BJP MP Rajveer Singh while BJP president JP Nadda and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh have visited SGPGIMS to enquire about the health of the senior leader.

PM appreciates women's efforts to make best out of waste

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



From the four walls of her house to becoming a successful entrepreneur producing banana fibre, Sunita and her self-help group are receiving recognition not just in the district and state but also across the country and abroad.

It is a moment for them to 'Go Bananas' with joy as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appreciated their efforts to make the best out of waste.

"During COVID-19 times, there has been a unique initiative in Lakhimpur Kheri. Here work has started to impart training to women to make fibre from the discarded banana stems, an attempt to achieve best from waste. Banana fibre is made by cutting the stem of a banana with the help of a machine, which is like jute or flax. Handbags, mats, rugs and many other things are made from this fibre. Due to this initiative, on one hand, the use of crop waste started, while on the other hand, the sisters and daughters living in the village got another source of income, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his 'Mann Ki Baat'.

Like any other village woman, Sunita of Samaisa village in Lakhimpur too could not think beyond the four walls of her house until she became a member of the Ma Saraswati self-help group. During COVID-19 pandemic, the husbands were finding it hard to feed their kids. Now, the self-reliant women of Uttar Pradesh are scripting their own success story.

A novel initiative of the Uttar Pradesh government and Lakhimpur Kheri district administration is bringing financial freedom to rural women by training them to extract fibre from discarded banana stems. Using discarded banana stems, they are reprocessing crop residue and also providing livelihood to rural women. Banana fibre is largely used in textiles, slopes, hygiene products such as diapers, etc. The project was kicked off last December in Samaisa village of Isanagar block.

"It is a great feeling to earn Rs 400-600 a day. Now, I am able to support my entire family," smiled Sunita. Like her, other such women in the village earn on an average Rs 400 a day through this enterprise.

Lakhimpur Kheri's Chief Development Officer Arvind Singh says the effort to make banana fibre is a step towards 'One Block One Product', taking inspiration from the One District One Product scheme. "Banana cultivation is done on a large-scale in the Isanagar development block. When the bananas are harvested, the farmers usually throw away the banana stem. The discarded stem has become a source of employment to rural women who draw fibres from them. We contacted the farmers and they gladly agreed to give the banana stem. Discussions were held with the women of the self-help groups in several phases (September-October 2020). We selected 25-30

women for the self-help groups and then they were given training," he said.

Singh said the main challenge before them was to mobilise machinery and other facilities for production and therefore, the self-help group was given loan from CLF and after talking to various vendors the machines were ordered from Riddhi Enterprises Surat, Gujarat in November 2020.

With the arrival of the machine, the production started in December 2020, but now the challenge was to find a market. Since Banana fibre is being used mostly in the paper and textile industries. Therefore, in this sequence, contacts were made for sales in areas like Surat, Ahmedabad and Kanpur.

Their efforts yielded results as AltMat, a company in Gujarat that transforms agricultural waste into natural fibres and yarns to be used in clothing and packaging, gave a contract to procure 400 kg of banana yarn per month extracted by the SHG. The group will start delivering the product in August 2021.

Apart from this, some other companies also gave token money of Rs 21,000 against the purchase. Not only this, the organisation has been registered on India Mart to sell the product. Various companies of India Mart have demanded the yarn from the village organisation on a large-scale (about 10 tons). Banana fibre is being demanded commercially in large quantities. Therefore, the GST registration of the SHG is also being done.

Banana fiber is being sold at the rate of about Rs 150- 200 per kg and a profit of about 50 per cent is being received at this price. With the increase in demand, profits are also likely to increase.

Two Nishad parties battle for legacy of Phoolan Devi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Phoolan Devi, former bandit queen and former Samajwadi Party MP, 20 years after she died, has emerged as a symbol of caste based identity politics of her community - Nishad. The two Nishad community-based political parties, both allies of Bharatiya Janata Party, one in UP, the Nishad Party and the other in Bihar, Vikassheel Insaan party Phoolan Devi -- are vying with each other to claim the legacy of Phoolan Devi, who is all set to make a "comeback" in the next Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

Political parties in the state are keen to revive the legacy of Phoolan Devi and win over the Nishad community to which she belonged. Her family members, meanwhile, are fighting their own battles. Phoolan Devi had emerged as an icon of the Nishad community when she avenged her exploitation and humiliation with the Behmai massacre where she gunned down 20 Thakurs on February 14, 1981, in Kanpur Dehat district.

In 1994, the then Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav heading the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party coalition government facilitated her release from Kanpur jail. She later joined the Samajwadi Party and went on to become

Member of Parliament twice. She married Umed Singh but her happiness was short-lived and Phoolan was shot dead at her Delhi residence on July 25, 2001. She was only 38. Now with the assembly elections around the corner in Uttar Pradesh, various political outfits are trying to claim Phoolan's legacy. The fledgling Nishad Party led by Sanjay Nishad is trying to revive Phoolan's legacy and seek rightful share for the community. His son Praveen Nishad is the BJP MP from Khalilabad.

"We want a statue of Phoolan Devi in Gorakhpur. She is an icon and deserves to be respected as one. The Nishad community must be given reservation in the scheduled caste category and all cases against our community members must be withdrawn," he demanded. The Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) of Bihar has gone a step further and is now making a foray into Uttar Pradesh politics, armed with 18 statues of Phoolan Devi that it plans to install in all divisional headquarters of the state.

Chaudhary Lautan Ram Nishad, state president of the VIP, said, "We are being denied permission for installing the statues and the officials say that Phoolan Devi was a criminal. She was not convicted for any crime and was elected to the Lok Sabha twice."

Lautan Ram Nishad said the Nishad community needs to fortify their political presence in Uttar Pradesh.

"The Nishad community and its sub castes like Mallah, Kevat, Bind, Manjhi, Ghevar, Raikwar and Kavar constitute almost 1.78 crore of the state's population. There are 1.5 lakh members of the community in each of the 160 assembly constituencies but the community has remained in the wings because we did not have a strong leadership till now," he says.

Meanwhile, Mukesh Sahni, president of VIP and minister in Nitish Kumar government in Bihar, who arrived at Varanasi airport on Sunday from Delhi was not allowed to come out of the airport terminal. He was scheduled to unveil the statue of Phoolan Devi in Ramnagar area of Varanasi. He was later sent to Kolkata by the Varanasi police.

The VIP, in a blatant move to woo the Nishad community in UP, announced that it would install statues of late Phoolan Devi in 18 Nishad-dominated districts of the state. Marking her 20th death anniversary, VIP chief Mukesh Sahni announced that the party would hold a garlanding ceremony at all 18 districts where her statues would be installed. Sahni had launched his party's UP unit on July 2 in Lucknow.

Over 8,000 people join free Sanskrit virtual classes

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government's campaign to promote Sanskrit language by offering language learning facilities in the state is paying off. The enthusiasm to learn Sanskrit language, especially among the youth, has increased significantly. It can be gauged by the fact that more than 8,000 people have registered themselves in the virtual classes of Sanskrit in a month.

In order to provide online Sanskrit learning and Sanskrit speech training, the Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sansthan has started one-hour free classes daily. It seems to have caught the fancy of Sanskrit lovers and a large number of youths have come forward to learn the language. According to UP Sanskrit Sansthan Chairman Dr Vachaspati Mishra, there are so many people who want to learn the Sanskrit language, especially professionals, doctors, engineers and business class ones. He said that this facility had come as a boon for such people who do not get time to learn, read and speak Sanskrit. He said those who were interested in learning Sanskrit could register themselves in the virtual class through a missed call on mobile phone number 952234003. "It is heartening to note that 8,533 students got themselves registered for virtual classes in the month of July alone," he said.

As many as 47 classes of one-hour each are being conducted daily for the people who want to learn Sanskrit through virtual medium. "The Uttar Pradesh government is constantly trying to inculcate love for Dev Bhasha Sanskrit and is giving opportunities to those who want to learn the language for which the Sanskrit Sansthan is playing a big role," Dr Mishra added.

For registration, candidates just have to fill a Google form and provide information about their occupation, job and education.

The students who want to study Sanskrit would also be educated about the moral values along with the knowledge of Sanskrit.

43 new cases of coronavirus found

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Additional Chief Secretary Amit Mohan Prasad said that 43 more people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection across the state in the last 24 hours, while 66 COVID-19 patients recovered during the same period.

"Coronavirus is under control in the state. There are only 868 active cases and the recovery rate is 98.6 per cent," Prasad said during his daily press briefing here on Sunday. He said Uttar Pradesh was

the state with the highest number of tests and vaccinations in the country.

He said over six crore samples had been tested for coronavirus infection in UP with more than 2.50 lakh samples being tested in the last 24 hours.

"Uttar Pradesh is the first state in the country to administer more than 4.43 crore Covid vaccine doses. More than 76 per cent of the healthcare workers and 61 per cent front line workers have received both doses of the vaccine," Prasad said.



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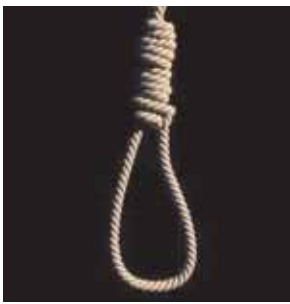
Tortured for dowry, woman hangs self

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Upset over torture by her husband and in-laws for dowry, a woman returned to her parents' house in Indiranagar and ended her life, leaving behind her 4-year-old son. The deceased was identified as Shruti Dixit, wife of Ankit Shukla of Om Nagar in Alambagh. The couple got married in 2016.

As per reports, Shruti was allegedly being tortured by her husband for a car. Her mother Anju Dixit said their financial condition could not allow them to gift a car to Ankit and the differences between the couple grew. Anju said Ankit started consuming alcohol and would thrash her off and on. "On July 10, he broke two of her teeth as he attacked her with a beer bottle," Anju alleged.

She further said that Shruti, along with her child, returned to her house in Indiranagar on July 20 afternoon. "She told me Ankit tried to kill her and she somehow escaped along with the child," Anju told the police.



"Shruti asked me to give her two minutes as she said she was feeling exhausted. She went to a room. We thought Shruti was in a state of trauma and allowed her to take her time. However, she did not come out of the room for hours and it made us apprehensive. We knocked on the doors but Shruti did not respond. We broke open the doors, only to find Shruti hanging from the ceiling with a dupatta tied around her neck. We rushed her to a hospital where she was declared dead," Anju said.

She said Ankit was informed about the incident but he was unmoved. "He simply collected Shruti's bag

and mobile phone and left for his house in Om Nagar," Anju alleged.

She said Ankit and her parents tortured Shruti to such an extent that she ended her life. "She was in a state of trauma when she reached our home. She could not discuss in detail about her sufferings. I am feeling hapless," she said.

Meanwhile, the mutilated body of a 35-year-old man was recovered from railway tracks at Jalalpur railway crossing under Para police station area on Sunday. The deceased was identified as Neeraj Kumar Gautam of Sadrauna in Para. Police said he was crossing the railway tracks in a drunken state when he was hit by some train.

Reports said Neeraj's brother Arvind went out to search for him after he did not reach home till late Saturday night. Arvind later found Neeraj's mutilated body on the railway tracks. Investigating officer, SI Anurag Dwivedi said Neeraj was in a drunken state and was hit by the train while crossing the tracks.

Deoria native duped of ₹8L

Lucknow (PNS): A Deoria native accused four people, including a businessman, of duping him of Rs 8 lakh in the name of facilitating work under Atal Jyoti Yojana in Vibhuti Khand police station area. The victim, identified as Saurabh Shukla of Deoria, runs his business in Dadra Nagar Haveli and met the fraudsters when he visited the city for work.

He said he first met Tarun Chaturvedi and Muzvul Islam Anasri through common friend Deenbandhu Dubey who hails from Dadra Nagar Haveli and knew Shukla for several years.

The accused introduced Saurabh to Pt Santosh Mani Tripathi of Deoria, who is a partner in Aksh Associates located in Cyber Heights, Vibhuti Khand. Saurabh was asked for an opportunity to get work under Atyal Jyoti Yojana by Santosh, who claimed that he had got the work order all across UP. Santosh asked Saurabh to deposit Rs 7.5 lakh for work in each of the districts and 12 per cent brokerage commission.

Saurabh chose work in Deoria and he deposited Rs 8 lakh with the brokerage commission in the bank account of Santosh's firm.

"I waited for the work for two months and then asked Santosh to refund the money. He threatened to kill me the day I filed the FIR against him. He told me that he was a law unto himself," Saurabh alleged. Police registered a case of fraud and criminal breach of trust and also for threatening.

Meanwhile, an unidentified driver of an SUV hit a woman and her daughter when they were returning home in Gomtinagar on Friday evening. The woman, identified as Razma Ferat of Dream Residency near New Amity Campus in Laulai, along with her 2-year-old daughter, was returning home when the speeding SUV hit her scooter from behind near SRS Mall and sped off the scene. The woman noted down the registration number of the SUV and later lodged a case in this connection.

Mankameshwar temple goes digital in view of third Covid wave threat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Mankameshwar temple has gone digital to ensure adherence to Covid protocols on the first Monday (July 26) of Shravan month. Mahant Devyagiri said the temple has come up with its own website through which slots could be booked by devotees for a quick *darshan*. She said people who cannot be present physically can have *darshan* through Facebook live. People aged above 60 and children below 10 years are not allowed inside the temple premises in view of the third wave threat.

"It is the first time that the temple is using these digital methods with a view to ensuring that Covid guidelines are followed. Normally when weekend lockdown is lifted, there is a huge rush on Mondays and office-goers want to visit the temple. Therefore, through the temple website or the associated links, we are providing slot bookings for *sugam darshan*. The devotees need to fill a form and book slots for *darshan* using Aadhaar numbers. This is a special process for a quick queue-free and hassle-free *darshan*, and it has been designed for devotees with time constraints and divyangs or people who cannot afford to wait in queues. In this process, a *shas-*



tri accompanies the devotee for *darshan* directly without queue and special *prasad* is provided to the devotee. Such devotees visit the temple through gate number 2. The booking date cannot be rescheduled and at the time of *aarti*, *sugam darshan* is not allowed. Devotees can book *sugam darshan* only in the available *darshan* slot and same day booking can be done over the helpdesk counter only while on-call booking facility is not available," she said. *Mangal aarti* is important because it is the first aarti in the morning, she pointed out.

"The scriptures talk of the '*brahma muhurta*' hour. It means an hour-and-a-half before the sun comes up. This time is very auspicious because the sun is pushing all of the energies of the earth from

a sleeping stage to an awakened stage. The *aarti* begins between 3 am and 4 am. Devotees are allowed to enter the temple between 2:30 am and 3 am. The entry point is gate number 2, and it is compulsory to show a ticket at the entry point of the temple," she said.

For the *sugam darshan*, the devotees have to pay Rs 300 per person and Rs 1,100 for the *mangal aarti*. She insisted that the only purpose of the fees was to deter the devotees from visiting the temple. "If we don't put a cost, the crowd will not be manageable and Covid guidelines will not be followed. In the *mangal aarti*, several times there are arguments by devotees to enter the temple premises which makes it difficult because the inside of the temple is very small," she added.

Focused testing key in Sarojininagar



SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

Sarojininagar and surrounding areas coming under the CHC witnessed over 100-150 cases daily during the second corona wave. The Sarojininagar CHC is now gearing up to deal with the third corona wave with a thrust of focused testing at the airport, Vrindavan Apartments and SGPGI.

CHC superintendent Dr Anshuman Srivastava said they are carrying out testing in taxi areas and in vegetable markets, medical stores, sweet shops and small ENT clinics. He said they have over 2.5 lakh population under them which is a blend of urban and rural areas. The doctor said the hotspot areas which they have identified include SGPGI and Vrindavan Yojana Apartments.

"In these hotspot areas, we are carrying out focused sampling, which includes testing of the vendors and delivery boys as also the shops," he said. He said they carried out an analysis of the hotspots where the maximum number of cases emerged in the second wave and found out that there were several patients coming for treatment at the SGPGI from and were causing a spread.

"As far as Vrindavan Yojana is concerned, it had a high number of cases during the second wave because there are many flats and the cause of the spread was having a common lift and common corridors at these apartments," he said.

Dr Srivastava said they are holding awareness programmes at these hotspots and telling residential societies to also carry out proper sanitisation of the common corridors and lifts on their own.

Talking about challenges, he said they found working in urban areas tougher. "In the apartments, people do not want others to know that they are infected and do not respond to calls. They do not cooperate in contact tracing and often give wrong addresses," he pointed out. He said they are also focusing on small ENT clinics because people have the habit of visiting these clinics and taking medicines while not revealing their symptoms.

"We are also testing the delivery boys because they are in contact both with the restaurants and residences, which may cause the spread of infection," he said. He added that vaccination is also taking place at a good pace. "We are seeing over 1,000 vaccinations per day and at the Ekana stadium too, vaccine doses are being administered under the CHC. We have completed more than 70,000 vaccinations in our area alone," he pointed out. He said their hospital is a Level-1 facility and arrangements are being made for oxygen concentrators. "We are also carrying out testing in all the villages so that we can stop the third wave. In addition, we are ensuring that Covid testing begins at each PHC," he said. He added that they have also made inquiries from all the private hospitals which have been declared as Covid facilities for the provision of details regarding how many oxygenated beds each of them has for the treatment of patients besides other beds.

Meanwhile, in a meeting held in view of the preparations of the third wave, District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash directed the officials concerned to be ready and not let the Covid cases increase. He said people coming from Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Maharashtra, Goa and Odisha should be tested and focus should also be on contact tracing. Hospitals should make twice the preparations in comparison to what they made for the second wave, he added.







कारगिल विजय दिवस



“ कारगिल विजय दिवस की वर्षगांठ हमें भारतीय सेना के महान सपूतों के शौर्य, त्याग और बलिदान का पुण्य स्मरण कराती है। अदम्य साहसी, अमर शहीदों के बलिदान को हम सभी भारतीय कोटिशः नमन करते हैं। ”

- योगी आदित्यनाथ
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

**के
अवसर
पर**

“ कारगिल का युद्ध, भारत की सेनाओं के शौर्य और संयम का प्रतीक है। इस बार यह गौरवशाली दिवस अमृत महोत्सव के बीच में मनाया जा रहा है इसलिए यह और खास हो जाता है। मैं चाहूंगा कि आप कारगिल की रोमांचित कर देने वाली गाथा जरूर पढ़ें, कारगिल के वीरों को हम सब नमन करें। ”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

शहीदों को श्रद्धांजलि एवं शहीदों के परिवारों का सम्मान समारोह

मुख्य अतिथि

योगी आदित्यनाथ

मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

गरिमामयी उपस्थिति

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सोशल मीडिया हैण्डल्स के माध्यम से देख सकते हैं।

सुरेश कुमार खन्ना

मंत्री, वित्त, संसदीय कार्य एवं चिकित्सा शिक्षा, उत्तर प्रदेश

डॉ. दिनेश शर्मा

उप मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

संयुक्ता भाटिया

महापौर, लखनऊ

आशुतोष टण्डन

मंत्री, नगर विकास, शहरी समग्र विकास, नगरीय रोजगार एवं गरीबी उन्मूलन, उत्तर प्रदेश

दिनांक

26 जुलाई, 2021

समय

पूर्वाह्न 10:00 बजे

स्थान : कारगिल शहीद स्मृति वाटिका, लखनऊ

 सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

Brahmins in demand as parties gear up for elections in UP

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW

With assembly elections just six months away, political activities have intensified with Brahmins being the fulcrum of all political discussions as there is a belief in Uttar Pradesh politics that the party which the Brahmins support forms government in this state.

In 2007, the Brahmin-Dalit combination catapulted Mayawati to power while in 2012, Brahmins were again in the centre stage in ensuring victory for Akhilesh Yadav when this upper caste combined with Backwards to support the Samajwadi Party. In 2017, Brahmins voted en bloc for Bharatiya Janata Party and this resulted in an astounding victory for the saffron party when it won over 325 seats in the 403-seat UP Vidhan Sabha.

The political parties have started sounding the poll bugle. Bahujan Samaj Party is the first party to get out of the starting block by holding a Brahmin sammelan in Ayodhya on Friday. Though the party has named the meeting as Prabuddh Varg (intellectual class) meeting to escape Election Commission norms, it was totally a Brahmin sammelan addressed by BSP general secretary and parliamentarian Satish Chandra Mishra.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has also called a meeting of the Brahmin leaders of the party next week while a senior SP leader, Manoj Pandey, declared on Sunday that president of Uttar Pradesh Brahmin Sabha had called the Yogi Adityanath government as anti-Brahmin. He even claimed

that Brahmins were better off during Akhilesh's regime.

"Politics is the art of giving messages. By holding these meetings the BSP and the SP are trying to send the message to Brahmins that they are eager to revive their old social engineering formula by stitching an alliance between the Dalits and the Brahmins in the case of BSP and Brahmin-Backwards in the case of Samajwadi Party," said Dr Nomita P Kumar from the Giri Institute of Development Studies here.

After the Ayodhya meeting, the BSP held similar meetings in Ambedkar Nagar on July 24 and 25, and will be holding such meetings in Allahabad on July 26, in Kaushambi on July 27, in Pratapgarh on July 28 and in Sultanpur on July 29.

These sammelans are a well thought strategy of the party because there is a feeling among the masses that this Yogi government is anti-Brahmin and pro-Thakur. Mayawati tried to make use of this sentiment when she claimed that Brahmins were being harassed in the present BJP regime and in the 2022 assembly polls the Brahmin would vote against the BJP.

The BJP has tried to set the house in order by roping in Jitin Prasada, a Brahmin, from Congress. The party also made Ajay Singh Teni, a minister in the Modi cabinet recently. There is speculation that a cabinet reshuffle will be carried out by the Yogi government with an eye on Brahmins.

In the 2017 assembly polls, 56 seats in the state were won by Brahmin candidates out of

Akhilesh also wooing Brahmins

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Apparently cornered in caste based identity politics from multiple quarters - Brahmin, Rajput, Nishad and Muslims, the Samajwadi party has decided to organise a convention of the Brahmin community ahead of next year's UP assembly elections.

The SP will hold its first Brahmin convention in Ballia on August 23. The battle of one-upmanship between the two Nishad community based parties in UP and Bihar -- Nishad Party and Vikassheel Insaan Party -- has put the Samajwadi party in a fix. Both the Nishad based parties are allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Sources in SP said though Mulayam Singh Yadav had given ticket to Phoolan Devi after her release from jail and she was elected twice to the Lok Sabha, it would be difficult for the party to woo the Nishad community as it may antagonise the Rajput community. Phoolan Devi, from Nishad community had hit the headlines after she led the massacre of the Thakur community members in Behmai

whom 46 were BJP candidates. In the Yogi government eight Brahmins have been inducted in the Cabinet but only Dr Dinesh Sharma, the Deputy Chief Minister, and Energy Minister Shrikant Sharma were given prominent portfolios.

The Brahmins account for 10 per cent of the votes in the

village of Kanpur Dehat in 1981.

By deciding to organise the Brahmin convention, the Samajwadi Party is forced to toe the line set by the Bahujan Samaj Party, which has already organised first such convention in Ayodhya on July 23. Samajwadi Party has however clarified that it would not be a caste based convention and people from different communities like Rajputs, Bhumihars as well as educated people of other castes would attend the convention.

The SP has made preparations for holding the convention of the Brahmin community on August 23. Sanatan Pandey, was the party's candidate from Ballia Lok Sabha elections in 2019. The convention in Ballia will be addressed by former UP Assembly Speaker Mata Prasad Pandey and national president of SP's intellectual cell Manoj Pandey.

BSP president and former chief minister of UP, Mayawati, on July 18 had announced to hold Brahmin convention across the state from July 23. She had said that she was fully assured that the people of the "Brahmin community will not

state but they play a decisive role in UP politics.

It is believed that they can influence elections on their own in about 100 constituencies but with a combination with other castes like Dalits and backwards, the upper caste can influence elections in 223 seats.

Purvanchal e-way near completion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With around 95 per cent of work completed, the construction of Uttar Pradesh government's ambitious Purvanchal Expressway project is near completion and it is proposed to be inaugurated soon, after which the main carriageway of the expressway will be opened for traffic.

UP Expressway Industrial Development Authority Chief Executive Officer Awanish Kumar Awasthi conducted an on-site inspection of Purvanchal Expressway and made package-wise inspections on Sunday. Awasthi first inspected and reviewed the construction works of Package 1 in Lucknow district. During the review, he mentioned about the ROB under construction in Package 1.

After this he inspected the construction works in Package 2. It was here that he talked about development keeping in mind the environment by planting trees and instructed the representatives of the construction firm to complete the construction work soon and open the main carriageway of the expressway for traffic.



Awasthi also directed officials to complete the construction of wayside amenities and toilet blocks at the earliest for the convenience of the passengers.

After this Awasthi inspected under construction ROB in the Package 3. After inspecting the airstrip in Package 4, he said that soon the main carriageway would be opened for traffic by inaugurating the Purvanchal Expressway.

Awasthi also inspected the construction work of Railway Over Bridge (ROB) under construction in Package 5. Here, he inspected the diamond interchange being built on the expressway near Bhelara village and issued instructions to complete it soon.

While inspecting and

reviewing the construction works of packages 5 and 6, he directed the representatives of the construction companies to ensure that the construction work was completed expeditiously keeping in mind the quality so that the construction work could be completed within the stipulated time frame. He also conducted on-site inspection of the construction works of packages 7 and 8 in Mau and Ghazipur districts.

After conducting the on-site inspection, Awasthi said that more than 95 per cent work of the Purvanchal Expressway had been completed and the eastern region of the state would get direct connectivity to the national capital Delhi.

Govt ruining future of hearing, speech disabled kids: RLD

Lucknow (PNS): Rashtriya Lok Dal on Sunday said that the Central government's negligence had ruined the future of deaf and dumb children in the country in the lack of facilities for continuing their studies in COVID-19 times. In a statement, national spokesman, Anupam Mishra said that these children were battling the COVID-19 pandemic for the last 16 months.

"They are completely deprived of their studies as educational institutions and hostels for them are closed. For normal children, online study and teaching is going on across the country. But these deaf children have neither such facility nor any such option has been provided

by the governments. In the time of such trouble, due to non-availability of financial assistance given by the Human Resources Ministry, the hostels of these children's in many states are also closed," he said.

Mishra said that there were about 2.68 crore deaf and dumb children in the whole country out of which 1.21 crore of 45 per cent such children were illiterate.

"If the Central government does not ensure the availability of financial assistance and resources to all the states in time along with the necessary guidelines for this, then not only the life of these children will be dark, but their illiteracy will also reach 75 per cent," he said.

HOLIDAY TURNS...

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur also expressed deep grief over the death of nine people due to the landslide at Batersi and termed the incident "unfortunate."

He has directed the local administration to ensure immediate relief and rescue operations and to provide relief to the affected. Those killed in the incident included three persons of a family namely Maya Devi Bivani (55), Anurag Bivani (31) and Richa Bivani (25) from Sikar in Rajasthan, driver Umrab Singh (42) from Delhi, Pratiksha Sunil Patil (27) from Maharashtra, Deepa Sharma (34) from Jaipur, Amogh Bapat (27) and Satish Katakbar (34), both from Chhattisgarh and Kumar Ulhas (37) whose details are being verified. Those injured have been identified as Shiril Obroy (39) from West Delhi, Naveen Bhardwaj (37) from Mohali in Punjab and Ranjeet Singh (45) from Batersi in Sangla valley.

The incident comes weeks after Himachal Pradesh witnessed flash floods in which at least ten people were killed and several were stranded. With monsoon wreaking havoc in the State, the tourists have been advised by local authorities not to venture towards destinations prone to accidents.

Notably, Himachal Pradesh Director General of Police Sanjay Kundu had on Saturday issued a warning on his Twitter account asking people not to venture too close to water bodies. "Himachal Pradesh is blessed with natural beauty which attracts people to rivers, rivulets, lakes and ponds. Be reminded that 156 people lost their lives due to drowning in the 13-month period between January 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021 (sic)," he had tweeted.

BSY WAITS FOR...

Among the probable candidates Santhosh is from an anti-BSY faction in the State.

In Bengaluru, Yediyurappa said he was waiting for direction from the BJP central leadership and "once it comes I will take an appropriate decision," he said in response to a question on when the directions from the party high command in Delhi were expected.

To a question on pontiffs holding a mega conclave in Bengaluru which is seen as expressing solidarity with him, he said, "There is no need for pontiffs to hold any meeting, I have confidence in PM Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda."

Questioned about a Dalit Chief Minister replacing him, Yediyurappa said, "I'm not the one to decide. It is for the high

command to decide. Let's first see what decision they will take today..." The Chief Minister added that if people were satisfied with his work, "that's enough for me."

He, however, indicated that Monday might be his last day in office. According to reports, Yediyurappa, given a choice, is likely to name State Home Minister Bommai (61), as his successor.

TROUBLESHOOTING...

Late in the evening, Maken and Venugopal left Jaipur reportedly taking along a proposed list of candidates who can be elevated to different posts, both in the organisation and the State Government for the consent and discussion with party president Sonia Gandhi. The meeting comes amid reports that the Sachin Pilot-led Congress faction is reportedly upset with the party high command over the continued delay in the expansion of the State Cabinet.

AICC sources said Venugopal, Maken and Gehlot discussed the reconciliation formula for a Cabinet expansion and reshuffle. Apart from this, the issue of appointments pending in boards, corporations in the State was also discussed. Rajasthan Congress president Govind Singh Dotasara was also present in the meeting held at the Chief Minister's residence.

Sources also mentioned that Ashok Gehlot told both the leaders that whatever decision is taken regarding political appointments, it is necessary to have the consent of senior party leaders, Congress representatives and local leaders.

Pilot was sacked as the Deputy Chief Minister and Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief in July 2020 after he rebelled against the leadership of Ashok Gehlot.

Talking to the MLAs on Sunday, Maken said he will be coming to Rajasthan for two days again on July 28 and 29.

Asked when the Cabinet expansion will take place in the State, Maken said, "We cannot bound ourselves to take this big decision on a particular date. The Congress leaders have expressed their faith in the central leadership; everything has been decided mutually," he said briefing the media.

"All the Congress workers have said in one voice that they shall abide by what the Congress high command says. We are discussing the Cabinet expansion and appointments at different levels," Maken added.

A couple of days earlier, Pilot had indicated that the Congress would take suitable steps soon to address issues raised by him. He had said that

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

he is in touch with the party high command over the issues raised by him and hoped that the required steps would be taken soon. Last month, MLAs from the Pilot camp said that the party should fulfill the promises made to Pilot last month, following which the demand for Cabinet expansion and political appointments gained momentum.

At present, there are 21 members in the council of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, and nine slots are vacant. Rajasthan can have a maximum of 30 Ministers. Rajasthan Cabinet rejig gained momentum after the Congress high command intervened in Punjab to pacify the infighting among factions led by Navjot Singh Sidhu and Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.

WITH 7-1 WIN...

India's lone goal came from the stick of Dilpreet Singh in the 34th minute.

India had earlier defeated New Zealand 3-2 in their opening fixture on Saturday.

The Manpreet Singh-led side will next play Spain on Tuesday

The eight-time former champions looked completely off colour from the first whistle and the team's backline was put under relentless pressure by the Australians.

In the first quarter, the Indians put up a semblance of fight but in the next 15 minutes it was all Kookaburras, pumping goals at will.

However, it was India who had the first chance at the goal, earning a penalty corner in the eighth minute, but Harmanpreet Singh failed to execute from the set piece.

Two minutes later, Australia surged ahead when Beale deflected in Jacob Whetton's strike after a poor penalty corner execution. A minute later, Dilpreet missed a golden chance from close range to level the scores. India custodian PR Sreejesh then made a double save to keep the Australians at bay. India were unlucky not to have equalised just seconds from the first quarter when Rupinder Pal Singh's low flick from their second penalty corner was brilliantly saved at the goalline by Andrew Flynn Ogilvie.

But the second quarter completely belonged to Australia as they scored three goals in a span of five minutes to take the game away from their opponents.

First Hayward found the net from Australia's third penalty corner and then Ogilvie slammed home from top right corner of the circle with a fierce hit past Sreejesh in front of the

Indian goal.

If that was not enough, Beltz added to India's misery with a fourth goal, four minutes before half time with a reverse hit.

The Indians showed some spark after the change of ends and attacked the Australian goal in numbers. In the process they secured three back-to-back penalty corners but wasted all of them.

Four minutes into the third quarter, Dilpreet infused some life into the game by pulling one back for India, beautifully deflecting in Rupinder's defence splitting pass from the mid-field.

India wasted another penalty corner in the 40th minute when Mandeep Singh failed to deflect in Amit Rohidas' lay-off.

But that was all India could manage as Australia slowly tightened their defence and withstood the pressure.

The Kookaburras managed to turn the tide and scored three more goals to hand India a humiliating loss.

Govers scored two goals in quick succession -- first from the spot and then from a penalty corner -- before Tim Brand rounded off the tally by finding the net from a tight angle nine minutes from the hooter.

ZERO MEDALS...

Batra, on the other hand, had to toil hard to upstage world number 32 Margaryta Pesotska and she did that with finesse to make the women's singles third round.

The world number 62 from India made a remarkable comeback after losing the first two games to prevail 4-11, 4-11, 11-7, 12-10, 8-11, 11-5, 11-7 in a match that lasted 57 minutes.

In the boxing ring, six-time world champion Mary Kom (51kg) powered into the pre-quarterfinals after a superb tactical victory over Dominican Republic's Miguelina Hernandez Garcia.

The 38-year-old Mary Kom, who is a 2012 Olympic bronze medalist, prevailed 4-1 against a rival who is 15 years her junior to start her pursuit of a second medal.

But it was a deflating day overall with tennis veteran Sania Mirza, partnering Ankita Raina, bowing out from the women's doubles contention after actually dominating for a good part of their match against Ukrainian twin sisters Nadiia and Liudmyla Kichenok.

But nothing beat the heart-break at the shooting range where 19-year-old Manu Bhaker, appearing in her maiden Games, finished 12th after losing nearly 20 minutes during the qualifications when the cocking lever

in her pistol broke down.

Yashaswini Singh Deswal, the other first-timer at the Games, ended 13th, with a total score of 574.

In the men's 10m air rifle event, both the experienced Deepak Kumar and the teenaged Divyansh Singh Panwar finished a lowly 26th and 32nd respectively.

Deepak aggregated 624.7 while Divyansh shot 622.8 over the six series, scores which were never going to be enough to make the final.

Taken together, the first two days' performance, or, the lack of it, is certainly going to raise a few eyebrows within the Indian shooting fraternity, including the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), which has done its bit in preparing its athletes.

And it was mayhem at the hockey field where Australians simply steam-rolled the men's team with a sensational star turn. It would take quite a lot from the side to recover from this 1-7 thrashing and make fresh ground in the clash against Spain on Tuesday.

There were no medal hopes in rowing, but Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh produced the best-ever Olympic performance by Indian rowers as they entered the men's lightweight double sculls semifinals.

The Indian duo clocked 6:51.36 to finish third in the repechage round at the Sea Forest Waterway which will ensure that they will sign off inside the top 12 at least, a major improvement for the country's rowing performance.

In sailing, Nethra Kumanan was placed 27th after two races while Vishnu Saravanan was at 14th after his first race.

Kumanan finished 33rd in the first race of the women's laser radial before recovering a bit by taking the 16th spot in the second for an overall 27th place with 49 net points.

Saravanan then finished 14th in the men's laser event before the second race was postponed due to bad weather conditions at the Enoshima Yacht Harbour.

India's lone gymnast, Pranati Nayak, also failed to qualify for the All Round finals of Artistic Gymnastics competition.

The 26-year-old from West Bengal recorded a total score of 42.565 over the four categories -- floor exercise, vault, uneven bars and balance beam -- at the Ariake Gymnastic centre.

There was expected disappointment in swimming too as both Srihari Nataraj and Maana Patel's Olympic campaign came to an end after they failed to qualify for the semifinals of the respective events.

Competing in their maiden Olympics, both swimmers were

LMC to rename roads, crossings and parks

Lucknow (PNS): The Lucknow Municipal Corporation House on Sunday passed proposals for 'namakaran' of roads and crossings and parks in the city.

Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia said that the Rakabganj crossing would be named after famous litterateur Yogesh Parveen and a gate would also be constructed in his name. She said that Napier Road Park at the Acharya Narendra Deva ward would be named after former Governor Lalji Tandon.

In addition the Talkatora road will be named after senior traders leader late Pandit Shyam Bihari Mishra, the Jail Road will be named after Pandit Ram Prasad Bismil, Nazarbarg Park will be named after freedom fighter Rampal Trivedi, Tedhi Pulia crossing will be named after social worker Vijay Aggarwal, Natha crossing will be named after Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rahim Nagar crossing will be renamed as Sardar Gurmukh Singh Anand crossing, the Nirala Nagar road at 8 number crossing will be named as Sardar Gurbaksh Singh Talwar road, the crossing in front of the Sachdeva store at the LDA Colony on Kanpur road will be named after Guru Tegh Bahadur, a gate at Alamnagar will be named after Samrat

Chandragupta Maurya, the mini stadium at Gominagar will be named after Lalji Tandon and a bathing ghat in the Daulatganj ward will be renamed as Om Gange Snan Ghat.

The other proposals passed by the LMC House included relief in all municipal taxes for the dependents of the Kargil martyrs, formation of a committee for inspecting the payments made to EESL and Eco Green companies. The committee will also make suggestions for improvements in arrangements and the starting of post-graduate courses at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Nagar Nigam Degree College. Among the other proposals, the House agreed that no mutation charges would be taken during the recovery of the first house tax from 88 villages which have come under the LMC jurisdiction, increasing the rent of the Kalyan Mandap and community centre at Vikasnagar and opening of three shops at Aminabad Inter College. The House also decided to seek objections on the new parking bylaws and the constitution of a committee for the resolution of these objections. The mayor also gave directions for setting up a Covid hospital if the need arose during the third wave of COVID-19.

AIMIM may ally with Samajwadi Party

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) said it had plans to forge an electoral alliance with the Samajwadi Party in the forthcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly polls.

AIMIM state president Shaukat Ali said, "We have never said that AIMIM will go for alliance with Samajwadi Party if Akhilesh Yadav makes a Muslim leader as deputy chief minister if the party comes into power in Uttar Pradesh."

"We said that SP had got 20 per cent of Muslim votes in the previous elections and came to power but they did not make any Muslim as deputy chief minister," he said.

Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday had said that if SP chief Akhilesh Yadav agreed to make any Muslim MLA as the deputy chief minister in Uttar Pradesh then he was ready to

form an alliance with the party. The Hyderabad MP had earlier announced that AIMIM would contest 100 seats in Uttar Pradesh polls scheduled early next year.

At present, there are 110 assembly constituencies where Muslim voters constitute around 30-39 per cent of the electorate. On 44 seats, this percentage rises to 40-49 per cent while on 11 seats, the Muslim voters are around 50-65 per cent.

Owaisi had earlier visited Lucknow and had been in talks with smaller political outfits. He is also part of Bhaagidari Sankalp Morcha.

In the 2017 UP Assembly elections, AIMIM fielded its candidates on 38 seats but could not win a single seat. It decided not to contest the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh, but Owaisi campaigned against the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Thousands offer prayer at Kashi Vishwanath temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst several Covid-19 restrictions, thousands of devotees offered prayers at one of the dwadasa jyotirlingas, Kashi Vishwanath temple on the first day of the auspicious month of Shravan on Sunday. The rush was also seen at many other famous Shiv temples. Though Kashi Vishwanath and some other temples remained open, there were several restrictions due to Covid pandemic including ban on Kanwar yatras.

At the Vishwanath temple in the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) premises, the honorary manager informed that from the first day of Shravan, it was decided to open the temple for Jhaki Darshan of the devotees following all the Covid-19 protocol. The temple remained closed from 7 am to 10 am and then 3 pm to 6 pm. However, he said that on every Monday of this auspicious month, the temple would remain open for Jhanki Darshan from 4 am to 9 pm. However, there would be restrictions on offering tika, wearing mala and offering



Devotees going to offer prayer at Kashi Vishwanath temple on first day of Shravan in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

flowers, water and prasad.

In Kashi Vishwanath temple, right from the morning hours after Mangla Aarti, there was continuous rush of devotees but it was not the same as generally seen on the auspicious occasions of Shravan Mondays. The devotees were asked to maintain social distance. No devotees were allowed to enter the

temple premises without wearing masks and sanitizing their hands.

Due to restrictions, it took more time for the devotees to reach the sanctum sanctorum (garbh grih) to offer jal-abhishek.

Elaborate security arrangements were made and no vehicles were allowed to move between Godowlia and

Maidagin throughout the day. The vehicles were also diverted from Benia Bagh, Ramapura, Madanpura, Luxa and other sides to reach Godowlia.

All the activities were also watched through various CCTV cameras. Police personnel were deployed both inside and outside of the Gyanvapi premises.

CP tells cops to treat devotees with courtesy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To instill a sense of security among the devotees in view of the first Monday of Shravan, Commissioner of Police (CP) A Satish Ganesh himself came on the road and conducted a route march from Maidagin to Godoulia along with cops on Sunday and directed the police personnel deployed in the security of the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir to treat the devotees coming to temple for a darshan of Baba Vishwanath during the suspicious month with respect and courtesy.

Along with the cops, the CP conducted the route march from Maidagin to Godoulia and imparted training to the police and security personnel deployed in the security of the temple not to



CP A Satish Ganesh inspecting Godowlia area on eve of first Monday in month of Shravan in Varanasi.

Pioneer

behave with the devotees rudely and help them in getting the darshan of Lord Shiva

smoothly.

The CP also chaired a meeting of the police officers

in the police line and directed them to ensure the security of the temple and also ensure the smooth darshan for the devotees during the auspicious month. He also directed the police officials to follow corona protocols.

He directed the police officers to ensure that no one enters temple premises with inflammatory articles, electronic materials, purse, belt, mobile phone and other restricted items. The use of South Indian languages should also be used while making any announcement by the temple administration for the convenience of the devotees. It is noteworthy that the devotees from South Indian states come to the temple in large numbers for darshan.

BJP govt conspiring to end reservation: Vishwakarma

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

State vice-president of Backward Cell of the Congress Ashok Kumar Vishwakarma on Sunday alleged that the government at the Centre is trying to end the reservation system under a well-planned conspiracy. The cell will launch an agitation to generate awareness among people on the issue of reservation and anti-people policies of the government, he warned.

Speaking as a chief guest at the convention held by cell in Sunderpur on 'Save democracy and reservation', Vishwakarma said more than

11 percents seat under reservation in medical colleges were allotted to the general class in the last three years whereas 27 percent reservation was not provided to the backward class in NEET despite it being their constitutional right.

The academic future of the youths belonging to the OBC category has become dark due to the anti-reservation policy of the government, he charged. The government is deliberately privatising the government institutions and applying a contractual system to deprive the beneficiaries from reservation facilities, he added. The people are frustrated

with the suppressive policy, unemployment, rising inflation and poor economic condition of the central and state governments, the speakers blamed adding, both governments are crushing down the democratic norms with its oppressive policy.

Each and every citizen has the right of freedom of speech and thus, the snooping and phone-tapping of leaders in opposition parties is an attack on democracy and violation of the right of privacy, they blamed.

The BJP governments at the Centre and in the state have virtually failed on the issues of

employment, law & order, inflation and development, the speakers alleged.

The cell will launch an agitation to make people aware of the government's anti-reservation and anti-people policies, the convention decided. The march will also be taken out to garner the support of the people on these issues, the convention decided. The chairperson of Ramnagar Palika Parishad Rekha Sharma, Srikanth Vishwakarma, Dr Pramod Kumar Vishwakarma, Nandlal Vishwakarma, Shyam Sundari, Soni Pal, Nirmala Devi, Babita and others attended the convention.

UPVMS criticises privatisation policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Strongly criticising the privatisation policy of the state government particularly in the power sector, the UP Vidyut Mazdoor Sangh (UPVMS), affiliated to Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), the labor organization of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Sunday decided to continue its movement against it and submit a memorandum to the Managing Director of the Purvanchal Vidyut Vitaran Nigam Limited (PVVNL) on Monday regarding this.

The privatisation of the power sector is not in the interest of the state and thus, any attempt to hand over this sector into the private hands will be strongly opposed, the state president of BMS Visheshwar Rai, state general secretary Anil Upadhyay, state president of Vidyut Mazdoor Sangh Rajendra Ghildiyal and

it's state general secretary Shashikant Srivastava said while speaking on the first day of two-days biennial state convention of the UP Vidyut Mazdoor Sangh being held at a Dharamshala in Rathayatra.

The Sangh will not tolerate the exploitation of labourers, they said and added that there are about 22 lakhs daily-waged and contractual basis labourers in the state and the Sangh will continue its fight for their rights.

They expressed their annoyance over the exploitation of the labourers, workers of Sangh. The conversation also discussed other issues related to labourers and the convention will continue on Monday also, the media incharge of the organization Ayodhya Prasad Shukla informed.

Many attended the first day of the convention including Rakesh Pandey,

Ramkrishna Gupta, Ram Janam Singh, Rajesh Kumar Singh, Santosh Verma, Vijay Tripathi, Manoj and Virendra Singh.

CLEANLINESS DRIVE LAUNCHED AT KEDAR GHAT: The activists of Namami Gange launched a cleanliness campaign at Kedar Ghat on the first day of the auspicious month of Shravan. They also performed aarti at Gauri Kedareshwar temple seeking the blessings of the Almighty to prevent the countymen from the corona pandemic. In the beginning they gathered at Kedar Ghat and cleaned and washed a number of Shivalings located on the banks of the river Ganga with the sacred river water. By running a cleanliness campaign, he tried to give a message to the people to maintain cleanliness at the ghats during the month of Shravan. While offering aarti at a nearby famous Gauri

Kedareshwar temple, they prayed for a self-reliant, happy and healthy nation.

Leading the activists, convenor Rajesh Shukla said: "Shravan is dear to Lord Shiva and Shiva is dear to all of us. Lord Shiva explains to us the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Cleanliness of Shivalings and ghats on the first day of this auspicious month inspires all of us for cleanliness." Important among those present were Ram Prakash Jaiswal, Rashmi Sahu, Vikas Tiwari, Ranjita Gupta, Bhavna Gupta, Sonu, Kanchan Mishra, Deepak Singh, Shubham Singh and Rekha Chaurasia.

TUBEWELL OPERATOR FOUND DEAD: Sensation prevailed in Uttari Kakarmutta village under Manduadih police station on Sunday when the villagers spotted the body of a tubewell operator. The police sent the body for the postmortem examination.

Devotees throng temples on first day of Shravan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The auspicious month of Shravan began on Sunday, but owing to Covid restrictions, Kanwar Yatra could not be taken out. Devotees thronged Lord Shiva temples after taking a holy dip in the Sangam but the temple authorities allowed only a limited number of devotees to enter the temple.

The Monday of Shravan month happens to be a big crowd puller, so the officials of the district administration and the police will be more vigilant to see the Corona guidelines followed to check the outbreak of the third wave of the pandemic.

Mankameshwar, Padila Mahadev and other Shiva temples attracted the devotees, and they waited for their turn patiently in long queues.

Thousands of Shiva bhakts performed Rudrabhishek on the first day of Shravan either



Devotees take holy dip in the Sangam during first day of holy month of Shravan in Prayagraj

Pioneer

at home or in temples.

Keeping in mind the corona restrictions and expected rush at temples on Monday, a good number of devotees have

decided to create sand Shiv Linga on the Sangam bank, and perform Abhishek there.

Seers have also requested

the Shiva bhakts not to overcrowd the temples. Those going to the temple must use masks and maintain distance, they said.

Temples to turn floral waste into compost

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The city-based temples generate tonnes of flower waste and the problem gets bigger during the pious month of Shravan and Navratri. However, the management of the city's famous Mankameshwar temple has devised a plan to address the flower waste problem by setting up an in-house composting unit for the disposal of waste.

Chief priest of Mankameshwar temple, Brahmachari Sridharanand said that they have devised a novel plan of tackling temple floral and puja waste and turning it into compost with the help of natural substances.

He added initially, a Kanpur-based Agro unit was handling the disposal of floral waste, leaves and garlands but the employees of the unit

stopped working during the corona pandemic and following which, the temple staff devised a plan to convert floral and puja waste into compost.

"With Shravan month beginning on Sunday and the strength of devotees offering flowers, garland and leaves of various species of plants to Lord Shiva during the pious month will be increasing manifold, producing several tonnes of flower waste, we would be taking the flower waste, leaves and garlands to our gaushala and making our effort to turn it into natural compost," said Sridharanand. "We would be offering natural compost to devotees including farmers free of cost to grow fruits and flowers," he added.

The process is simple. The volume of leaves, flowers and garlands from the temple waste is collected into bins. The

garbage goes either to the landfills or big drums which have the system of soaking water and adding natural substances, turning the waste into organic after a certain period and producing clean manure," informed the chief priest of Mankameshwar temple. "Many people arrive at temple premises to seek natural compost to grow plants," he added.

Moreover, the management committee of the bade Hanuman temple is also turning flower waste into natural fertilizer.

Swami Anand Giri of Lord Hanuman temple said, "we are using the simplest form of composting at our fields and getting the natural fertilizers to grow plants and vegetables".

Experts claimed that the flower waste, leaves and garlands were placed in bins at the fields and gaushalas. After a few months, the lowest layer

decomposes and turns into black powder. This compost can be used as manure, they explained. "This is a completely zero maintenance process and everything is in nature here," they added.

The fact is that most of the city's prominent temples, to tackle the floral waste issue, have now started turning floral and kitchen waste generated in their premises into compost. Temple authorities also claimed that they have ideas about composters that were being installed at many temples in southern states but we have opted for the natural process to decompose the flower waste.

Chief priest of Maa Kalyani Devi temple, Shyam Pathak says, "the volume of flower waste increases manifolds during the festive season and we then make suitable arrangements for its natural disposal."

BJP starts campaign to connect with masses at vax centres

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

With an eye on the 2022 state assembly polls, leaders and workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have started a campaign to connect with the masses through the vaccination drive. The BJP leadership has taken up a 3-day special campaign to promote vaccination among those eligible and deputed a 3-members team at each vaccination site to assist the beneficiaries.

Mritunjay Tiwari, member of BJP state working committee, informed mediapersons that a three-member team of

the BJP including a youth party worker, a woman party worker and an office-bearer of the party with medical background is connecting and assisting with the beneficiaries at the various vaccination sites – community health centres and other medical units where vaccination is underway. He further added that the party leaders are also holding chaupals among the masses to promote vaccination among the eligible recipients and for that purpose they are knocking on the doors of the recipients in different wards, blocks and villages.

Tiwari said that the party

aims to reach out to as many eligible recipients as possible and convince them to visit the vaccination sites and get vaccinated against the deadly virus.

The party leadership has also spelt out the role and responsibilities of district-level leaders and office bearers to make the campaign successful. Moreover, the BJP will take out a special booth screening/verification campaign from August 9 to 15 in all the 12 assembly segments of the district to add more people and names to the party fold. Besides, party workers would

also be distributing special cover bags having photos of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Yogi Adityanath to the beneficiaries of the 'food safety scheme' in the city from July 26 to August 10.

Party workers will also hold interactions with the beneficiaries to understand their problems or grievances, if any, and take corrective measures accordingly on the spot. Moreover, party leaders and workers would be attending the 'Guru Pujan' programme at RSS shakhas and offices on July 24 and 25, informed Tiwari.

Atique's aide builds bridge illegally to sell his plots

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Gulbahar, a close associate of mafia don Atique Ahmad, has made an illegal investment in building a bridge on a small river Sasur Khaderi just to sell his plots across the river at handsome rates.

Authorities were caught napping when the construction of this illegal private bridge was nearing completion in the area under the influence of Atique and his gangmen.

The Summer season was chosen by Gulbahar to build this pucca bridge over Sasur Khaderi, when it flows in the shape of a nullah. The labourers, engaged by Gulbahar, narrowed the width of the river at one point by dumping soil, caring least about the situation when this small river swells owing to back pressure from the Yamuna.

Now the authorities and the police officials are camping there to stop the bridge construction.

Higher authorities are smelling something fishy, and are suspecting connivance of

the police and other officials in this illegal construction of the bridge. An inquiry into the whole episode may expose connections of the local police and officials with property dealers of the Atique gang.

Owing to the poor approach of Sasur Khaderi river, Gulbahar was unable to sell plots at high rates, so he decided to build a small bridge over the river to ensure proper connectivity of the area with the city. He did the work stealthily and this illegal construction of a private bridge could not come to the knowledge of the higher authorities, thanks to local officials and the police of the area.

The Yogi government has launched a campaign against mafia dons and gangsters to adopt unauthorised ways to mint money, but the corrupt officials are still having a soft corner for the criminals for some obvious reasons.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) team is also digging out facts regarding money laundering charges on

Atique and his associates. The ED officials were surprised to know about the wealth accumulated by the Atique gang by adopting illegal practice.

The Prayagraj Development Authority and the police have so far demolished scores of such unauthorised constructions still there are some black sheep in the official machinery who turn a blind eye towards such illegal constructions by the gangsters, and the bridge over Sasur Khaderi river is the example of such ignorance.

SAINA VISITS PRAYAGRAJ: International badminton player Saina Nehwal visited Prayagraj late on Saturday evening. She came here with her husband and other family members. She rested in Prayagraj on Saturday night. On the first day of Shravan on Sunday, she offered prayers at Shakti Mata Baglamukhi Temple in Phaphamau. The worship was performed under the leadership of Acharya Vinod Ojha. Saina left for Delhi in the

afternoon.

Saina, who reached Prayagraj on the occasion of Guru Purnima, performed Ganga Pujan. She stayed on the banks of Sangam for an hour. During this, she took a boat ride like a normal traveller. She did not take a VIP boat there and did not inform the regional players about her arrival. Apart from worshipping Ganga, she also visited Akshayavat and Mankameshwar temple.

Thereafter, Saina reached Sangam beach with her family. She did not inform the administration or the players of Prayagraj about her arrival. There was a VIP boat of the Water Police and Prayagraj Development Authority at the ghat. However, she hired a normal boat. Along with other family members, she performed Ganga Pujan at Sangam. Magan Nishad, general secretary of the Boatmen Association, said that after worshipping the Ganga, Saina visited Akshay Vat. After visiting Akshay Vat, she also went to Mankameshwar temple

Medical College, its hosps to follow Covid protocol strictly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The principal of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Memorial Medical College, Prof Kala, said that as per the directives of the district administration, the medical college and its associated hospitals would follow the protocol strictly, especially in view of the apprehended third wave of COVID-19.

He said the district administration had cautioned the medical authorities to ensure foolproof arrange-

ments so that loss of life could be minimised. He said momentum was being further given to completion of oxygen plants and set up fully equipped hospitals and paediatrics wards.

He said it had been decided that admission to the hospital would be made only after the COVID-19 test and the treatment would be started as per the protocol. He said on the arrival of a patient at the Emergency Ward immediately the antigen test would be conducted and in case it

was positive then the patient would be admitted to the hospital.

He said as per the directives all patients who approached the hospital would be kept in the holding area till the RT-PCR test was conducted and only if it was positive they would be admitted to the Covid section. He said in case the report was negative, the patient would be referred to the non-Covid ward but in case it was positive then he or she would be referred to the Covid hospital

as per the availability of beds.

Prof Kala said special arrangements were being made to handle paediatric cases and for children paediatric wards with all life saving equipment were being set up on priority. He said a special oxygen supply line would be maintained so that there was no oxygen crisis. He said the district administration had decided to take cue from the second wave casualties and the oxygen crisis which would be arranged in a foolproof manner.

OTS scheme extended for Awas Vikas defaulters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In a bid to provide one more chance to defaulter allottees of UP Awas Vikas Parishad and development authorities, the state government has extended the date of its One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme for accepting their applications till July 31.

It may be recalled that earlier the OTS scheme was introduced from March 6 to December 31, 2020. But following the COVID-19 pandemic, the applications received offline till December 31, 2020, could not be included in the OTS scheme. These applications, along with the fresh ones, will now be included under the extended period

of the OTS scheme by declaring six months' time from January 1 to June 30 as a zero period for interest charges.

Hence, all the defaulter allottees of Kanpur Development Authority, in order to take maximum benefit of the scheme, are required to collect the prescribed OTS scheme form from the HDFC Bank's KDA branch and submit it along with the prescribed fee at the OTS counter on the ground floor of KDA within the extended period.

PM AWAS YOJANA: Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) has also extended the date for accepting online applications as part of the demand survey being conducted for allotment of 872

houses through lottery in Jawaharpuram Sector-1 scheme under the PM Awas Yojana (Urban) till July 31. These applications were earlier required to be submitted through HDFC Bank from June 25 to July 12.

Interested persons can now submit their online applications along with application fee of Rs 5,000 at any of the HDFC Bank branch in the city or through KDA website kdaindia.co.in.

At the time of submitting the application, the applicant is attach copies of Aadhaar cards of both husband and wife and in the event of an applicant being unmarried, the copies of Aadhaar cards of parents, latest passport size photograph,

caste and income certificate, details of bank account (account number, IFSC Code), mobile phone number etc are to be given.

On receipt of sufficient number of applications for inclusion in the demand survey, the process for their registration with Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) and allotment will be started. No offline application will be accepted.

Thus, under the PM Awas Yojana (Urban), the last date for accepting applications for allotment of 872 houses in Jawaharpuram Sector-1 is July 31. Thereafter, no application will be entertained, according to a press release issued by the KDA on Saturday.

Union leaders give memo to KESCo MD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A delegation of Vidyut Uppbhokta Kalyan Manch and Joint Forum for Central Trade Unions led by their conveners Dilip Bajpai and Rajesh Kumar Shukla respectively handed over a charter of demands to the managing director of KESCo, at his office on Saturday.

After minutely going through the demands, the KESCo MD assured the delegation to resolve the issues as soon as possible.

He said as the issue relating to fixed service charge was dealt by the state administration, it would be referred to them. He said as for the remaining demands, he would issue a directive for necessary action after proper study.

The delegation comprised P Bajpai, HN Tewari, Rajkumar Shukla, Sidh Nath Tewari, Umesh Shukla, Neeraj Tewari, Sudhir Sonkar, Mobin Ahmad and Mukesh Pandey.



Union leaders handover charter of demands to KESCo MD.

Pioneer

The demands include suspension of replacement of smart meters with prepaid meters; reintroduction of old meters and removal of fixed charge, service charge from electricity bills.

They said when the subscribers were already upset by

the frequent power trippings, increased electricity charges and COVID-19 pandemic, KESCo's move to convert the smart meter into prepaid meters was like adding fuel to fire.

They said the performance of prepaid meters was

also not up to the mark and one may also lose his/her life due to frequent cuts amid such scorching heat during nights.

KESCo also pressed for depositing extra charges on disconnection of a meter, they told the MD.

IT Dept extending all possible help, respect to taxpayers: CA

KANPUR (PNS): Noted chartered accountant Sudhindra Jain, while addressing a webinar organised by Income Tax Bar Association on the occasion of 161st IT Day, said that at one time the taxpayers were always put under the scanner but today the IT Department had extended all possible help and respect to them.

He said the complex rules of IT had been simplified and it had brought in perfect coordination between the IT Department and the taxpayer.

He said at one point of time the IT returns were scanned 100 per cent but today it had been brought down to only 2 per cent. He said the biggest benefit to the taxpayers was that they did not have to run to the IT office every day but the department had introduced a Facelless system. He said above all the refund was being released in the shortest possible time. He said although some minor problems had raised heads yet the department was more focused on the simplification process and total transparency in its working. He said for honest taxpayers this policy had been adopted by the department as it felt that hon-

est taxpayers deserved to be recognised for the contribution they were making to the progress of the country by honestly paying their due taxes.

He said the department also needed a word of praise as its endeavour was to continue with the simplification process of procedures and processes, and to ensure the department's functioning hassle-free, fair and transparent.

Jain said the department commended the taxpayers for discharging their compliance obligations despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic. He said this day also paid homage to the honest dedicated officials who lost their lives in the line of duty due to the pandemic. He added that tax compliance lay at the heart of a well-functioning society.

He said the CBDT had realised that by simplifying communication from tax administrators could certainly improve tax compliance, motivate taxpayers to pay on time, and force momentum to those who filed their return late. He said the measures like the facility to e-file income tax return (ITR), e-payment of taxes, ECS facility to deposit tax refunds

directly in taxpayers' bank accounts, and e-filing of TDS returns were such measures which were now bearing fruit for the government.

Other prominent persons present on the occasion were Rajiv Mehrotra, Akshay Gupta and several others.

D'SILVA CONGRATULATES MERITORIOUS STUDENTS: The principal of St Aloysius High School, Fr Walter D'Silva, congratulating the meritorious students of ISC and ICSE of the school on their success in the recently declared results, said the credit for the academic success rested on three important factors -- hard work, parents and teachers. He said the school emerged with flying colours and the students had brought laurels not only for their school but the city as well. He extended his good wishes to the parents for the achievement of their wards. Addressing a webinar on 'National Parents Day' on Sunday, Fr Walter D'Silva said this year the theme was 'Appreciate all parents throughout the world'. He appealed to the students to acknowledge their parents' worth and affection and to value their sacri-

fices. He said the results were declared in a pandemic year but this year also endorsed their struggles and sacrifices towards their children especially during the COVID-19 pandemic which had hugely raised their responsibilities.

He said the upbringing of the children entirely rested on the parent's love and care. He said be it mental or physical growth, emotional or social development, career or financial establishment, parents helped their children in every possible way. He said in India, the parents were like roots which helped make children strong enough to sustain any storm that may come in their life. Quoting a famous adage he said 'God cannot be present everywhere so he made parents'. He said parents were the divine souls and to say that they shared our sorrows to reduce the pain would certainly not be exaggeration. He advised parents that love and care were equally vital elements like food and shelter for their children. He said it was the parent's endless effort to earn for the living so that they could provide a proper education to their children was worth mentioning.

C3iHub launches first cohort of start-ups

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

C3iHub, the technology innovation hub on cyber security at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur launched the first cohort of start-ups who will develop services and products across the critical cyber security domains of UAV Security, Blockchain, Intrusion Detection, and Cyber Physical System on Saturday.

The first cohort includes a select group of 13 start-ups and 25 R&D principal investigators for incubation and research programmes respectively who were selected after a rigorous application process.

The presence of cutting-edge technology in cyber security is accompanied by an increasing need to protect digital assets and deploy solutions for the common public as well as government and industry.

The event was graced by Prof Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India; Prof Sandeep Verma, Secretary, Science & Engineering Research Board (SERB); Prof AR Harish, Dean, Research and Development, IIT Kanpur; Prof Manindra Agrawal, Project Director, C3iHub, IIT Kanpur; Prof Sandeep Shukla, Co-Project Director, C3iHub, IIT Kanpur; and Dr Nikhil Agarwal, CEO, C3iHub, IIT Kanpur.

The panelists charted a way forward for the selected cohort aiming to redefine cyber security with a holistic approach in India. The dynamic nature of threats and ever evolving advancements necessitates the need for dedicated centres such as C3iHub supported by an evolving ecosystem such as IIT Kanpur.

Prof Ashutosh Sharma, said, "The government is committed to bring India to a leadership position in cyber security. C3iHub IIT Kanpur's focus on safeguarding cyberspace including critical infrastructure is vital in this regard. I urge innovators and researchers to take up challenges by solving problems through technology."

IIT Kanpur Director Prof Abhay Karandikar said, "We are excited to launch the first set of start-ups cohort in cyber security. Over the next few years, C3iHub is committed to create a vibrant ecosystem of cyber security start-ups fostering world class innovations."

'CS well equipped to handle start-ups'

KANPUR (PNS): Company secretary SP Sharda, while addressing a webinar on 'Role of CS in start-up ecosystem' organised by the Company Secretaries Institute, Kanpur Chapter, said in India there were more than 41,000 registered start-ups. He said now the company secretaries would be able to extend their academic help to these start-ups in areas like quality certification, compliance audit and business planning and monitoring etc. He said ICSI was now well equipped to handle start-ups and also ready to adopt artificial intelligence (AI). He said the manner the business was now run engendered the need to gear up to handle the newer concepts. He said company secretaries would now guide start-ups, detect and minimise frauds and scams and to stay abreast with corporate governance. Covering a large canvas, he highlighted how disruptive technologies were changing lives, how demographic dividend could turn into demographic liabilities if we do not gear up, how professionals must shift from single-man firms to multi-disciplinary collaborative partnerships to rise in activism in all walks of life leading to greater transparency. Sharda emphasised upon the need for company secretaries to rise up to the challenges in the global economy by embracing technology tools and focus on value-added advisory services. He also called upon the company secretaries to devise ways and means to provide better assistance and guidance to small businesses and MSMEs who need professional support at competitive prices. He also advised the company secretaries to be cautious while auditing and certifying decisions and opinions which could eventually be subject to scrutiny under right to information (RTI).

22 complaints disposed of

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

As many as 22 complaints were disposed of in the district on the occasion of Thana Samadhan Divas held at all 15 police stations on Saturday. At Dehat Kotwali District Magistrate Praveen Kumar Laxkar and Superintendent of

Jigna police station four out of 10 cases were disposed of. At Vindhychal police station seven applications were put up for disposal and the teams were told to go to the spot for settling the matters. At Lalganj police station the naib tahsildar held the meeting where out of six only one case was disposed

authority letter of the company whose chemical was being sold there. It was found that the items were being sold without giving cash memo to farmers. The deputy director (Agriculture) directed the official concerned to suspend the licence of the shop and inform him. During the inspection of another shop located on Jangi road the deputy director (Agriculture) found that it had no any stock register, no paper regarding the sale as well as purchase while about the licence the shopkeeper said that papers had been deposited for renewal in the office concerned. Thereafter the official concerned was directed to issue a warning to the licensee. Besides, the deputy director (Agriculture) collected samples from two shops situated in Dankeenganj in order to ensure whether the items there were as per the quality or not.

MISHAP DEATH: One person died while two sustained serious injuries in a road accident which took place under Chilh police station on Saturday. According to a report received here, Ashutosh alias Doctor (32), a resident of Purjagir under Chilh police station, died on the spot when a hyva hit a motorcycle near Purjagir village on the Mirzapur-Aurai road. As a result Arun Singh (28) and Ajay Yadav (26) sustained serious injuries. On getting information the area police reached the spot, brought both the injured to the district hospital and took the body into custody for completing the necessary legal formalities.



Police (SP) Ajay Kumar Singh jointly held the meeting. Out of 10 applications three were disposed of on the spot while teams were sent for settling the remaining ones. On the other hand, at Katra Kotwali city magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh held the meeting. Out of five applications none of them could be disposed of the spot. On the other hand, at City Kotwali Circle Officer (CO) City held the meeting in which three complaints were registered. At Kachhawan police station the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Sadar and CO Sadar jointly held the meeting in which out of 16 complaints only one could be disposed of. At Halia police station SDM Amit Shukla chaired the meeting in which out of 26 total four matters were solved. Besides, at

of on the spot. At Chunar police station total nine applications were submitted in which one of them was disposed of. At Ahraura police station seven complaints were lodged, six at Madihan police station, eight at Adalhat and three at Jamalpur but none of them could be disposed of and the teams were sent for the disposal of the matters.

INSPECTED: As per the directions of the government DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar has constituted teams for checking seeds as well as pesticides shops in the district. Deputy Director (Agriculture) Ashok Kumar Upadhyay on Saturday inspected a shop situated on Jangi road where the shopkeeper failed to show documents like licence, stock and sales registers besides the

SP spells out priorities

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAU

New Superintendent of Police (SP) Ravi Kumar said on Saturday that law and order and proper implementation of government policies were his priorities. An IPS officer of 2015 batch, Ravi Kumar was earlier posted as SP (Rural), Agra, and Deputy Commissioner in Lucknow. Stressing on solving cases related to crime against women, he said checking cyber crime will be given priority. He added that focus will be on nabbing inter-state criminals. Besides

people of the district. Circle Officer (Sadar) Santosh Kumar was also present on the occasion. will also assist the district administration in solving revenue related issues. On the occasion he added that strict action will be taken against land mafia. Emphasising that social policing is necessary he said the aim of the police is to provide justice to the



184 new management trainees to join NCL team soon

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

As many as 184 new management trainees will soon join the team of Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India. As per the information received from Coal India headquarters, these management trainees will report in NCL in three different batches from July 19 to September 24.

Their first batch will stay from July 19 to 30, the second batch from August 16 to 27 and the third batch from September 13 to 24 comprising 59, 66, 59 management trainees respectively. As per the instructions of the NCL management in various projects for the new trainees furnished accommo-

modation has been arranged. It may be pointed out here that for achieving the increased targets the NCL is continuously enhancing its existing capabilities. Under it special attention is being paid to deployment of mining machines with the state-of-the-art technology, enhancement of coal extraction and despatch capabilities, skill training etc.

DIRECTOR VISITS SATELLITE CENTRE: Director (Technical/Operations), NCL, Dr Anindya Sinha, recently visited the Birkuniya-situated satellite centre of NCL-IIT (BHU) Incubation Centre (NIIC). For strengthening efforts for the uplift of tribals and farmers of Singrauli region under NCL CSR, Dr Sinha gave necessary

suggestions to the youth team of NIIC. He also took stock of the efforts being made by the NIIC team towards creating a self-reliant rural economy in the NCL region. Dr Sinha had a dialogue with the members of the Khadi and Handloom Centre at Semuar, operated by a women Self-Help Group (SHG) with the help of NCL and encouraged them to take this initiative to a new level. NCL under CSR in nearby Birkuniya village with the technical support of NCL-IIT BHU Incubation Centre has developed a satellite centre. Agriculture experts are giving free training to farmers of the village here in organic and state-of-the-art farming, packaging of agricultural products, marketing, food processing etc.

Vaccination continues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

For the prevention of coronavirus infection in Varanasi division under the direction of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vijay Kumar Panjari, vaccination is going on continuously. In this sequence under the leadership of Additional Chief Medical Superintendent (ACMS) Dr RR Singh in the North Eastern Railway (NER) Divisional Hospital, Lahartara and here the Covid vaccination of contract employees working at various railway stations of the division and those associated with railway service through other means is being done by the railway medical team and the one constituted by the state government in the form of a campaign. In collaboration with the district administration, a total of 465 doses of Covid vaccine were administered on Friday. In it division's 39 employees, families of 35 employees, including 11 contract labourers besides 380 non-railway people were administered the Covid vaccine. At the Divisional Hospital of North Eastern Railway (NER) the vaccination of the aged, physically disabled along with sick per-

sons is being done in their private vehicles in its lobby. Besides, the employees and their families were also informed about following the Coronavirus prevention guidelines i.e. wearing of mask properly, washing their hands frequently and thoroughly along with maintaining physical distancing. Apart from it in various rail sections, station premises along with stations and trains of Varanasi division deep cleaning, sanitisation and

cleanliness is being done daily. In the main stations of the division for awareness among railway passengers besides in the station premises for passengers and employees, messages related to the prevention of coronavirus infection and for vaccination against it are being displayed at various places through posters. Markings have been made in stations and railway premises to follow social distancing. Besides, the compliance of Covid-19 protocol is being ensured in the station premises along with trains and strict action is being taken against the violators, Public Relations Officer (PRO) Ashok Kumar said.



‘Bharat Jodo Andolan’ need of hour: Modi



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

“Our Victory Punch Campaign for the support of Olympics sportspersons has begun. Do share your Victory Punch with your team...Cheer for India”, said Prime Minister.

Affirming that feeling of patriotism unites, Modi

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

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

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

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

The Prime Minister said “just the way the Quit India Movement (Bharat Chhodo Andolan) steered under Babu’s leadership, every countryman today has to lead a Bharat Jodo Andolan (Unite

Khadi sale grew manifold across country since 2014

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Meanwhile, KVIC Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena has said that sale of Khadi products across the country has grown manifold since 2014, thanks to the repeated appeals by the Prime Minister to promote Khadi. Since October 2016, the single-day sale at Khadi India’s Flagship Outlet in Connaught Place, New Delhi, has crossed Rs 1 crore mark on 11 different occasions. This record performance of Khadi found a special mention in the latest episode of Prime Minister’s radio program “Mann ki Baat” aired on Sunday.

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

India Movement).”

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

He again emphasized on the need for self-reliance and going “vocal for local.” “We can contribute to nation building even while performing our routine chores...such as ‘Vocal for Local’ Supporting local entrepreneurs, artists, craftsmen, weavers should come naturally to us. The National Handloom Day on the 7th of August is an occa-

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

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

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

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

sion when we can strive to attempt that”, he said.

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

Modi pointed out that in the rural and tribal regions of the country, handloom is a major source of income. This is a sector that comprises lakhs of women, weavers and craftsmen and “even small efforts on your part will give rise to a new hope in weavers”, he said.

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

While the two sides are likely hold intensive review of

the situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban controlling major part of the country, India will also convey its concern about the instability in Afghanistan spilling over into the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, Lashkar-e-Taiba(LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed(JeM)terrorists now currently fighting alongside the Taliban may also target Kashmir, sources said.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PC seeks JPC probe into Pegasus snooping



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Rajya Sabha member also asked the government to come clean on the amount paid to acquire the spyware.

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

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

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

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

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

In a statement on Sunday, Brittas, who is a CPI-M member, said that despite the very serious nature, the central government has not cared to investigate into the allegations

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

According to the health ministry, over 45.37 crore vaccine doses have been provided to the states and UTs so far through all sources and a further 11,79,010 doses are in the pipeline. Of this, the total consumption, including wastage, is 42,08,32,021 doses (as per data available at 8 am Sunday), the ministry said. More than 3.29 Cr (3,29,38,559) balance and unutilized doses are still available with the States/UTs and private hospitals to be administered, the Ministry said.

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

India has added 39,742 new cases of coronavirus infection taking the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 3,13,71,901, while the death toll rose to 4,20,551 with 535 fresh fatalities in the last 24 hours. The country is seventh among the most affected countries by active cases. The active cases have declined to 4,08,212 and comprise 1.30 per cent of the

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

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

Overall, five states with the biggest 24-hour jump in total cases are Kerala (17518), Maharashtra (6753), Odisha (1917), Tamil Nadu (1830), and Andhra Pradesh (1747).

Govt urges community radio stations to bust vax myths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Sunday urged community radio stations to bust Covid vaccine myths particularly among people living in remote and far flung areas of the country. The Health Ministry’s request came during a workshop it conducted in collaboration with UNICEF for representatives of community radio stations from 16 states to bust myths related to COVID vaccinations and to educate people on Covid-appropriate behaviour (CAB).

In his opening remarks, Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary with the Union Health Ministry, appreciated the contribution of community radio stations in India’s vaccination drive against Covid-19. He also noted that sustained efforts of such radio stations by airing informative programs on Covid vaccination has trans-



lated into increased community participation in the ongoing vaccination drive.

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

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

cination progress is resulting in uptake of vaccination among many tribal districts of India, the Ministry statement read.

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

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

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

Heavy rainfall, thunderstorm likely in MP, warns IMD



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The ‘orange alert’ which asks authorities to be prepared for possible heavy rains and thunderstorms accompanied with lightning at isolated places, has been issued for 23 districts in Madhya Pradesh, namely Indore, Dhar, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Khargone, Barwani, Khandwa, Burhanpur, Ujjain, Dewas, Ratlam, Shajapur, Agar-Malwa, Mandsaur, Neemuch, Hoshangabad, Betul and Harda.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No laxity

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

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



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

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PICTALK



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

PTI

In a hurry?

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

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

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



China's 'friendship' must bother Putin

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



PRAFULLA GORADIA

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MIRABAI CHANU IS OUR NATION'S PRIDE

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

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

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

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

MONSOON FURY BATTERS MAHARASHTRA

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

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

Rid the Ganga of pollution



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

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

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

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

Venu GS | Kollam

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

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT MUST END

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

occupied areas in the country have increasingly become the hangouts for wandering wild animals ("The human-animal conflict on the rise", July 24).

The conflict with wildlife has reached unprecedented levels, with predators attacking livestock, thus leading to retaliatory animal killings. The deadly human-animal conflict has largely been the consequence of a fast growing human population's inability to find sustainable ways to coexist with the bustling wildlife. As a result, humans and wildlife compete for the same diminishing resources. It is, therefore, necessary to address the issue in a holistic manner and co-create palliative solutions with full engagement of all the relevant stakeholders.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

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



Olympic silver medallist — Saikhom Mirabai Chanu



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

BJP national president — JP Nadda



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

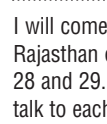


Mexican President — Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador



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

Stand-up comic and actor — Sunil Grover



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

Congress in-charge of Rajasthan — Ajay Maken

FIRST COLUMN

ADMINISTERING INDIA



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

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



The British administered India with the help of the Indian Army and an institution called 'The Indian Civil Service'. After Independence, the service metamorphosed into the Indian Administrative Service. The story of Indian unity post-independence is a saga that many have testified to. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was the chief architect of the merger of the princely states with India. Some territories also merged with Pakistan by a wafer-thin majority. The first few years of Indian independence were also spent on reorganising the Indian Union into linguistic states and the states into districts. The story still continues with new states emerging and the districts of the states being reorganised. Two administrative reforms commissions have been set up since independence and their recommendations used to carry out administrative restructuring. Appraisal systems of IAS officers have been thoroughly revised and the writer has been involved with some of these efforts. It is not sufficiently recognised that every IAS officer does not automatically graduate to the level of Secretary to the Government of India. There are institutional filters, evaluations, barriers, and in-built learning opportunities. After 1947, the nascent Indian Administrative Service, through special recruitment, spread across India. However, a few thousand civil servants, definitionally, could not fully administer all aspects of a nation's life. Their expansion no matter how planned was bound to leave gaps. One of the first felt needs was for an 'Indian Foreign Service' which would handle external affairs. An all-India competitive examination was conceived and the Union Public Service Commission was entrusted with the task of holding it and selecting recruits depending on their need. Administering India is not just a simple function of civil administration. The railways have to run, health and education need policy attention, information needs handling, etc. So, separate services like the Indian Railway Service and the Indian Information Service were created while IRS and IPS became essential collaterals of the Indian administration. Over time, administrative groups were created, with IAS, IPS, and Indian Forest Service officials coming under Group A. However, because of their coordinating role, IAS officers remain prima donnas. Their perks and salary structures are also superior. Gradually, the states developed their own civil service to look after their administrative needs. Provision is there for movement from state service cadre to central service cadre after due evaluation. Domain specialists began to occupy specialised administrative positions, especially in the departments of science and technology, biotechnology, taxation, and customs. The message is simple: the Indian Administrative Service, in its fullness, is amongst the powerful sections that administer India. *(The writer is founder Director, IIM-K and a management thinker and practitioner. The views expressed are personal.)*

Pegasus affair is an assault on privacy

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



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

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

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

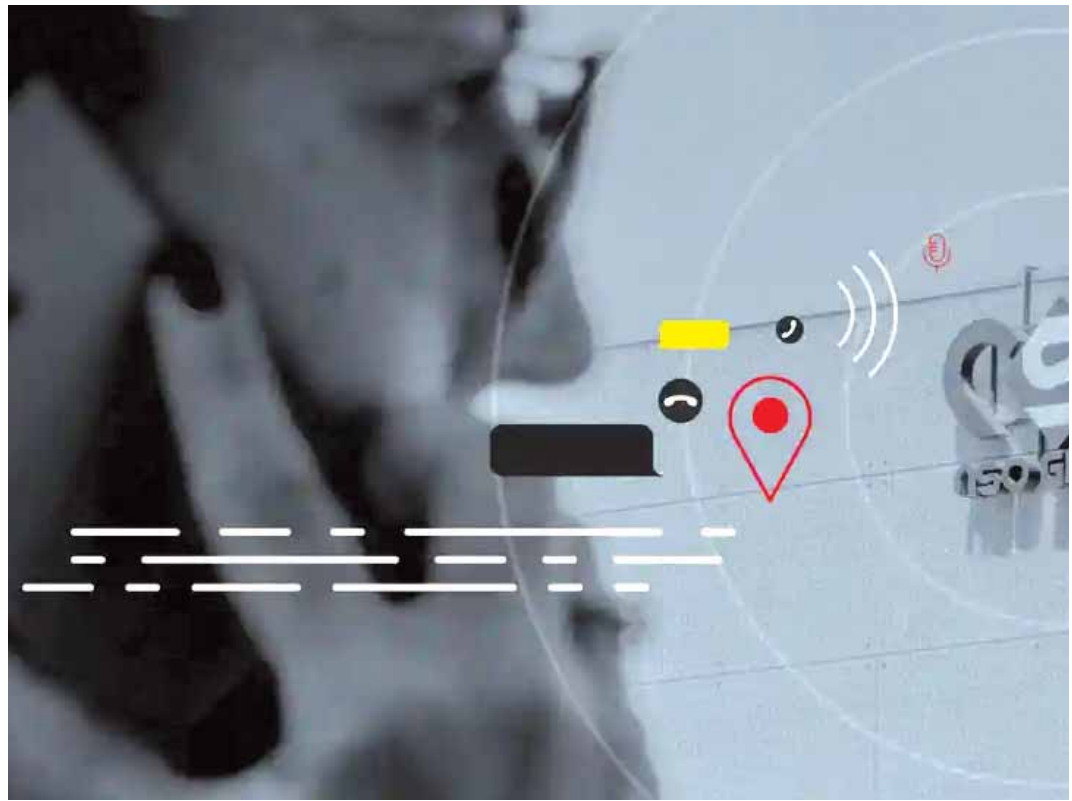
India is a democratic nation. At the heart of democracy are its people. When incidents like this (Pegasus snooping) happen, it infringes on the basic fundamental rights of the citizens. The right to privacy, though not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, is inherent under various provisions of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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

VACCINATION IS AN ONGOING AND DYNAMIC PROCESS AND, THEREFORE, A FIXED TIMELINE CANNOT BE GIVEN FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE COVID-19 IMMUNISATION DRIVE.
— MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH
BHARATI PRAVIN PAWAR



PEOPLE'S LIVES ON THE LINE, THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ADMITS NO TIMELINE, CLASSIC CASE OF MISSING SPINE. #WHEREAREVACCINES
— FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT
RAHUL GANDHI

Small businesses and wealth maximisation

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

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

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

HIMA BINDU KOTA

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

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

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

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

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

Over the years, when financial management became independent from economics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CBIC does away with renewals of licences

New Delhi: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has abolished the requirement of periodic renewal of licence and registration issued to Customs Brokers and Authorised Carriers.

This move is expected to help reduce the compliance burden cast on the trade, which had to otherwise file applications and submit numerous documents to renew their licences/registrations.

The changes have been made effective from July 23, 2021.

The net effect of the amendments carried out to the Customs Brokers Licensing Regulations, 2018 and Sea Cargo Manifest and Transshipment Regulations, 2018, is that the existing licenses/registration would have a lifetime validity.

Another change that has been introduced is to allow a licensee/registration holder to voluntarily come forward to surrender his licence/registration. Also, a provision has been made to invalidate licences/registrations that are

inactive for more than a year.

These steps would prevent misuse of dormant licences/registrations by unscrupulous persons who mis-declare import or export or wrongly obtain export refunds/incentives and when caught, put the burden on the original licensee/registration holder, a Finance Ministry statement said.

At the same time, the interest of genuine trade is safeguarded by empowering the Commissioners of Customs to revalidate the licence/registration in case the inactivity is for genuine reasons.

The life-long validity of licences/registrations is expected to provide a major relief to the trade by reducing their compliance burden and promoting ease of doing business in India.

Removing the requirement of seeking periodic renewals also reduces the interface between the Customs and the trade, which is a deliverable of the CBIC's 'Contactless Customs' initiative, a critical component of its flagship Turant Customs programme. **IAN S**

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With as many as 28 per cent Indians planning to travel in August-September, which is also the time for some of the major festivals in the country, the risk of the third wave of the pandemic is set to rise, according to a survey.

In a statement, online platform LocalCircles also said its survey on April 12 had outlined the immediate second wave risk suggesting Governments to impose travel restrictions.

To estimate the risk once again in light of a potential third Covid-19 wave and to understand people's travel plans for the coming months, LocalCircles conducted another survey. It also sought to understand the reason for their travel amid the second wave of the pandemic, it said.

The survey received over 18,000 responses from citizens residing in 311 districts, with 68 per cent of respondents men and the rest women.

LocalCircles said 28 per cent citizens are planning to travel during August-September though only five per cent have made their bookings. It added that during the second wave of the outbreak, many citizens faced teething issues to cancel their travel plan for the summer.

In many cases, the travel agent or the airline did not refund anything, and some citizens lost the complete ticket amount, while some were able to retrieve a partial amount, and others were asked to re-book the ticket for a later date, it stated.

As many citizens now look forward to travelling in August and September, the first question in the survey was to know about their current plan.

"In response, it received from 9,146 people, 63 per cent of citizens said they don't have a plan to travel during these two months.

"Five per cent said they have plans and have booked the tickets, along with stays while 23 per cent said they have a plan to travel during these two months but have not booked tickets and they stay yet. Nine per cent said they are undecided," LocalCircles said in the statement.

During this time, many parts of India have holidays for festivals and there is a good bit of travel that takes place. Many also tend to club these holidays with weekends by taking a day or two off, it stated.

The survey also asked citizens about what kind of personal travel do they plan to undertake in the next two months.

"In response, 13 per cent citizens said "holiday destination", 39 per cent citizens said "visit family and friends" and 22 per cent said "other travel", it said.

The report added that the results of the survey indicate that of those who plan to travel in August-September, 54 per cent will be visiting friends and family.

On an aggregate basis, if the data of those planning to travel in August-September is analysed, it indicates that 54 per cent plan to "visit family and friends", 26 per cent will be travelling to "holiday destinations", and 32 per cent will be undertaking other kinds of travel, according to the statement.

In summary, with the decline in daily COVID-19 caseload, 28 per cent citizens plan to travel in August-September. As indicated by the findings of the survey, 23 per cent of citizens plan to travel in the next two months, though they haven't booked their tickets yet and only 5 per cent of citizens surveyed have booked their tickets and accommodation, it stated.

Of those who are planning travel, the majority of 54 per cent citizens are planning to meet their friends and family, while 26 per cent plan to travel to a holiday destination, LocalCircles said.

Kerala vet gets patent for biodiesel from chicken waste

PTI ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

After waiting for more than seven years, John Abraham, a veterinary doctor-turned-inventor, has finally received the patents for inventing biodiesel from slaughtered chicken waste that offers mileage of over 38 km a litre at around 40 per cent of the current price of diesel and lowers pollution by half.

After seven-and-a-half years, the Indian Patent Office finally granted us the patent on July 7, 2021, for inventing 'biodiesel produced from rendered chicken oil', Abraham, an associate professor at the veterinary college here under the Kerala Veterinary & Animal Sciences University, told *PTI* from Wayanad.

The invention is an outcome of his doctoral research at the Namakkal Veterinary College under the Tamil Nadu Veterinary & Animal Sciences University.

He said the patent was delayed as permission from the National Biodiversity Authority was needed because the key raw material going into the patented invention was a biological material locally sourced.

During 2009-12, Abraham pioneered research on producing biodiesel from the

slaughter waste of broiler chicken and dead poultry birds. He completed the research under the guidance of the late Prof Ramesh Saravanakumar (passed away awaiting the patent in November 2020), who had filed for the patents in 2014 on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary & Animal Sciences University, Abraham said.

After his research, Abraham joined the Pookode Veterinary College, near Kalpetta in Wayanad, and in 2014 he set a Rs 18-lakh pilot plant at the college campus with funding from the Indian Council for Agricultural Research.

Following this, Bharat Petroleum's Kochi Refinery in April 2015 had issued a quality certificate for the biodiesel he invented and since then a college vehicle was being run on this fuel only, he said.

When asked why chicken waste, he said birds and pigs have single stomach which offer higher fat saturation and this is easy to render oil under room temperature.

Three of his students and Abraham are now working on developing biodiesel from pig waste.

He said 100 kg of chicken waste, procured from slaughter

houses for which he gets paid up to Rs 7 a kg, can produce 1 liter of biodiesel, which offers over 38 kmpl and can be sold at 40 per cent of the diesel price now.

The higher mileage and lower pollution is due to the fact that chicken waste contains 62 per cent fat, offering the key energy content of Cetane at 72, while in normal diesel it is only 64. It also increases engine efficiency by 11 per cent due to the presence of more oxygen, and reduces smoke levels by over 47 per cent, Abraham said.

The high Cetane value of 72 in animal fat bio-diesel leads to shorter ignition delays, providing more time for fuel combustion, leading to more efficiency and less exhaust emission, he explained.

On blending side, he said, for old diesel engines his biodiesel can be blended at a ratio of 80:20, while for new CDEi engines, it the reverse-20:80.

About commercialisation, he said a team from Hindustan Petroleum visited him last Friday, adding after the lockdowns he and the HPCL team would meet the Tamil Nadu veterinary university to negotiate the commercials as the patent is granted to the varsity.

India's gold imports surge in Apr-Jun, silver imports fall

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India registered a manifold raise in import of gold during the first three months of FY22 on a year-on-year basis, to nearly \$7.9 billion.

This rise in gold imports can be attributed to low imports during the same period last year owing to the nationwide lockdown and the revived consumer demand in this financial year.

During the same period last fiscal, gold imports stood at \$687.83 million. As per data from the Commerce Ministry, import of the yellow metal in July also registered a nearly 60 per cent rise to \$969.87 million.

Silver imports, however, have declined this fiscal.

During Q1FY22, silver imports stood at \$39.39 million, 93.15 per cent lower than \$575.11 million worth of imports in April-June FY21. In June, silver worth \$11.83 million was imported, against \$137.22 worth of the metal imported during the same month last fiscal.

India, a major importer of gold, exports gems and jewellery. In April-June, gems and jewellery worth \$9.17 billion was exported, 244.29 per cent higher on a year-on-year basis.

Confidence over job scenario, economic prospects remain subdued in July

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Confidence of urban Indians over the employment scenario in the country and the economic prospects remains subdued although the overall consumer confidence has recorded an uptick in July.

As per the Refinitiv-Ipsos Primary Consumer Sentiment Index (PCSI), the Employment Confidence Sub-Index is down by 0.1 percentage points, and the Economic Expectations Sub Index, has reduced by 1.8 percentage points.

The Primary Consumer Sentiment Index (PCSI), which constitutes of four sub-indices slightly improved by 1.1 percentage points in July 2021, over the previous month.

The overall growth can be attributed to improved sentiments in terms of investment climate and personal finance conditions.

The PCSI Investment Climate Sub-Index is up by a significant 3.7 percentage points, while the Current Personal Financial Conditions Sub-Index has also recovered by a healthy 3.5 percentage points.



"Easing of restrictions and reopening since June has positively impacted livelihoods and we are seeing a robust uptick in sentiment for personal finances (for day to day running of households) and for investments (savings and investing for the future)," said Amit Adarkar, CEO, Ipsos India.

"However, the recovery around jobs and particularly the economy is slow and unless the mass immunisation becomes a reality, we are likely to see the government working with utmost caution, to mitigate another wave of infections. And hence the economy may take longer to get back on grid. Which I believe we'll need to accept because the corona virus threat is still far from over, with many other countries facing the onset of a new wave," Adarkar added

E-commerce rules: CAIT says draft norms to end crony capitalism

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Describing the draft e-commerce rules as a perfect set of guidelines for conducting structured and transparent e-commerce business in India, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has said that the rules if implemented would end the crony capitalism that allegedly exists in the current e-commerce scenario in the country.

The traders' body has also suggested to come up with a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance of these regulations by the online majors. In a letter to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, it has also suggested the penal actions should be taken in case the rules are violated.

CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal said that the foreign funded e-tailers and some of the prominent industry chambers are giving lame arguments to oppose draft rules.

He noted that it is a "sinister trap" of vested interests of companies duly supported by industry chambers to dislodge the draft rules. However, more than eight crore small businesses of the country are committed to oppose any wrong narrative if anyone tries to build around the draft rules, Khandelwal said.

CII suggests mandatory life insurance cover for PMAY borrowers

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Government should relaunch the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) with an in-built credit-linked insurance cover for the borrowers, industry chamber Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has suggested.

As per the industry body, the PMAY scheme, which aims to provide housing for all by 2022, falls short of covering the risk of death or disability of the borrower as the loans sanctioned under the scheme do not have an in-built insurance provision.

CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said: "There is a need for a relaunch of the PMAY scheme with an in-built credit linked insurance or a mandatory life insurance for all borrowers under the PMAY scheme to ensure that the intent of providing 'Housing for All' does not take a hit due to death or disability of the primary borrower. The family should inherit a home, not a loan."

Affordable housing is one of the vital components of economic growth, provided the prevailing impediments of untimely death of the borrow-

er and impact on the residual loan, the status of the home and family in case of such exigency are dealt with, he added.

"Now with the pandemic affecting lives and livelihood of the Indian citizens hard and with increased mortality rate, the importance of protection to families becomes paramount as all sections of society struggle to meet medical costs, unemployment, inflationary pressures. With an in-built insurance cover in the PMAY loans, the inherent lacuna of risk-protection can be plugged with minimum additional disruptions," Banerjee said.

The scheme could have standard premium rates which could be utilised by any insurer to offer the credit cover with their partner banks, according to CII. The in-built level cover equal to the loan amount could be taken by the borrower at the inception.

CII has made presentation on the same to the Finance Ministry, the IRDAI and the National Housing Bank.

As per the current version of the scheme, the banks or lenders are partially protected as the property is mortgaged with them, but the family is left to pay the loan or lose their home.

M-cap of 6 of top 10 firms eroded by ₹76,640 cr

New Delhi: Six of the 10 most valued companies witnessed a combined erosion of ₹76,640.54 crore in market valuation last week, with HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest laggard.

During the last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark dipped 164.26 points or 0.30 per cent.

From the top-10 list, Reliance Industries Limited, HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever Limited, HDFC, State Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank witnessed erosion in their market capitalisation.

The market valuation of HDFC Bank tumbled Rs 43,578.18 crore to reach Rs 7,97,422.67 crore.

The valuation of Hindustan Unilever Limited eroded by Rs 13,004.97 crore to Rs 5,54,326.75 crore. HDFC's market valuation plunged Rs 9,543.39 crore to Rs 4,48,566.27 crore and that of Kotak Mahindra Bank dipped Rs 5,392.88 crore to Rs 3,41,634.86 crore.

The market capitalisation of Reliance Industries dropped by Rs 4,184.03 crore to Rs 13,34,579.57 crore and that of State Bank by Rs 937.09 crore to Rs 3,82,999.70 crore. **PTI**

Cipla recalls 7,228 bottles of overactive bladder treatment drug in US

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Cipla is recalling 7,228 bottles of Solifenacin Succinate tablets, a medicine used to treat overactive bladder, in the US market due to manufacturing issues.

As per the latest Enforcement Report issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), the Mumbai-based company is recalling 10 mg, 30-count bottles in the US.

The recalled batches were produced at the company's Goa-based plant and later shipped to its New Jersey-based arm Cipla USA Inc.

The US health regulator noted that the company is recalling the 7,228 bottles due to "CGMP (current good manufacturing practices) deviations". Cipla initiated the recall on June 10 this year and the USFDA has classified it as a Class II recall.

As per the USFDA, a class II recall is initiated in a situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences or where the probability of serious adverse health consequences is remote.

Pandemic-hit Govt finances to get crude shock as crude set to get more expensive

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

In a clear indication that the global oil market may not present an advantage to India as it provided during the pandemic-hit fiscal 2020-21, the countrys oil import bill in the first three months of current fiscal has increased close to three times to reach scales not seen in past few years.

As per cent numbers on oil trade, the country's oil import bill has risen to \$24.7 billion in the April-June quarter 2021-22, a whopping growth of over 190 per cent over \$8.5 billion worth of imports made in Q1 of the last fiscal year FY21.

And the high growth in oil bill during the first three months may just be the beginning as crude is set to get more expensive in coming months with a rise in global demand and falling inventory levels of the US.

This despite the oil cartel OPEC agreeing to raising crude production by 400,000 barrels per day stating August to increase production by 2 million barrels a day by the end of the year.

The way the oil market is giving signals now, crude may remain range bound between \$70-75 a barrel this fiscal. This could add significant jump in the country's oil import bill as

average crude oil purchase price stood at mere \$45 a barrel in FY21 and May be above \$70 a barrel in FY22," an oil sector expert from one of the four largest global consultancy firms said on the condition of anonymity.

If the projections for average crude prices to be over \$70 a barrel in FY22, the country's oil import bill could once again shoot above the \$100 billion mark. It last remained at that level in FY20 at \$101.4 billion.

The government received big advantage of softer oil prices in the pandemic hit FY21 when it had to pay just \$62.7 towards oil import bill with overall import quantity also sliding with demand as lockdowns eroded demand. This also helped the government to raise level of taxes on auto fuels petrol and diesel and earnings from there contributed significantly towards Covid-19 relief and stimulus measures that the Centre announced in FY21.

The problem of higher imports at expensive prices is already becoming real this year. The first quarter over 190 per cent growth in import bill is based on average crude price of \$67.5 a barrel. If the projections for crude at \$70 a barrel stays, the import bill will be even higher in Q2 and the remaining months of the year.

RBI's central board short of 9 non official directors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The central board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is facing shortage of nine non-official directors, including seven from the category of people of eminence from various fields.

The central board is the highest decision making body of the apex bank headed by the RBI Governor.

According to the RBI Act, the Government nominates 10 eminent persons from various fields to the central board of the RBI, besides four directors (one from each of the four local boards). The Government is yet to appoint seven non-official directors from the category of people of eminence from various fields while representations from local board from western and southern areas are missing.

Currently, only three eminent personalities -- Tata Sons Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, seasoned banker S K Marathe and chartered accountant and RSS ideologue Swaminathan Gurumurthy -- are serving the central board. They are nominated under Section 8(1)(c) of the RBI Act, 1934, according to the RBI's website.

About 90% Indian consumers willing to pay a premium for purchase of EV: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With global electric vehicles (EVs) sales expected to boom in the next 12 months, nearly 90 per cent of consumers in India are willing to pay a premium for buying an EV, according to a survey by consultancy firm EY.

The EY Mobility Consumer Index (MCI), a survey of more than 9,000 respondents from 13 countries, including 1,000 respondents from India, also found that 40 per cent of the respondents were ready to pay a premium of up to 20 per cent. The survey concluded in the second half of July.

"Among the car buyers in India, 3 in 10 respondents would prefer to buy an electric/hydrogen vehicle," the survey said. A majority of the respondents surveyed in India consider a driving range of 100 to 200 miles from a fully charged EV, EY said.

It further said, "Nearly 90 per cent of consumers in India are willing to pay a premium for buying an EV and over 40 per cent of respondents are ready to pay a premium of up to 20 per cent."

Existing and future EV owners, who intend to buy a car, have a relatively higher preference for digital channels

compared to the existing and future ICE owners.

Commenting on the findings, EY India Partner and Automotive Sector Leader Vinay Raghunath said, "The reducing gap in cost of ownership between electric and other technology platforms and the increasing segment of consumers vocal about environmental impact will drive a fundamental change in consumer buying behaviour for electric vehicles."

He further said, "Consumers are willing to pay extra for an added value of being environmentally responsible."

According to the survey, the top reason for buying an EV is environmental concern, with 97 per cent also stating that the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness and concerns about environmental issues. About 67per cent of those looking to buy an EV feel it is their responsibility to reduce their personal environmental impact, and 69 per cent feel buying an EV is one way to achieve this goal.

When it comes to charging, the survey found that "nearly a third of the existing EV owners expect vehicle charging to take less than an hour compared to 45 per cent of the respondents who are planning to buy an EV".

HDFC Bank's Puri top earner among bankers in FY21

Mumbai: HDFC Bank's Aditya Puri emerged as the highest grossing banker among the top three private sector lenders in his retirement year with total emoluments of ₹13.82 crore.

His successor Sashidhar Jagdishan, who took over as the chief executive and managing director of the largest private sector lender on October 27, 2020 grossed a salary of ₹4.77 crore for the fiscal year, which included payments as a group head till his elevation. Puri's overall payments included ₹3.5 crore as post-retirement benefits.

Its immediate rival ICICI Bank's MD and CEO Sandeep Bakhshi "voluntarily relinquished" his fixed compensation of basic and supplementary allowances for FY21, which had seen wide-scale impact of the Covid pandemic, as per the second largest lender's annual report.

Bakhshi, however, did receive allowances and perquisites amounting to ₹38.38 lakh, the document said, adding he also got Rs 63.60 lakh as performance bonus from ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company as deferred variable pay for FY17 and FY18.

PTI

Finance Min moves file for extension of 3 MDs, 10 EDs of Govt-owned banks

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has moved a file for extension of tenure of three public sector banks' managing directors, including Punjab National Bank (PNB), according to sources.

Besides, the sources said the Ministry has also recommended the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) for extension of 10 executive directors (EDs) of various public sector banks.

The three-year term of S S Mallikarjuna Rao, MD and CEO of PNB, is coming to an end on September 18 but the finance ministry has recommended for extension for four months till January 31, 2022, when Rao attains his superannuation age of 60 years.

Atul Kumar Goel's term as MD and CEO of UCO Bank has been recommended for a two-year extension beyond November 1 this year. A S Rajeev, MD and CEO of Bank of Maharashtra, has been suggested for an extension of two years beyond December 1.

The finance ministry has simultaneously forwarded the name of S L Jain for the appointment of MD and CEO of Indian Bank. The BBB, the headhunter for state-owned

banks and financial institutions, had recommended the name of Jain in May after the interview.

With regard to EDs, the ministry has recommended names of 10 for extension of their term till their superannuation age or two years, whichever is earlier.

The MD and CEO of a public sector undertaking is given a maximum tenure of five years as a government guidelines.

According to sources, the ministry sought extension of the executives from the Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC). The proposal has been sent to the DoF Personnel and Training for the same after consultation with BBB. The final call for extension will be taken by the ACC.

Interestingly, the Banks Board Bureau (BBB) has also invited applications for appointment of new MDs of PNB.

For PNB, the BBB on June 16, had sought public application for the MD and CEO post. The eligibility criteria as announced in public notice is that the applicant should be in the age group of 45 to 57 years in mainstream banking, of which, at least one year has to be at the board level.

International Criminal Court investigating war crimes by Taliban

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

on July 16, they conducted searches to identify residents who have worked for the local government or security forces.

Taliban forces that control areas around Kandahar city have carried out similar searches and have evicted some residents.

Taliban have taken more than 300 people into custody and have detained them in unidentified locations.

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

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

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

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

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

their safety, a local activist reported.

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

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

Afghanistan imposes night curfew in 31 provinces

IAN S ■ KABUL

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

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

The new measure comes

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

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

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

Afghan forces kill 81 militants in Balkh province

IAN S ■ KABUL

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

The sorties were launched on Saturday in parts of the restive Kaldar and Chamtal districts, leaving 81 insur-

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

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

The Taliban militants have claimed capturing nearly 200 districts since early May across Afghanistan.

UK parliamentary report finds bullying, harassment of women in military

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

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

to male veterans, that cannot be dealt with by broad-brush, one-size-fits-all veterans' services," she said.

A female veteran herself, Atherton said the sto-

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

"The complaints system, as it stands, is woefully inadequate and leaves most feeling unable to come forward. We also heard accusations of senior officers sweeping complaints under the rug to protect their own reputations and careers. While many commanding officers want to do the right thing, it is clear that, too often, female service personnel are being let down by the chain of command," she added. The Sub-Committee recommends that the MoD create a specialised Defence Authority to handle BHD complaints and that the MoD better resource the Service Complaints Ombudsman and make their decisions binding.

Global coronavirus caseload tops 193.6 mn

IAN S ■ WASHINGTON

The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 193.6 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.15 million and vaccinations soared to over 3.81 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Sunday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and the total number of vaccine doses administered stood at 193,633,246, 4,151,311 and 3,815,028,866, respectively.

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

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

The other worst countries



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

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

Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (420,016), Mexico (237,954), Peru (195,243), Russia (150,583), the UK (129,416), Italy (127,942), Colombia (118,538), France (111,800) and Argentina (103,584).

PoK holds polls to elect Assembly

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

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

didates for 44 seats.

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

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

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

Apart from the ticket holders of different political parties, a total of 261 independent candidates are also in the race for the 33 constituencies in PoK, while 56 independents are vying for the 12 refugees' seats.

Elaborate security measures have been taken and army troops deployed to maintain peace during the elections.

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

Beijing sends supplies to flooded area, rebuilds barriers

AP ■ XINXIANG

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

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

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

The volunteers occasionally broke into cheers of, "Go,



Xinxiang"

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

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

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

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

California's largest fire torches homes as blazes burn West

AP ■ BLY (US)

Flames racing through rugged terrain in Northern California destroyed multiple homes Saturday as the state's largest wildfire intensified and numerous other blazes battered the US West.

The Dixie fire, which started July 14, had already levelled over a dozen houses and other structures when it tore through the tiny town of Indian Falls after dark. It was burning in a remote area with limited access, hampering firefighters' efforts as it advanced eastward, fire officials said.

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

Meanwhile, the nation's largest wildfire, southern Oregon's Bootleg fire, was near-



ly halfway surrounded Saturday as more than 2,200 crew members worked to corral it in the heat and wind, fire officials said. The growth of the sprawling blaze had slowed, but thousands of homes remained threatened on its eastern side, authorities said.

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

contingency options."

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

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

French protesters reject virus passes, vaccine mandate

AP ■ PARIS

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

Similar protests were held in neighbouring Italy.

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

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

The French government wants to speed up vaccinations

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

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

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

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

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

Marchers included far-right politicians and activists as well as others angry at President Emmanuel Macron. They were upset over a French "health pass" that is now required to enter museums, movie theaters and tourist sites. The bill under debate would expand the pass requirement to all restaurants and bars in France and some other venues.

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

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

IAN S ■ PARIS

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

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

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

Travellers and armies camping on the site left a

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

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

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

The other sites include the Lighthouse of Cordouan on a

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

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

Tens of thousands march for LGBTQ rights at Berlin parade

AP ■ BERLIN

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

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

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

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

rights groups.

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

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

They had been expecting around 20,000 people amid social distancing

rules and a ban on alcohol to combat the risk of new coronavirus infections.

There was no parade last year due to the pandemic so many people took advantage of the warm sunny weather.



Bollywood

'I want to keep exploring myself and genres to get out of my comfort zone.'

—Mrunal Thakur



Futuristic building blocks

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

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

Necessity is the mother of innovation

The current pandemic-induced recession has become a golden opportunity for Engineering, Construction and Infrastructure enterprises (EC&O) to accelerate their digital transformation. Compared to other sectors globally, real estate has been lagging in productivity for decades now.

Findings from McKinsey's annual report reflect that yearly productivity growth in engineering and construction has averaged just 1 per cent over the past two decades, compared with a 3.6

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

per cent and 2.8 per cent growth rate for the manufacturing sector and the global economy, respectively.

Another research in the US revealed that a tenth of material purchased for construction is wasted, 30 per cent of all construction is reworked, 90 per cent of projects are delayed, and 40 per cent of job site work is unproductive. This results in 40 per cent of projects going over budget. The scenario is not so different in India and is compelling developers and contractors to embrace technology.

Technology enhances the survival of infrastructure players

The industry desperately needs to

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

Automation, IoT and robotics will also play a crucial role in reviving the



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

The era of sustainable infrastructure development

Global commitments to contain greenhouse emissions are compelling construction businesses to switch to more sustainable methods. Given that the global construction industry is estimated to emit 35 to 45 per cent of CO2 released into the atmosphere, it's high time the industry takes on the burden to combat climate change.

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

bility while improving sustainability.

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

Leveraging technology for safer construction

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

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

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

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

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

WEBBED



MR CORMAN

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



SHERSHAAH

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



MODERN LOVE S2

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

Ladies leading the way

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

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

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

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

◆They are fearless and unapologetic

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

◆They are flawed and real

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

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

◆They can do anything for love

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

◆They voice important issues

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

◆They are decisive

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



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

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

□CONSUMING FATS MAKE YOU FAT

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

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

□FESTIVAL FOODS DON'T MAKE YOU FAT

Myth: You can eat *shrikhand*,

Eyes on the prize

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



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

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

when you eat them.

□THE MYTH OF 'THE PERFECT DIET'

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

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

with time, you will lose weight.

□SUPPLEMENTS WILL HELP YOU LOSE WEIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRENDBLAZER

OTT MAKING US UP OUR GAME: ASHISH

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

fairtalk

GOVINDA



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

dailytalk

TANYA MANIKTALA



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

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

Hollywood filmmaker **QUENTIN TARANTINO** has shared that he is open to letting his 17-months old son Leo, watch his movie *Kill Bill* when he turns five or six-years-old.

When asked what age would he be comfortable letting his son watch his work, he replied, "That depends on his interests as well. If I had to imagine, he would probably, as a little boy, be most attracted to *Kill Bill*, anywhere between five, six or seven."



SPILLING THE SECRET

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

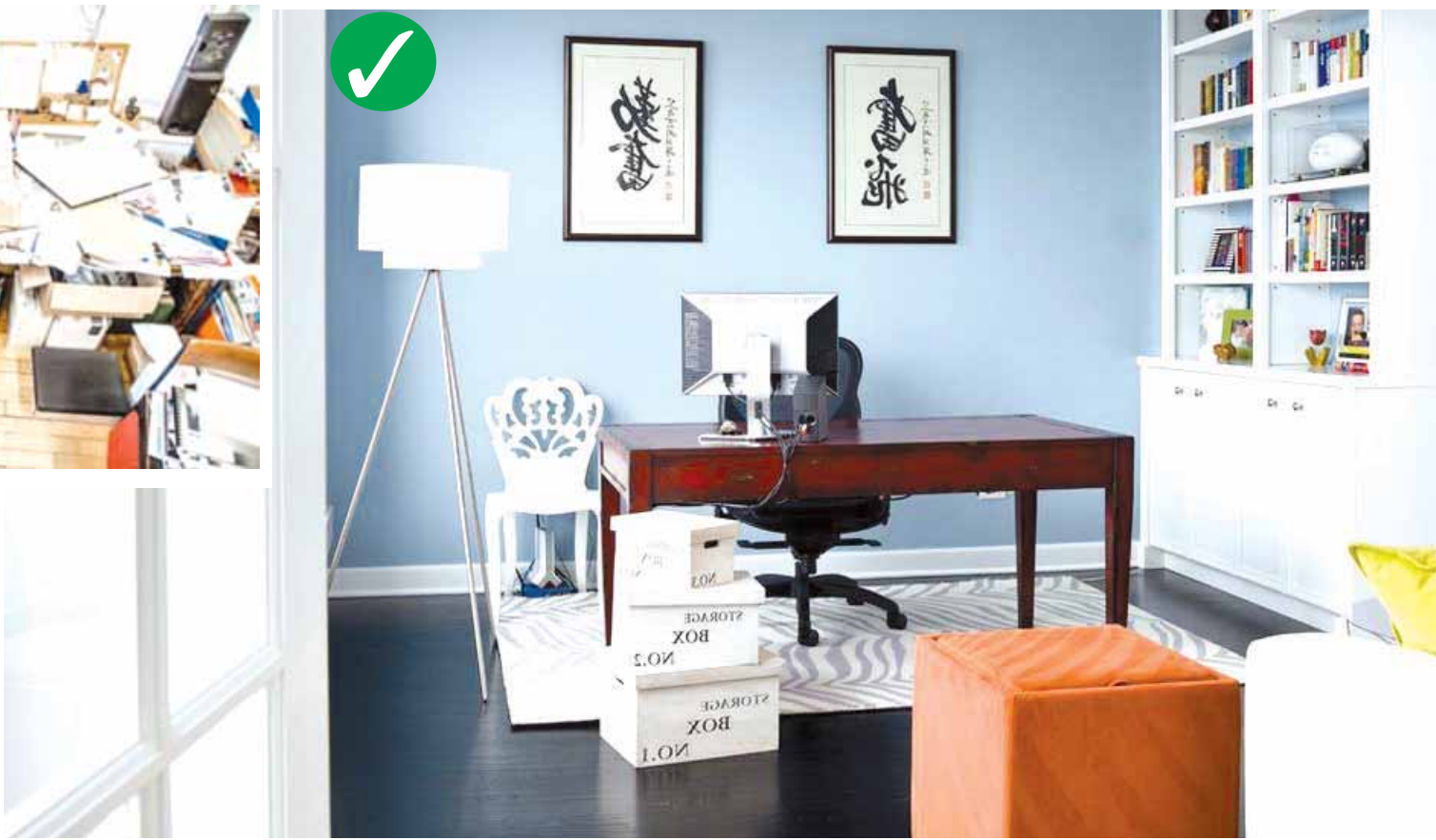


During the pandemic, working from home has become the new normal. Many software and consulting organisations have switched to work-from-home till the fourth quarter of this year. Even otherwise, due to several modern professions, there are a growing number of home-based professionals and entrepreneurs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

Most work-from-home professionals choose to set up their workspace in a corner of their bedroom, on the dining room table, in the corner of a passage, or maybe even in the guest bedroom. However, to maintain a balanced environment, ensure productivity and attract positivity, it is important to follow some Vastu guidelines.

Vastu energies are present subtly in a space that can be harnessed as a catalyst to our growth and progress. Here are a few simple steps which you can follow to ensure the benefits of good Vastu energies while working from home.

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



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

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

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

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

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

The room used as a home office

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

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

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

nature and celebrations are the best.

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

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

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

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



Make the world a better place

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

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

A battle without a leader

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

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

Out of these 15 villages, it had become the toughest for seven villages of Sangola Block to contain the spread of Covid-19's second wave, which included, Aglavewadi, Burangewadi, Bopsewadi, Khilarwadi, Nijaampur, Hanmantgaon and Tarangewadi. Apart from these villages, the Gram Panchayats of Jahanpura in Baarshi Block, Khed in North Solapur Block, Bopale and Shengalewadi in Mohol Block, Ganeshwadi in Mangalwedha Block, Rajur and Takali in South Solapur Block, and Yeliv in Malshiras Block are also awaiting a sarpanch. As the cases were on a rise, the district administration was enforcing strict measures with the assistance of sarpanches. However, the lack of institutional leadership in these 15 villages was causing issues ranging from protocol adherence to treatment provision.



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

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

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

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

ly treatment in coordination with the state government.

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

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

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

—Charkha Features

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

MATURE CATARACT ON THE RISE

The number of cases of dry eyes and digital eye strain has gone up during the pandemic period, said a top official of Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital.

The cases of digital eye strain and dry eyes seen a significant rise as a result of excessive exposure to light-emitting digital screens as people adapted to work-from-home and study-from-home scenarios, said Dr Amar Agarwal, Chairman.

According to him, the cases of matured cataracts surged from 10 per cent of the total cataract cases in the last quarter of 2019 to over 50 per cent during the same period in 2020.

Citing an internal study conducted in 2020, he said that the delay in seeking medical interventions during the first wave of the pandemic — due to lockdown restrictions or fear of infection risks, had severely deteriorated the eye conditions of many patients.

Hence, without ignoring any eye issue, patients should seek medical intervention at the earliest.



GLOBAL WARMING MAY LIMIT SPREAD OF DENGUE

Global warming could limit the spread of dengue fever but could also affect Wolbachia as a biological control agent, according to new research.

Researchers, at the Pennsylvania State University in the US, found that infection with the bacterium Wolbachia, which has recently been used to control viral infections in mosquitoes, also increases the thermal sensitivity of the insects. Wolbachia have been shown to prevent viruses, including dengue, from replicating inside mosquitoes.

But future climate models point to increasing frequencies of extreme temperature events, making short exposures to high temperatures a threat to the survival of dengue and Wolbachia infected mosquitoes, the researchers said.

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



HYPERTENSION, DIABETES AMONG TOP NCDs

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), as part of its 'Illness to Wellness' campaign, unveiled India's largest primary healthcare survey report on the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCD).

The report titled *Non-Communicable Diseases in India* covered 2,33,672 people and 673 public health offices in 21 states to analyse the rising cases of NCDs in the country and the social profile of suffering households.

Report prepared by Thought Arbitrage Research Institute (TARI), the survey report observed that India's non-communicable disease burden is growing at an alarming rate with the average age for onset falling sharply.

It reported that NCDs increase after 18 years and show a quantum leap when an individual crosses the age of 35 years. It found that more than 2/3 of the individuals suffering from NCDs are in the most productive-life age groups i.e., between 26-59 years. This is an alarming trend and points to the grim reality.



SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE OF PLASTIC IN GANGA

The Ganga river is polluted with multiple kinds of plastic, with the highest concentration at Varanasi, and micro-plastics samples being found at Haridwar, Kanpur and Varanasi, a new study by Toxics Link has found.

Micro-plastics are defined as plastics less than five mm in length and recognised as a major source of marine pollution due to their persistence, ubiquity and toxic potential.

Plastic products and waste material released or dumped in the river break down and are eventually reduced to micro particles and the river finally transports significantly large quantities downstream into the ocean which is the ultimate sink of all plastics being used by humans.

"Essentially all along micro-plastics are flowing into the river system. It does reflect or suggest a direct linkage between the poor state of both solid and liquid waste management; hence, it is critically important to initiate steps to remediate it," said Priti Mahesh, Chief Coordinator at Toxics Link.



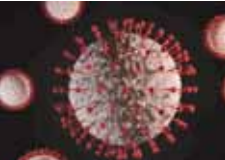
CUT DOWN STEROIDS TO AVOID BONE DEATH

Increased use of steroids for the treatment of Covid-19 has resulted in many problems from black fungus or mucormycosis to bone tissue death in patients who recovered from the deadly infectious disease, say doctors.

Many patients are reporting pain in joints, hip shoulder and knee — a condition medically known as avascular necrosis — months or upto a year after recovering from Covid-19.

While the condition is not new and is treatable, the incidences are on the rise as a side effect in the patients, who had Covid.

"The use of steroids during the treatment of Covid-19 which was a double-edged sword, is the suspect behind this unnatural bone damage. The excessive use of steroids causes marrow edema at bone ends and that cuts off its own blood supply," Orthopaedic & Robotic Joint Replacement Surgeon at Jalandhar's NHS Hospital, Dr Shubhang Aggarwal said.





INDIA'S SCHEDULE ON JULY 26 (ALL TIMES IST)		
TIME	EVENTS	ATHLETES
05:30 AM	Fencing: Women's Sabre Individual Table of 64	C Bhavani Devi
06:00 AM	Archery: Men's Team 1/8 Eliminations	Pravin Jadhav, Atanu Das & Tarundeep Rai
06:30 AM	Shooting: Men's Skeet Event Day 2	Mairaj Ahmad Khan & Angad Vir Bajwa
	Table Tennis: Men's Singles Round 2	Achanta Sharath Kamal
TBD	Tennis: Men's Single Second Round	Sumit Nagal
08:30 AM	Table Tennis: Women's Singles Round 2	Sutirtha Mukherjee
08:35 AM	Sailing: Men's Laser Race 2 & 3	Vishnu Saravanan
09:10 AM	Badminton: Men's Doubles Group Stage	Satwiksairaj & Chirag Shetty
10:15 AM	Archery: Men's Team Quarterfinal	
11:05 AM	Sailing: Women's Laser Radial Race	Nethra Kumanan
11:47 AM	Archery: Men's Team Semifinal	
12:00 PM	Table Tennis: Women's Single Round 3	Manika Batra
12:20 PM	Shooting: Skeet Men's Final	
12:45 PM	Archery: Men's Team Medal Rounds	
03:06 PM	Boxing: Men's 75kg - Round of 32	Ashish Kumar
03:50 PM	Swimming: Men's 200m Butterfly - Heat 2	Sajan Prakash
05:45 PM	Hockey: Women's Pool A	India vs Germany
	LIVE ON SONY TEN & SIX NETWORK	



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

Manika rises to the occasion

Tokyo: India's table tennis star Manika Batra made a stunning comeback against world number 32 Margaryta Pesotska to reach the women's singles third round but G Sathiyan succumbed to the pressure on his Olympic debut to exit the men's singles competition on Sunday.

While the 26th seed Sathian was expected to beat world number 94 Hong Kong's Siu Hang Lam in his second round match after getting a first round bye, the same cannot be said about Manika, whose gritty approach under pressure proved decisive against her higher-ranked opponent from Ukraine.

Manika, ranked 62, made a remarkable comeback after losing the first two games to prevail 4-11, 4-11, 11-7, 12-10, 8-

11, 11-5, 11-7 in a second round match that lasted 57 minutes.

She meets Austria's Sofia Polcanova on Monday for a place in the round of 16. If Manika manages another upset, it will be a significant achievement for the Indian in her second Olympics.

Earlier, world number 38 Sathiyan had a commanding 3-1 lead but lost four games in a row to lose 3-4 to lower-ranked Lam from Hong Kong.

"It is heartbreaking but I will come back stronger. I was playing really well initially. I was aggressive and serving well but after the fourth game he started to slow down the pace and started receiving better," Sathian said.

Tokyo: Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh on Sunday produced the best-ever Olympic performance by Indian rowers as they cruised into the men's lightweight double sculls semifinals at the Tokyo Games.

The Indian duo clocked 6:51.36 to finish third in the repechage round at the Sea Forest Waterway.

"We followed exactly what ever had been told to us by our coach. The coach told us that we should try to get the best position for India," the duo said.

"It's (rowing) not a very popular sport in India. So our coach told us that getting to the semifinals is also a big motivation for us, and we had to do our best."

While Arjun assumes the role of the bower, Arvind is the team's stroker. The two had finished fifth in their heats on Saturday.

"Arvind and Arjun are now among the 12 semifinalists. It can be difficult to win a medal but they will be competing in the semifinals. There will be two semifinal races of six boats each and top three from each semifinals will reach the final," Rowing Federation of India president Rajlaxmi Singh Deo said.

The event includes two rowers in a scull boat using two oars each. The long, narrow and broadly semi-circular in cross-section boats helps to reduce the drag.

The maximum weight set

Rowers Arjun, Arvind produce best-ever Indian performance



Indian rowers Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh in action @WeAreTeamIndia

for each male competitor is 72.5kg and the average weight cannot exceed 70 kg.

The semifinals will be held on July 27.

NAYAK FAILS TO QUALIFY

India's lone gymnast at Tokyo Olympics, Pranati Nayak failed to qualify for the All Round finals of Artistic Gymnastics competition.

The 26-year-old from West Bengal recorded a total score of 42.565 over the four categories — floor exercise, vault, uneven bars and balance beam — at the Ariake Gymnastic centre. She is now ranked at 29th overall at the end of subdivision 2.

There are a total of five sub-

making unforced errors. Sindhu entered the break with 11-5 lead.

Soon, Sindhu was on a roll, grabbing 13 straight points. The Indian used her trademark straight and cross court smashes and drops to trouble the Israeli, who couldn't utilise the few opportunities that came her way.

Sindhu sealed the first game in her favour when Polikarpova missed a shot.

Polikarpova, who was playing with a strapped knee, continued to struggle with her strokes as Sindhu opened up a 9-3 lead in the second game and then entered the mid-interval with a massive seven-point advantage.

It was business as well after the break, with Sindhu riding on the errors of her opponent.

Another wide shot from Polikarpova gave Sindhu 13 match points. The Indian squandered three of them before Polikarpova once again sent the shuttle out to end the match.

On her approach to playing a lower-ranked opponent, Sindhu said: "I think it's important to make sure that you play all of your strokes and get used to them."

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

'WORK ON AGGRESSION'

In the post match Press conference Sindhu said she has worked on her aggression in the past five years and promised a very 'different' version of herself after making a winning start.

"Mentally, physically and experience-wise, a lot has changed. Coming to (Tokyo) 2020 is completely different; back then there were no expectations," the reigning world champion said.

"I know that I have worked hard and given all my heart all of these years and I think it's time to show now. I've been working on my aggression and my technique and you will definitely see a different Sindhu."

Mary's experience triumphs

Tokyo: Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg) powered into the Olympics' pre-quarterfinals with a superb tactical victory over Dominican Republic's Miguelina Hernandez Garcia but Manish Kaushik's (63kg) Games debut ended in disappointment following a hard-fought opening-round loss on Sunday.

The 38-year-old Mary Kom, who is a 2012 Olympic Bronze-medallist and a multiple-time Asian champion, prevailed 4-1 against a rival who is 15 years her junior and a Pan American Games Bronze-medallist.

But Manish, a Commonwealth Games Silver-medallist and a world championship Bronze-winner, went down 1-4 to Britain's Luke McCormack in an edge-of-the-seat clash.

Mary Kom was the first to step into the ring and in a bout that was also exciting from start to finish, the Manipuri displayed some brilliant tactics to overcome the fight that Garcia put up.

She will next be up against third-seeded Colombian Ingrid Valencia, who was a Bronze-medallist at the 2016 Rio Games.

Mary has beaten the Colombian both times the two have faced, including the 2019 world championship quarterfinals.

"I have all the medals in my hand. Olympic medal (Bronze) from 2012, Commonwealth Games Gold, six-time Gold at world championships. It's not easy to count them, but the difficult part is continuously winning and performing, it's not easy," she said.

"...What is left is the Olympic Gold medal. That is what is driving me and pushing me to carry on. I am trying my best, if I am able to get it then I will be so grateful, but if not then I will still be so happy for all the medals I have won



in the past," she added.

On Monday, another Games debutant Ashish Kumar (75kg) will open his campaign against China's Erbieke Toutheta.

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

Tokyo: The medal-winning athletes at the Tokyo Olympics will now be able to sport a wide smile for the shutterbugs after the IOC updated its protocol on Sunday, allowing them to remove their masks for 30 seconds during the podium ceremony.

The updated protocol, which allows athletes to remove masks briefly, came into effect on Sunday morning.

"It has been decided today, in line with the Tokyo 2020 Playbooks, to adapt the victory ceremony protocol in order



to allow athletes to have a physically distanced image on the podium without their masks on for 30 seconds, and a group photo with masks on the Gold-medal step," said the IOC in a statement.

"...The victory ceremony protocol has been adapted to allow athletes to have an image for the media that captures their faces and their emotions during a unique moment in their sporting career, as well as to celebrate the achievements of all the medallists together."

Shooters disappoint, again

Tokyo: The fancied Indian shooting team drew a blank for the second day running in the Tokyo Olympics, with a major weapon malfunction leading to a heartbreaking exit for the young Manu Bhaker in the women's 10 air pistol event.

Appearing in her maiden Olympics, the 19-year-old Manu finished a creditable 12th, despite losing nearly 20 minutes during the qualifications after the cocking lever in her pistol broke down, forcing her to go to a designated area for getting it fixed.

Manu shot 575, while the cut-off was 577.

Yashaswini Singh Deswal, the other first-timer at the Games, recovered from a subdued start to end 13th, with a total score of 574.

In the men's 10 air rifle event, both the experienced Deepak Kumar and the teenaged Divyansh Singh Panwar finished a lowly 26th and 32nd respectively.

Deepak aggregated 624.7 while Divyansh shot 622.8 over the six series, scores which were never going to be enough to make the final.

India's Angad Vir Singh Bajwa missed two targets out of 75 to be placed 11th on



count back at the end of the third round in men's skeet qualifications. He looks to be in search of a top-six finals spot.

Angad had scores of 25, 24, 24 in the first three series and will come back on Monday to shoot the final two series.

Compatriot Mairaj Ahmad Khan shot 71 and was placed 25th out of the 30 shooters in fray.

Taken together, the first two days' performance, or, the lack of it, is certainly going to raise a few eyebrows within the Indian shooting fraternity, including the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), which has done its bit in preparing its athletes.

Sania-Ankita pair knocked out



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

Tokyo: Sania Mirza and debutant Ankita Raina were knocked out of the Tokyo Olympics despite dominating a large part of their women's doubles opener against Ukrainian twin sisters Nadia and Liudmyla Kichenok.

Sania and Raina were running away with the contest after baggeling their opponents but in a dramatic turnaround, the Kichenok sisters came back from the dead to pull off a 0-6, 7-6(0), 10-8 win at court 11 of Ariake Tennis Centre.

Sania was serving for the match at 5-3 in the second set

but perhaps nerves got the better of her and ended up dropping her serve.

From there on, it was not the same match, in which the Ukrainians looked out of sort, struggling with their serves and returns. The Indians became the prey and Ukrainians pounced on them.

Sania and Raina were down 1-8 in the Super Tie break but reeled off seven straight points to make it 8-8 but lost the next two points to make an exit from the Games.

Barty exits



Tokyo: Japan's Naomi Osaka won in straight sets on her highly-anticipated return to court on Sunday, while world

No 1 Ashleigh Barty crashed out in the first round.

Osaka defeated China's Zheng Saisai 6-1, 6-4 in her first match since taking an eight-week break for mental health reasons and is now the clear favourite for Gold after Barty, the reigning Wimbledon champion, dropped serve twice in each set and made 55 unforced errors in a 6-4, 6-3 loss to Spain's 48th-ranked Sara Sorribes Tormo.

Govt exempts Olympic returnees from RT-PCR test

Tokyo: Athletes, officials and media returning to the country from Tokyo Olympics will not be required to produce RT-PCR negative test reports for Covid-19 before their departure from Tokyo, the Government of India said on Sunday.

The decision was intimated in an official letter by Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare after the Indian Olympic President Narinder Batra had earlier in the day requested the Government to exempt returnees from the Tokyo Games to produce RT-PCR negative report before boarding their flights.

The Health Ministry official, however, said that only those individuals who have returned negative in the saliva-based test prior to their departure to India will be allowed to board the flight. Besides, all those returning from Tokyo will be retested upon landing in India.

The weightlifting contingent will depart from India from Tokyo on Monday after Mirabai Chanu won a historic Silver in women's 49kg event. PTI

India win first T20 by 38 runs

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A brilliant performance by Suryakumar Yadav followed by a four-wicket-haul by Bhuvneshwar Kumar helped India beat host Sri Lanka by 38 runs in the first T20I here on Sunday.

Surya's second T20I half-century was complemented by useful contributions from skipper Shikhar Dhawan (46 off 38 balls) along with Ishan Kishan (20 not out off 14 balls) at the back-end.

Skipper Dhawan added 62 with Surya in eight overs to provide a solid launch-pad but the latter's dismissal surely cost India 20 extra runs.

But looking at the partnership, it was evident that the junior partner was batting in a more assured manner, having already sealed his place in the T20 World Cup team while the skipper is still fighting what looks like a losing battle to jostle inside that jam-packed top-order in the main squad.

There was a six over deep mid-wicket off Akila Dananjaya but the innings did lack the



punch despite four more boundaries.

It was Surya's five fours and a six that really helped Kishan and Hardik to launch the final assault.

At the start, Prithvi Shaw had a forgettable T20I debut as Dushmantha Chameres (2/24 in 4 overs) outswinger found the edge of his bat off the very first delivery of the match.

Sanju Samson (27 off 20 balls) hit his customary six while batting like a millionaire

before Wanindu Hasaranga (2/28 in 4 overs) trapped him with a googly.

Surya as usual was in his free-flowing self, hitting those whiplash on-drives, cover drives and ramp shots which is a sight to watch both against pacers and spinners.

However what was exhilarating was how Surya picked all those back-of-the-hand slower deliveries from seamers Isuru Udana and Chamika Karunaratne.

MI-CSK to kickoff IPL 2021 UAE leg

New Delhi: Defending champions Mumbai Indians will meet Chennai Super Kings in Dubai on September 19 when the IPL resumes in the United Arab Emirates, the BCCI announced on Sunday.

The tournament was suspended in May after multiple Covid-19 cases were reported in its bio-bubble.

A total number of 31 matches will be played in the duration of 27 days including seven doubles headers.

After the CSK-MI clash, the action will shift to Abu Dhabi where the Kolkata Knight Riders will square off against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Sharjah will host its first game on September 24 when RCB take on CSK.

In all, 13 matches will be held in Dubai, 10 in Sharjah and 8 in Abu Dhabi.

The first Qualifier will be played in Dubai on October 10, the Eliminator and Qualifier 2 will be played in Sharjah on October 11 and 13 respectively with Dubai hosting the final on October 15. PNS