

**OPINION 6**  
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## Eyes on Gupkar Alliance ahead of all-party meet

June 24 talks Centre's bid for political outreach

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

All eyes are set on the formal response of the People's Alliance For Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) to the invitation from Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, to attend the all-party meet convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on June 24.

The Prime Minister's meeting on June 24 with the political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is expected to be about the delimitation exercise. The meeting is an attempt by the Centre to seek political validation of the administrative exercise which started in the first week of June. But Kashmiri leaders have their own agenda for initiating the talks.

"We have stressed for a collective fight and hence the PAGD will send two representatives to the meeting in New Delhi," a news channel quoted a senior leader, who attended the meeting, as say-



ing. "Mehbooba has not decided to boycott the meeting. We are in favour of a political process but it's a collective fight and hence we will all meet to decide who all should represent us in the meeting and convey the aspirations of the people," senior leader stressed on condition of anonymity.

## Modi brainstorms with core team, fuels rejig

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of an expected Cabinet reshuffle and the June 24 Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) political outreach by the Central Government aimed at restarting the electoral process in the Union Territory (UT), a high-level ministerial meeting was chaired by Prime

## Delimitation panel may meet DCs virtually

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mid speculations of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), the Delimitation Commission is expected to hold a virtual meet in the next few days with all Deputy Commissioners to discuss various inputs on geographical features of constituencies and the suggestions made by them. Delimitation involves redrawing the boundaries of

Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies in a State or Union Territory. Sources said that the Delimitation Commission is likely to visit J&K soon to begin the delimitation exercise which was on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The commission had recently sought data from all Deputy Commissioners on the area of existing constituencies, including geography and facilities available, and had asked them for their suggestions to make them more "geographically compact."

Having received the data and suggestions, the commission has decided to hold a virtual meeting with the DCs to take forward the matter. "As far as possible, the constituency should be fully geographically compact," sources said.

After the delimitation exercise, the number of Assembly seats in J&K will go up from 83 to 90. Twenty-four seats of the Assembly continue to remain vacant as they fall under Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

## Cheers! Bars to reopen with 50% capacity

DDMA allows opening of public parks too

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The bars in Delhi will be allowed to reopen with 50 per cent seating capacity from Monday. These bars will function from 12 pm to 10 pm. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Sunday released the order allowing public parks and gardens also to reopen for public.

As per the order, the owners of restaurants and bars will be responsible for strict implementation of Covid safety measures and guidelines. While the parks and gardens will also be opened, the Resident Welfare Association (RWAs) will have to ensure the visitors follow Covid-appropriate behaviour. "Public parks, gardens and golf clubs will be reopened and outdoor yoga activities will also be allowed," the DDMA stated in its order.

Prohibited activities and services, including schools, colleges and educational institutions, cinemas, gyms, spas, all kinds of political, social, cultural, religious gatherings among others, will remain closed till further orders or 5



am on June 28. The lockdown was imposed in Delhi amid a surge in second wave of Covid-19 on April 19. Many restrictions have been lifted in a phased manner with improvement in the Covid situation, starting with allowing manufacturing and construction activities on May 31. In its order, the DDMA said it has been observed that the number of coronavirus patients and positivity rate has declined considerably and the overall situation has improved, but due caution and care has to be maintained for consolidating the whole process of Covid-19 management.

Covid-19 IN INDIA	
TOTAL CASES:	2,99,33,497 (+52,092)
DEATHS:	3,88,136 (+1,395)
RECOVERED:	2,88,34,524 (+75,962)
ACTIVE:	6,99,062
MAHA:	58,72,781 (+9,361)
K'TAKA:	28,06,453 (+4,517)
KERALA:	28,09,395 (+11,647)
TN:	24,22,497 (+7,817)
DELHI:	14,32,292 (+124)

The United Nations Special Rapporteurs have criticised the new Information Technology (IT) rules, prompting a strong rebuttal from the Government. In its letter dated June 11, UN special rapporteurs on right to freedom of opinion, peaceful assembly, and privacy said India's Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, in their current form, do not conform with international human rights norms.

The seven-page communication expressed concerns on various other aspects of the IT rules, and asked the Government for a response. The letter is authored by Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Clement Nyaletossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Joseph Cannataci, Special Rapporteur on right to privacy.

## New 'national' vax drive to kick-off today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Come Monday and the next phase of India's vaccination drive will kick-off across the country with the Central Government providing free Covid-19 vaccines to everyone above the age of 18 years. Since the launch of the nationwide vaccination programme from January 16, the June 21 drive will mark a departure from its earlier "liberalised and accelerated" vaccination policy.

## India hits back at UN for criticising new IT rules

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The seven-page communication expressed concerns on various other aspects of the IT rules, and asked the Government for a response. The letter is authored by Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Clement Nyaletossi Voule, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Joseph Cannataci, Special Rapporteur on right to privacy.

The UN special rapporteurs in its letter said India's new IT Rules are in violation of rules laid down in International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a key international human rights treaty.

## CAPSULE

### LAKSHADWEEP ADMIN SEEKS CHANGE IN HC

**Kochi/New Delhi:** The Lakshadweep administration, which has been facing widespread protests from the islands' people over some of its policies, has mooted a proposal to shift its legal jurisdiction from the Kerala High Court to the Karnataka High Court.

### KERALA GOLD: NOTICE ISSUED TO 53 PEOPLE

**Kochi:** The Customs probing the Kerala gold smuggling case has issued show-cause notices to 53 people including prime accused Swapna Suresh.

### CAN'T PAY ₹4L EX-GRATIA TO VICTIMS: CENTRE TO SC

**New Delhi:** The Centre has told the Supreme Court that ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh cannot be paid to the families of those who have died of Covid-19 as it is beyond fiscal affordability and the finances of Central and State Governments are under severe strain.

### ASSAM AMONG TOP 5 IN SDG INDIA INDEX

**Guwahati:** Assam's Environment and Forest Department has emerged as a front-runner in the Life on Land category of the 2020 edition of the Niti Aayog's Sustainable Development Goal India Index.

## Sore Soren returns to Ranchi after 4-day wait

Gandhis give time to Stalin as Hemant simmers

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

After Punjab and Rajasthan, a trouble is brewing in the JMM-Congress Party-led Government in Jharkhand. Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who camped for four days in Delhi, could not get an audience from either Congress chief Sonia Gandhi or senior leader Rahul Gandhi. The Gandhis, in between, however, found the time to meet the new Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, whose DMK is an ally of the Congress in the southern State.

"Hemant returned to Ranchi on Saturday. He had been repeatedly making attempts to call on Sonia and Rahul but failed. The snub has not gone down well with the JMM. Moreover, their meeting with Stalin has only rubbed salt to the wound," sources said.



Filling up the vacant Cabinet berth, a possible reshuffle in the Council of Ministers and appointments to corporations among others were high on Soren's agenda, sources said.

"Such developments do not augur well for the coalition when there has always been an air of mistrust among the two major coalition partners. Particularly, given the buzz of a possible BJP-JMM alliance, that keeps the Congress and the RJD on their toes. Or for that matter, the BJP getting a sizeable MLAs of the JMM and the Congress to resign just as it did in several States," they added.

An AICC leader, however, asserted, "Sonia could not meet Hemant as she was too busy the entire week due to developments in Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra as well. There is no problem in the Jharkhand coalition." The Congress is saddled with the power tussles between Sachin Pilot and Ashok Gehlot in Rajasthan and Navjot Singh Sidhu and Amarinder Singh in Punjab.

Jharkhand Congress chief and Finance Minister in Hemant's Government, Rameshwar Oraon, too, had come to Delhi to discuss "party affairs" besides appointments in corporations and commissions etc under the State Government. Both Hemant and Oraon would have participated in the meeting with the Congress top brass to discuss all the pending issues.

Both the JMM and the Congress have staked claim to the vacant 12th berth in the Soren Cabinet. Besides the CM, the JMM has five Ministers while the Congress has four and other ally RJD one ministerial berth.

## CM announces assistance for Covid-orphaned kids

'Ashirbad' scheme launched

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a significant decision, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the Father's Day on Sunday announced an 'Ashirbad' scheme, under which the State Government would provide monthly financial assistance to the children who have been orphaned due to Covid-19.

Rs 2,500 per month would be provided to the children who have lost both parents/single parent and Rs 1,500 per month to those who have lost earning parent due to Covid-19 on or after April 1, 2020.

The amount would be transferred to the bank accounts of the guardians/caretakers of the orphans till they attain the age of 18



years. The assistance would not be provided in case the child is adopted by someone. These beneficiaries would be included under the State Government's Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana for availing free medical services and also under the Central/ State Food Security schemes.

The State Government would facilitate continuation of these orphans' education at their respective schools. If required, assistance would be provided for studying in Adarsh Vidyalayas and Central Schools. The children would be assisted for their higher education under the Green Passage scheme of the State Government.

Pucca houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana/

Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana and benefits under other government schemes would be approved to the orphans' guardians/ caretakers on a Priority basis.

If the children stay at childcare institutions, an amount of Rs 1,000 per month would be deposited in their bank account as recurring deposit till they attain 18 years of age.

For those who have lost their earning parent, Rs 1,500 per month would be transferred to the bank account of their living parent till they attain 18 years. Mothers of such children, if eligible for Madhu Babu Pension Scheme, would be provided the pension.

The District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), Childlines, block and panchayat-level committees and frontline workers would identify the children and prepare their list. The guardians/ caretakers can also approach the DCPUs with the children's death certificate to avail the benefit under the scheme.

## State adds 3,577 new Covid cases

TPR AT 5.38%

42 MORE DBIE; TOLL MOUNTS TO 3,590

5,082 RECOVER; TOTAL RECOVERIES 8,40,214

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Covid-19 positive cases increased marginally to 3,577 on Sunday from 3,427 on Saturday. The new cases were reported from the 30 districts and the State pool, with which the total tally surged to 8,77,502.

A total of 64,112 samples were tested in the last 24 hours and the test positivity rate (TPR) stood at 5.38 percent. Out of the new cases 2,039 were from quarantine and 1,538 were local contacts. Besides, 84 cases were reported from the State pool.

Khordha district again reported the highest daily cases at 571 followed by Cuttack with 407, Jajpur 337, Puri 237, Baleswar 205, Mayurbhanj 187, Bhadrak 186, Angul 127, Kendrapada 141, Nayagarh 114 and Jagatsinghpur 103.

The districts which reported cases below 100 were Dhenkanal with 96, Rayagada 88, Malkangiri (86), Keonjhar 61, Koraput 59, Boudh 59, Nabarangpur 57, Bargarh 51, Sundargarh 43, Kandhamal 41, Kalahandi 41, Balangir 36, Sambalpur 31, Subarnapur and Gajapati 29 each, Ganjam 27, Nuapada 19, Jharsuguda 13 and Deogarh 12.

The active cases in the State stood at 38,727; and so far, 8,35,132 patients have recovered. However, as many as 42 more patients succumbed to the virus in the State in the last 24 hours, mounting the total death toll to 3,590.

Five deaths each were reported from Bargarh and Cuttack districts, four each from Koraput, Rayagada and Mayurbhanj and three each from Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Khordha. Besides, two deaths each were reported from Balangir, Puri and Sundargarh and one each from Angul, Malkangiri and Nayagarh. However, another 5,082 patients recovered on the day, increasing the total recoveries to 8,40,214.

## 287 new infections in BBSR 2 die; 537 recover

BHUBANESWAR: Bhubaneswar on Sunday registered 287 new Covid-19 positive cases, with which the State capital city's total tally increased to 86,689. This was a slight decrease from the 332 infections reported on Saturday. Out of the new cases, 255 were local contacts and 32 were quarantine cases.

The local contacts included 19 in Chandrasekharpur, 18 in Patia, 12 each in Mancheswar and Baramunda, 11 in Nayapalli, 10 in Khandagiri, nine each in Old Town and Sailashree Vihar and seven each in Laxmisagar and Niladri Vihar. Currently, the active cases stood at 1,854 in the city. Meanwhile, two more patients succumbed to the disease in the city on the day, with which the total death toll to 402. However, 537 persons recovered on day, increasing total recoveries to 84,412.

## Millions to bend, stretch on Yoga Day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From political personalities to commoners, from Bollywood celebrities to jawans guarding India's borders, people from all walks of life will stretch and bend in their homes, parks and grounds to mark the International Yoga Day on June 21, which will be celebrated amid the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic for the second year in a row.

The Union Ayush Ministry, which is the nodal Ministry for International Day of Yoga (IDY), said in a statement that in view of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictions on congregational activities, the lead event of the day will be a televised programme. The highlight of course will be Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation. This year's theme is 'Yoga for Wellness.' The Prime



Two girls perform yoga near Taj Mahal ahead of the International Yoga Day in Agra on Sunday. PTI

Minister tweeted, "Tomorrow, June 21, we will mark the seventh Yoga Day. The theme this year is 'Yoga For Wellness', which focusses on Yoga for physical and mental well-being."

Scheduled to start at 6.30 am on all Doordarshan channels on Monday, the event will also include an address by Minister of State for Ayush Kiren Rijju and a live Yoga demonstration by the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, the Ministry said in a statement.

## Thundershowers to lash State from today

IMD issues yellow warning for several dists

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here on Sunday issued thunderstorm and heavy rainfall alerts for several districts in the State from Monday till Thursday.

Light to moderate rain or thundershower is likely to occur at a few places over the districts of north Odisha and at one or two places over the districts of south Odisha in the next 24 hours. "Due to steep pressure gradient and strong monsoon flow, squally weather with surface wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph very likely over north Bay of Bengal and adjoining central Bay of Bengal during next 24 hours," said the weather office said.

The IMD issued a yellow warning and said thundershower with lightning likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Nuapada, Balangir, Subarnapur, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Gajapati, Ganjam and Bargarh on Monday.

On Tuesday, heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Nuapada and Subarnapur. Besides, thundershower with lightning very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Balangir, Bargarh, Boudh, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Angul, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Baleswar. On Wednesday, heavy rainfall is

very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Bargarh, Balangir, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, Jharsuguda and Nuapada.

Thunderstorm with lightning very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Subarnapur, Boudh, Nuapada, Balangir, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Gajapati, Ganjam, Nayagarh and Khordha. On Thursday, heavy rainfall is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Koraput, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Angul, Boudh, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Balangir and Kalahandi, the IMD said.

## State pays ₹3L to kin of electrocuted girl

Responding to NHRC orders

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has paid a compensation of Rs 3 lakh to Hema Kadra, mother of a student, Nandini, who died of electrocution on July 11, 2019.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), acting on a petition filed by rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, had asked the State Chief Secretary to provide the compensation to the parents of the student. Nandini Kadra, a student of the Kasturba Residential School at Kumudapali in Rayagada district, had been electrocuted when her head came in contact with a low-voltage live electric wire at around 11.15pm while she was going towards a bathroom of the hostel.

# State targets 3 lakh vax doses daily from today

Presently, coverage is less than 1.5 lakh doses

So far, 17.97 lakh citizens have received two doses

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the Centre going to supply free vaccines to the States from tomorrow, the Odisha Government has set an ambitious target to vaccinate 3 lakh doses each day. Additional Chief Secretary, Health, PK Mohapatra on Sunday asked district Collectors, Municipal Commissioners and Chief District Medical and Public Health Officers to plan accordingly and meet the targets set for their districts. "Presently, the average daily coverage is less than 1.5 lakh doses across the State. The Government of India will supply vaccines to our State based on the vaccine consumption & vaccine wastage rate. Under revised strategy of Covid-19 vaccination drive, you are directed to expand the 18-44 years and above 45 years vaccination drive in all blocks



and ULBs from 21 June in a campaign mode and completely consume available stock (Both Central & State supply) within shortest possible time," Mohapatra said in his communiqué. The district and municipal administrations have been asked to conduct at least five sessions in each block and NAC, 10 sessions in each municipality and 20 in each municipal corporation from Monday onwards. If required, additional sessions over and above the targets can also be planned as per need, Mohapatra stated. "Districts can plan for both online and on-site sessions based on feasibility. At the same time, the beneficiaries already due for the second dose shall be mobilised to ensure timely vaccination," he told the officers. As per the letter, a daily target of 30,000 doses has been set for the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, 23,300 for

Ganjam district, 18,000 for Cuttack, 16,100 for Mayurbhanj, 15,500 for Baleswar, 14,000 for Sundargarh, 12,300 for Jajpur, 11,800 for Keonjhar, 11,600 for Puri, 10,650 in Balangir and 10,000 each in Bargarh, Kalahandi and Bhadrak. All other districts have a daily target of less than 10,000. The districts are Angul (8,600), Boudh (2,800), Deogarh (2,000), Dhenkanal (8,000), Gajapati (3,650), Jagatsinghpur (7,700), Jharsuguda (4,000), Kandhamal (4,600), Kendrapada (9,400), Khordha (8,400), Koraput (8,700), Malkangiri (3,850), Rayagada (6,150), Sambalpur (7,000) and Subarnapur (4,000). The State target for 18 years and above is 3.09 crore citizens (6.18 crore doses). Since January 16 this year, the State has administered 93.73 lakh doses, out of which 17.97 lakh citizens have received two doses.

## BJP warns State-wide protest on power tariff increase

'It's additional financial burden in Covid time'



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP on Sunday warned the State Government to withdraw the power tariff hike or else face State-wide protests. Party leaders said the protest would start from Bhubaneswar and then it would spread across the State in the forms of demonstrations and meetings. Addressing party workers at a virtual demonstration, BJP State president Samir Mohanty described the power tariff hike during the time of Covid pandemic as an additional financial burden on the people. Party leaders alleged that the power tariff hike is the result of the bonhomie between the State Government and the power distribution companies. They pointed out that during the last 10 years, the Government has increased the tariff at regular intervals; and especially during the last six months, it has increased it by 50 paise per unit in two phases. The virtual demonstration was organised by the party's Bhubaneswar district unit.

# Memo war surfaces between BJD MP, MLA

BISHNU P BEHERA ■ PALLAHARA

Again the spat between the Adhenkanal BJD MP and Pallahara BJD MLA came to the fore with the supporters of the two leaders accusing each other over the June 5 incident. On June 5, MP Mahesh Sahoo had a verbal duel with Pallahara MLA Mukesh Pal

over breach of protocol in inauguration of a Covid care Centre in Pallahara. The Citizen Forum gave a memorandum to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik through the local administration demanding an apology from Dhenkanal MP Sahoo for engaging in a brawl with MLA Pal and using vulgar language during an altercation with Pal

and his supporters. Sahoo was miffed over the inauguration of the Covid Care Centre in Pallahara by Pal without waiting for him though he was invited for the same. Forum president Sontosh Dehury and secretary Susil Samal threatened to stage demo by wearing black badges in front of the Biju Patnaik statue in Pallahara if Sahoo did not

apologise within a week. Meanwhile, another local forum, Bikash Parishad Pallahara, countered the move by sending a memorandum to the CM seeking a proper inquiry into the incident. Parishad president Jogesh Bukta and secretary Sanjib Behera alleged that it was a conspiracy of MLA Pal to defame MP Sahoo.

## 30,799 MT O2 sent from Odisha so far

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A total of 1,653 tankers or 30799.662 MTs medical oxygen have been dispatched under the escort and supervision of the Odisha police so far from Rourkela, Jajpur, Dhenkanal and Angul districts of Odisha to 17 deficit States and Union Territories in the country. More are leaving on Friday. During last 59 days, as many as 125 tankers were dispatched from Angul with 2036.562 MT, 342 from Dhenkanal with 5720.41 MT, 324 from Jajpur with 6594.433 MT and 862 from Rourkela with 16448.257 MT. A total of 489 tankers with 9587.32 MT of oxygen have been sent so far to Andhra Pradesh, and 396 tankers with 7058.579 MT of oxygen to Telangana. Tamil Nadu has received 273 tankers with 5064.888 MT of medical oxygen. Similarly, Haryana has received 182 tankers filled with 3331.793 MT of oxygen.

# Yoga's acceptance by urbanites yet to take off

## Take Bhubaneswar example

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the World Yoga Day is celebrated on June 21 and despite the worldwide focus on yoga for its potential to prevent non-communicable diseases, it has yet to find wide acceptance among the urban population, a recent study has revealed. A mere 17 per cent of people in Bhubaneswar practise either 'asana' or 'pranayama' or 'dhyana' while only 10.7 per cent of the city's population practise all the yoga techniques, the study on the Epidemiology of Yoga among the Urban Population conducted by the Community Medicine Department of the Institute of Medical Sciences here said. The study was conducted with a sample size of a little over 1,200 people in Bhubaneswar, now ranked among the top four Livable Capital Cities of the country, by three researchers Dr Satyajit Mohanty, Dr Sandeep Kumar Panigrahi and Dr Jyotiranjana Sahoo. "Interestingly, participation of women in yoga in the city was more compared to men and it was found that the level of education had a role in people wanting to accept and practise yoga," Prof E Venkata Rao of the Department of Community Medicine said. Stating that this was the second study on people's acceptance of yoga as a needed physical activity, Prof Rao said it is prompted by an ear-

lier study, the findings of which said only 5.3 per cent of the urban population in eastern India practise yoga. The study's findings also said that family bread winners or people belonging to higher socio-economic strata are less likely to participate in yoga, but those who practise it are physically active and are eager to take part in other forms of physical activity. It also found that 49 per cent of the physicians in Bhubaneswar prescribe yoga to their patients as a physical therapy. The study said the concept of yoga originated in India in the post-Vedic era (3000 BC). Yoga has been included as an alternative to physical activity in the recently published guidelines under the 'Fit India' programme, in which it has been recommended for all age groups. While recommending spread of the practice of yoga across Odisha for better impact in controlling non-communicable diseases, the study said the Covid-19 pandemic has left everyone rattled and there is a requirement to deal with the post-Covid scenario. "The post-Covid chronic sequels can be ameliorated

by yoga and, hence, the need for its spread," it said. Among the eight yoga techniques, 'asana' (yogic postures), 'pranayama' (breath control) and 'dhyana' (meditation) are practised most, but inappropriately on many instances, 'asana' is interchangeably used with the term yoga, the study said, adding that each of the eight steps has profound biological impact on the human body and mind. Yoga is being increasingly recognised as a medical therapy for several conditions involving non-communicable diseases like high blood pressure, high blood sugar, several lung conditions, joint conditions as osteoarthritis, low back pain and mental disorders like anxiety and depression. Any exercise or physical activity with isocaloric energy expenditure value equivalent to the World Health Organisation (WHO)-recommended 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity can prevent non-communicable diseases in all population and yoga offered a superior option than all other forms of physical activity or exercise, the study said.

# NIT holds meet on 'Financial Planning'



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Nalanda Institute of Technology (NIT)'s MBA Department conducted a webinar on the topic "Future of Financial Planning and Covid-19" on Friday. In the webinar founder president, AWOKE India, Praveen Kumar Dwivedi was the esteemed speaker. Over 100 participants joined. Dwivedi focused on knowledge regarding various kinds of financial planning, products, insurance, investments, savings, portfolio management and earning of profit in the wake of Covid-19. The welcome address was given by HoD MBA Dr Manoj Kumar Sahoo. Professor Deepti Mishra conducted the webinar and lastly, Professor Prafulla Kumar Dwivedi gave the vote of thanks. The event was held with the joint collaboration of Bombay Stock Exchange and AWOKE India with full cooperation of B-School Forum, Knowledge Centre, Odisha.

# 'Take strong action in N'garh girl murder case'

It reminds Pari episode, says BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The BJP Mahila Morcha on Sunday expressed concern over the increasing atrocities on children like rape and murder cases in the State, especially in Nayagarh district. Morcha State president Smruti Patnaik alleged that due to failure and insensitivity of the BJD Government the crime against women and children are on the rise. As the Government and particularly the Minister from Nayagarh district maintain



do not take any action immediately, the criminals have become fearless. The recent Banigochha case in the district in which a minor girl was raped and murdered

is a grim reminder of what happened in the Pari case in Minister Arun Sahoo's constituency a year back. A Mahila Morcha delegation led by

Archana Das visited the baby's family and consoled them. The Morcha demanded immediate action and exemplary punishment to the accused.

# In city Sex racket busted; 3 held; woman rescued

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Commissionerate police on Sunday busted a sex racket operating from a rented house at Buddheswari Colony under the Laxmisagar police station in Bhubaneswar. Acting on information from locals, the Laxmisagar police conducted a raid on the house, which was used as a guesthouse, and arrested three persons, including the guesthouse manager, and rescued a woman. Sources said the racket was functioning from the guesthouse for the last two to

three months. But since it didn't have any signboard, nobody had any inkling about it. Later, though the police reportedly had conducted raids on it twice, they were unable to find anything illegal. However, after locals found girls and strangers frequenting the house, they became suspicious and informed police. The cops were carrying out further investigation about the kingpin of the racket, the house owner, from where the sex workers were brought into the establishment and the modus operandi of contacting the customers by the accused.

Notably, some sleazy hotels and guesthouses in the city's Cuttack Road area and near the railway station are notorious for being used for prostitution rackets and are most of the time on the radar of police. But it is not clear whether these hotel managements are providing space knowingly or unknowingly for these rackets. Besides, it is also not known whether police have, of late, held any meeting with hoteliers and guesthouse owners to ensure that their properties are not used for immoral activities.

# 'Artist never dies; only her body has left us'

## Ollywood mourns Tapu Mishra's death

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ollywood mourned the untimely demise of its popular playback singer Tapu Mishra, who lost the battle to Covid-19 late on Saturday night. Tapu's body was consigned to flame at the Satyanagar crematorium here on Sunday morning in the presence of her family members and many Ollywood actors. "An artist



never dies. Only her body has left us, but she will remain immortal through her music and songs," said actress-turned-

politician Elina Dash. The 36-year-old Tapu had been on ventilator support some days after being admitted to a private hospital here since May 19. She died at about 11 pm on Saturday. "Tapu, no one can believe that you will go like this. Another star has risen in the sky today. We could not do anything. Rest in peace dear. Om Shanti," wrote actor Sabyasachi Mishra, who is working for people during the pandemic. Actor-turned-politician Anubhav Mohanty said, "Not only was she the finest singer but also she was a compassionate human being. I was in constant touch with hospital

doctors attending to Tapu. I was praying for her recovery, but she lost battle." Anubhav had made debut in Ollywood with the movie 'I Love You', in which Tapu debuted in Odia film industry as a young playback singer. Actress-turned social activist Varsha Priyadarshini wrote: "Tapu! You will always be remembered. The death of Tapu Mishra, a famous vocalist, is an irreparable loss for the Odia music and also for me. My condolences to her family and friends and my prayers to the Lord for her soul. Her fame in the world of Odia music will always be remembered."

# Dissent and protest should not be punished



■ S. JYOTIRANJANA

The right to protest and dissent is an indispensable aspect of the right to freedom of speech and expression and has been accorded very high position taking into account our experience of freedom struggle against the British. However, there has been umpteen instances of right of protest have been confounded with sedition and terrorism.

Irrespective of all of this, the recent observation of Delhi High Court while granting bail to three students in the north-east Delhi riots "conspiracy" case has been quite encouraging, in which the court said, "It seems that in its anxiety to suppress dissent, in the mind of the State, the line between the right to protest and terrorist activity seems to be getting somewhat blurred. If this mindset gains traction it would be a sad day for democracy." Over the years, the Supreme Court has demarcated the line between the right to protest and the Government's authority to suppress the protests or agitations. In Himat Lal K Shah vs Commissioner of Police, in the year 1973 the Supreme Court keeping in view the public safety and law and order concerns, had barred the citizens to stage a protest by forming unions and associations at

"whatever place they please", having said that it left the duty of assigning place of protest to the appropriate government and held, "the government cannot by law abridge or take away the right of assembly by prohibiting assembly on every public street or public place". The Supreme Court has further held against whimsical and politically motivated government diktats of muzzling the voice of protest in the name of law and order or endangering of public interest; hence in the case of S Rangarajan vs Jagjivan Ram, 1989, the court said, "Our commitment to freedom of expression demands that it cannot be suppressed unless the situations created by allowing the freedom are pressing and the community interest is endangered." It further clarified on what 'danger' would mean in the context of protests as, "The anticipated danger should

not be remote, conjectural or far-fetched. It should have proximate and direct nexus with the expression." Apart from this, in the case of Re-Ramlila Maidan Incident vs Home Secretary, 2011, in the issue involving the arrest of yoga guru Ramdev Baba following his anti-black money agitation, the court rightly held that the right to freedom of speech and expression is the essence of a democratic system. Further the court said, "There could be no expression without these rights. Liberty of thought enables liberty of expression. Attainment of the preambled liberties [of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship] is eternally connected to the liberty of expression." Last year while adjudicating a matter pertaining to the Shaheen Bagh protest over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), in Amit Sahnii vs

Commissioner of Police case, the Supreme Court held that public places cannot be occupied indefinitely in the pretext of protest and such occupation of public places "is not acceptable and the administration ought to take action to keep the areas clear of encroachment or obstructions". However, such a view of the court was not anti-'the right of protest', but, as it clarified, "Democracy and dissent go hand in hand, but then the demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places alone. The present case was not even one of protests taking place in an undesignated area, but was a blockage of a public way which caused grave inconvenience to commuters." Wherein the court also said, "We have considered the earlier judicial pronouncements and recorded our opinion that the Constitutional

scheme comes with a right to protest and express dissent but with an obligation to have certain duties." Additionally, the court held, "The right to protest cannot be anytime and everywhere. There may be some spontaneous protests but in case of prolonged dissent or protest, there cannot be continued occupation of the public place." While the court has been quite spontaneous and vocal in support of upholding the right to protest as an extension of right of freedom of speech and expression but it expects the citizens to exercise the right with respect to the boundaries drawn within the same constitutional scheme. As under Article 51A it is a fundamental duty of the citizens to safeguard public property and abjure violence. It is not difficult to understand that fundamental rights are subject to "reasonable restrictions" and

the right to protest is no exception. Therefore, state can act against the protesters in order to protect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign countries, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence. However, any excess state action to curb any protest without the justifications of reasonable restrictions and just to safeguard political interests is absolutely unacceptable and against the spirit of democracy. We must not forget despite China surpassing us on many accounts, it has not succeeded in the field of being a democracy and that is precisely why Prime Minister Modi was asked to speak at the G7 Summit and his Chinese counterpart lost the privilege. Besides, Modi in his address to

the G7 leaders has termed India as a democratic country and therefore a natural ally of their group. Interestingly, the G7 statement which India supports, reads as follows, "We will harness the power of democracy, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights to answer the biggest questions and overcome the greatest challenges." The fact is we cannot continue to stand anywhere near the G7 statement as above, if we fail to respect the right to protest and dissent and put a genuine effort to understand the voice of dissent, rather than punishing it. (The writer is a lawyer and public policy expert and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Law and Media Studies at School of Mass Communication, KIIT University. He can be reached at sjyotiranjana3@gmail.com)

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# N'rangpur women duped of lakhs on loan plea

Finance firm after 2 months of operation closes office  
MONOHAR MOHANTY ■ NABARANGPUR

Two months ago, one Ravi Narayan Rautaray had opened a company called AU Small Finance by renting a room on Medical Road in Umakote town of Nabarangpur district. From April 31 to June 5, Ravi introduced himself as an assistant manager of the company and assigned four girls and a boy from Umakote area to oversee the group's paperwork and online login. Ravi Narayan's job was to bring women groups together to form new groups for providing them loans. He took a deposit of Rs 840 for a loan of Rs 30,000 and Rs 940 for a loan of Rs 40,000 as insurance and processing fees. In this regard, Ravi Narayan asked innocent women SHGs to submit copies of bank accounts, voter IDs and Aadhaar card for registration

purpose. Sources said that about 2,500 women groups from Chandahandi, Raighar, Jharigam and Umakote areas of Nabarangpur district have paid lakhs of rupees in the name of insurance and processing fees to get loan. The money was collected from about 2,500 groups. However, on July 10 at 10 am, the staff members found the office locked and the office sign board missing. They tried to contact Ravi Narayan over phone but his mobile was switched off. Later, they went to Ravi's house near the office and found the door locked. Being asked, the house owner said Ravi had not been in his room since last evening. The news spread rapidly in the area. After seeing closure of office, the women who had paid money insisted on return of the money. Finally, the employees lodged a written complaint with the Umakote police station for self-defence. Contacted, Umakote PS IIC Naresh Pradhan said, "The complaint has been registered and police have taken steps to apprehend accused."

# 1 dies, 2 critical in jumbo attack on forest godown in Sambalpur

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

A person was killed on the spot and two others sustained critical injuries when an elephant attacked them while they were sleeping in a kendu leaf godown at Gadumunda village under the Rairakhol Wildlife Division in Sambalpur district on Saturday night. The deceased Bimbardhar Mahakud was a labourer. The other injured Binayak Dehury and Pabitra Dehury were initially admitted to the Rairakhol hospital before being shifted to the VIMSAR in Burla after their health conditions worsened. Both legs of Binayak and Pabitra have been fractured. Reports said six persons were sleeping in the godown after having dinner when the elephant barged into the house and attacked them. The three other labourers, managed to escape. Later, tension ran high in the village as locals protested when Forest Department officials reached the spot late after getting information. However, the officials pacified the mob and sent the deceased's body for postmortem.

# Rape accused flees cops' custody in Rourkela

While in hospital for test, he ran away on plea of going to washroom  
PNS ■ ROURKELA

A rape accused who was sent for medical examination with escorts after his arrest managed to flee hospital in movie style on Saturday evening here. Police launched a manhunt to nab him. A married woman had lodged a complaint at the Chhend police station that Kishore Das, a resident of Chhend, had been forcibly keeping physical relationship with her for last few days and threatening her of dire consequences if she told it to anybody. Police nabbed Kishore on Saturday afternoon. The accused was sent for medical examination to the Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) at around 5 pm along with three escorting policemen. His first round of medical checkup was conducted and he was asked to wait for a second round. On the plea of going to washroom, he suddenly started running out from the hospital premises. The three escorts ran after him for a while, but he successfully escaped from the spot by pillion-riding a Bullet motorcycle. The driver of the Bullet is reportedly the nephew of the accused. The incident, however, has come as a major embarrassment for police since it clearly appeared from the CCTV footage that the accused escaped in a planned manner. "We will nab the accused soon," said Panposh SDPO Santa Nutan Samal, adding, "A departmental inquiry will be conducted; and if any police official is found guilty, action will be taken against him."

# Covid distress Brahmapur MLA distributes relief materials

Cremares body  
PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

A team of volunteers led by Brahmapur MLA Bikram Panda distributed dry food packets and ration items among the poor people of Ayodhya Nagar under Ward No.34. More than 430 packets of ration items and rice were distributed in the area. Among others, Subash Maharana, Sanjeet Kumar Panigrahi, Srikanta Pattnaik, Srinivas Rao, Ajit Panda, Jagannath Sabat, Tapas Sahu, Nalinikanta Debdarshi, Surendra Maharana, Amit Das, Sunil Panda, Aditya Pattnaik, Sarita Panda were present in the relief distribution event. Similarly on Thursday night at 10 pm, MLA Panda received a call from an old and ailing woman of Brahmapur who was literally crying for help to cremate her son Shankara Gouda who died of cancer. She was not getting support of the relatives and neighbours who were scared of Corona and not coming to her to lift the body to the burial ground. Panda came with a team of volunteers from "Mo Paribar" and arranged everything for the cremation of the body.

Cremares body  
PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

# INBRIEF

## GANJAM CHAMBER MEMBERS, FAMILY VACCINATED



Brahmapur: As many as 280 members of the Ganjam Chamber of Commerce (GCC) along with staffs and family members were administered Covid vaccine on Saturday at the chamber office here. While 216 persons were given the first dose under the 18-44 age group, 64 under the 45+ category got the first job. The programme was conducted by the Berhampur Municipal Corporation. The vaccination camp was coordinated by the chamber president E Shiva Prasad Rao and secretary V Santosh Kumar.

## NAGARIKA PARISHAD DISTRIBUTES COOKED FOOD IN B'PUR



Berhampur: The Govind Vihar Nagarika Parishad of Lochapada here distributed cooked food packets to 300 poor and daily wage earners living in Govind Vihar, Bhabinipur Nrusingha Temple and MKGC Medical College Hospital area. The food distribution programme was continued from June 4 to 17. Shanti Kalyan Mandap in Govind Vihar has helped them in cooking and packing foods. The program was conducted with financial and material support and assistance by the Parishad members.

# BJP demands Baripada Rath Yatra

PNS ■ BARIPADA

The BJP Mayurbhanj (East) unit held a news conference here on Sunday to press for its demand for holding Rath Yatra on the Grand Road of Baripada, which is described as the second Shrikshetra. Party leaders urged the Government to give permission for the festival in full compliance with Covid norms as has been decided for the Rath Yatra at Shrikshetra Puri. The Press conference was addressed by district BJP president Kandra Soren along with MLAs



Prakash Soren, Budhan Murmu and Sanatan Bijuli and leaders Kavi Vishnu Satpathy, Sanjeev Mohanty, Krushna Chandra Mohapatra and others. They said Baripada has been witnessing the famous Rath Yatra on its Grand Road for more than 400 years now.

# UAIL signs pact for business incubation

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

The Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL), a unit of Hindalco Industries Limited signed an MoU on June 16 with Entrepreneurship Development Initiative of India (EDII) to set up a rural business incubation centre, Udyamee, in Kashipur block of Rayagada. The MoU was signed by Unit Head, Utkal Alumina Mazhar Beig and Director Corporate Projects, EDII Dr Raman Gujral in the presence of senior delegates Bipul

# UAIL signs pact for business incubation

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Chatterjee, Head, CSR, Hindalco Industries, Dr Sunil Sukla, Director General, EDII, along with dignitaries from the UAIL and EDII. Over the next three years, Project Udyamee will nurture 300 entrepreneurs from Kashipur block and Thuamul Rampur block of Kalahandi in non-farm and agri-allied sectors partnering with EDII. Identification of aspiring youths, mapping of their skill sets and providing business solutions are some of the key components of the project. The project will converge various Government run schemes and programmes related to entrepreneurship development and seed an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region.

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# Seven held for lynching man in Baleswar

Miscreants stoned helper of cattle-laden vehicle to death  
PNS ■ BALESWAR

In connection with murder of a helper of a cattle-laden container, the Khantapara police arrested seven people. They were identified as Jogeswar Sahu, Abdul Sultan Khan, Arabinda Mahalik, Ramakanta Das, Bhuleswar Sahu, Nirmalya Behera and Kshitish Chandra Rout. SK Sahruck was stoned to death by these accused when the cattle laden container was heading from Bhadrak towards Bengal near Sergarh after they intercepted the vehicle there on Thursday morning. According to police, these goans in the name of cow savers used to stop the cattle vehicles and extort money at different points on the NH. And on that day, they had demanded money from the cattle laden vehicle driver and helper and when they didn't get money there was an altercation which led to the incident. Critically, wounded Saharukh had died on the way to hospital. As the news spread a scuffle took place between the supporters of Saharukh and the cow savers and Kapileswar Rout belonging to the latter group was injured.

# Paradip leader honours scribes as Covid warriors

PNS ■ PARADIP

Paradip's renowned social activists and trade union leader Rakesh Pattnaik honoured mediapersons of Paradip on Wednesday for their relentless and dedicated service during the fight against the Covid-19. A felicitation programme was held at Press Squire near to Paradip Model police station following Covid-19 guidelines.

Nearly 40 journalists were offered sanitizers, masks and other Covid preventative and safety materials. Notably, the working journalists are doing a great service to the State as well as country by providing seamless news feeds, making people aware of issues relating to Covid-19 during these very trying times and they are a great support for the war against Covid-19. More than 100 journalists have lost their lives due to Covid-19, said the speakers on the occasion.



Paradip: A felicitation programme was held at Press Squire near to Paradip Model police station following Covid-19 guidelines.

# 6 looters held; cash, pistol seized in B'swar

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Cracking a loot incident, the Nilgiri police on Sunday arrested six miscreants and recovered cash worth Rs 5.51 lakh and a pistol from them. Three other miscreants were absconding. The arrestees were identified as Chandrakant Mohapatra, Surendra Pradhan, Madhusudan Behera, Susanta Barik, Pradip Pradhan and Jatun Pradhan. They had looted Rs 10 lakh from Dinesh

Sanghvi, a resident of Baleswar and a jeweller. On June 17, Dinesh had gone to buy gold from the Nilgiri area along with Pradip Pradhan, who happened to be the son of the former's friend. While he was going with cash and a licenced gun to procure gold, on way some people in uniform stopped him posing themselves as Forest department personnel. They searched his scooter and took away the cash as well as pistol before fleeing spot. Dinesh while lodged an FIR with police, the latter during investigation could learn Pradip and Jatun were the key conspirators who informed others that Dinesh was going to village Dwarika under Oupada block to buy gold. Jatun had prepared a blueprint on how to execute loot along with others. SDPO Nilgiri Ritesh Mohapatra said loot was pre-planned and three absconders would be brought to book soon.

# Stop abusing elders; they're your guiding spirit



SUBHANARAYAN SATAPATHY

philosophy to give right directions to their inheritors. They never mislead family; rather they show the right path to protect us and our family. In return, they never wait for any kind of support from the inheritors. In many cases, it has been seen that after achieving the goal, some inheritors forget the elders' contribution for their success. But no one can deny that without elders' support a person cannot stand strongly. A study reveals that the global population of people, aged 60 years and older, will more than double from 900 million in

2015 to about 2 billion in 2050. Elder abuse is predicted to increase as many countries are experiencing rapidly ageing populations. Rates of elder abuse have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Elder abuse can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences. There are several types of abuse like hitting, punching, slapping, burning, pushing, kicking, restraining, false imprisonment/confinement etc. Similarly mental abuses are humiliating, verbal forms of abuse, constantly criticising, accusations, blaming, or non-

verbal forms such as ignoring, silence, shunning or withdrawing affection etc. Also, financial exploitation involving misappropriation of financial resources by family members or strangers, etc, is making their life difficult and troublesome. Forcing elders to take part in sexual activity against their will and various types of negligence depriving them of proper medical treatment are another major problem. Now-a-days, abandonment of elders is a matter of serious concern. Scars, broken bones, rope mark etc are the signs to identify the

physical form of abuse against elders. Unresponsive or uncommunicative social isolation, suspicious or fearful signs may be the emotional abuse. In maximum cases, such emotional abuse go unreported which are most damaging leading to physical and mental health problems of elders. The study also says that the risk of death for elder abuse victims is three times higher than for non-victims. An abuser can be a spouse, partner, relative, friend, neighbour, volunteer worker, paid worker, practitioner, solicitor, or any other individual with the intent to

deprive a vulnerable person of his/her resources. Additionally, past studies have estimated that between 16% and 38% of all elder abusers have histories of mental illness. As most of the abuses are occurring within the family, the abusers may be unemployed, may have criminal history, mental health problems, or history of abusing others. Lower income or poverty has been found to be associated with elder abuse. Low economic resources have been conceptualized as a contextual or situational stressor contributing to elder abuse. Living

with a large number of household members other than a spouse is associated with an increased risk of abuse, especially financial abuse. In most cases after abuse, the elders are hiding the problems. Elder abuse victims are often unwilling to report their abuse for fear of others' disbelief, loss of independence, of being sent to old age homes and of losing their only social support. It can be prevented if the elders association at village or ward level will be formed. In the informal small conflict resolution within family or community, and monitoring of

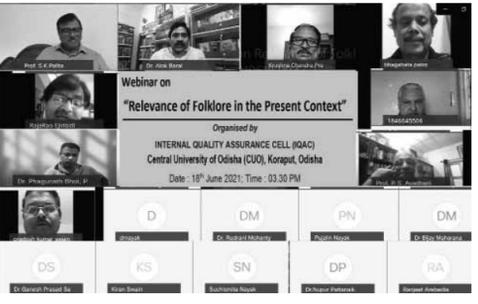
standard of care of elder persons in the families, the elder persons of the locality should be involved. The mobile health team of nearest health centers may visit regularly to the home of elders for periodical health check-up and to monitor their psychological condition. It is needed to encourage elders to raise voice against maltreatment and negligence by their family members using various laws for the protection of elder persons. (The writer lives at Bijipur, Brahmagiri, Puri; M-09438432023)

# 'Folklores are nation's cultural identities'

CUO holds webinar  
PNS ■ KORAPUT

A webinar on 'Relevance of Folklore in the Present Context' was organised by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the Central University of Odisha, Koraput, on Friday here, in which Prof Krushna Chandra Pradhan, Visiting Professor, (Odia Language and Literature) delivered a lecture. CUO VC Prof I Ramabrahmam conveyed his best wishes for a successful programme and hoped the students of the CUO will learn the importance of folklore in the present context. Prof Sharat Kumar Palita, Dean, SBCNR and Director, IQAC, chaired, while Dr Alok Baral, Head-in-Charge, Department of Odia

and Sanskrit, delivered the introductory note and explained the relevance of the topic. Delivering his address Prof Pradhan highlighted different features and forms of folklore in the local as well as a global culture. He also highlighted forms of folklore such as folk literature, folk dance, folk culture and folk stories by giving examples of different stories and phrases of Odia literature and their importance in day-to-day's life. He said, "Folklore always carries ethnic culture of period reflected in the contemporary dance, drama, song and literature. They are identities of various cultures of a nation."



Webinar on 'Relevance of Folklore in the Present Context' was organised by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) of the Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput, Odisha.

# 'Take pride in wearing CRPF combat uniform'



RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The CRPF headquarters has issued a directive to all the formations across the country to take pride in wearing the paramilitary's khaki/ combat pattern uniform. The move comes after CRPF chief Kuldeep Singh took exception to a number of officers and men wearing the CoBRA pattern fatigue while deployed in Jammu and Kashmir.

Despite repeated reminders for following the uniform rules, even senior officials have been flouting the norms in the Valley.

"During the visit to operational units in Jammu and Kashmir, the DG, CRPF observed that in spite of the instructions, some officers/men are still wearing CoBRA pattern of combat uniform. It is once again reiterated that we

need to take pride in wearing CRPF pattern uniform," an official said, quoting the circular sent recently across the formations.

The official further said, "The competent authority has desired that all officers/men including QATs/CTTs to wear only prescribed pattern khaki/ combat uniforms as applicable in the area."

While QAT refers to Quick Action Teams, the CTT implies Counter-Terrorism Team.

Earlier, similar instructions were issued on April 16 and April 19 this year underscoring the need to adhere to the uniform rules.

In the circular issued on April 16, the DG's office had said, "Competent authority has observed that officers are exhibiting complacency towards their uniform. Uniform is a matter of pride and officers must have an

exemplary turn-out at all times. Commandants and senior officers should not hesitate to point out deficiencies. Henceforth, please ensure that officers and the men they command are smartly turned out." It called for a strict compliance of the order.

Likewise, in a separate letter on April 19, the Force reiterated the importance of wearing proper uniform.

Combat Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) is a specialized anti-Naxal force within the overall command of the CRPF.

The CRPF was raised in 1939 but despite being in existence for over 80 years, the paramilitary does not have a patented pattern for uniform. Besides the CoBRA, the Rapid Action Force (RAF) also has a distinctive pattern of fatigue. The RAF uniform pattern has been copied by the West Bengal

police and the disruptive pattern of the CoBRA uniform has been adopted by several state police forces in absence of any patents for these uniforms.

Despite being the biggest paramilitary with lead roles in various operational theatres, the provisioning directorate has not been able to properly address the continuity and cohesion factor that is instilled through a consistent pattern of uniform.

A senior official said that during the entire winter season every year, the CRPF has to rely on the Jammu and Kashmir Police pattern of jacket in the absence of any authorised pattern of winter jackets (angola dark shade) of its own.

During various official meetings, even the senior officers have been found asking the delegates to wear the JKP pattern of winter jacket to maintain uniformity.

"It is unfortunate that even the Police forces are having better and established dress codes and the lead paramilitary force like CRPF lacks any coherent uniform which is so important for inculcating discipline in the ranks and imparting a unique identity," the official added.

During the last 17 years, the CRPF uniform has been changed thrice and the fatigue in vogue currently was introduced during the then paramilitary chief K Vijay Kumar in 2012.

This combat pattern uniform has bright white patches which could give a distinctive advantage to the ultras during operations in various theatres as they may not be so effective in camouflaging, officials said.

"Frequent changes in the uniform pattern disrupts continuity in outlook and leads to lack of cohesive continuum with regard to the image of the force," this official added.

# ₹4L compensation to Covid-19 victims not feasible: Centre to SC

New Delhi: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh cannot be paid to the families of those who have died of Covid-19 as it is beyond fiscal affordability and the finances of central and state governments are under severe strain.

In an affidavit filed before the top court, the Ministry of Home Affairs said the Centre submitted that it has by ways of "Minimum Standard Relief", under section 12 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, taken several steps providing for substantial and speedy measures by way of increase in health, infrastructure, ensuring food safety to every citizen.

"The prayer of the petitioner for payment of ex-gratia to all deceased persons due to Covid-19 is beyond the fiscal affordability of the state governments. Already the finances of state governments and the central government are under severe strain due to the reduction in tax revenues and increase in health expenses on account of the pandemic.

"Thus, utilisation of scarce resources for giving ex-gratia may have unfortunate consequences of affecting the pandemic response and health expenditure in other aspects and hence cause more damage than good. It is an unfortunate but important fact that the resources of the governments have limits and any additional burden through ex-gratia will reduce the funds available for other health and welfare schemes," the affidavit filed by the Centre said.



It further submitted that under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Section 12, the "National Authority" is empowered to recommend guidelines for the minimum standards of relief, including ex-gratia assistance and the function entrusted to the authority by the law passed by the Parliament.

"It is well settled through numerous judgements of the Supreme Court that this is a matter which should be performed by the authority, to whom it has been entrusted and not one where the Court will substitute its own judgement for the decision to be

taken by the Executive.

"Any attempt to second guess may create unintended and unfortunate constitutional and administrative ramifications. It may also be noted that the term 'ex-gratia' itself connotes that the amount is not based on legal entitlement," the affidavit stated.

The Centre told the apex court that it is wrong to state that the help can be provided only through ex-gratia assistance as "it would be a rather pedantic and narrow approach".

"A broader approach, which involves health interventions, social protection, and economic recovery for the

affected communities, would be a more prudent, responsible, and sustainable approach. Globally, the governments in other countries too have followed this approach, and have announced interventions that provide fiscal stimulus. Government of India has followed a similar approach," it said.

Earlier, on June 11, the Centre told the top court that issues raised in the pleas, seeking directions for ex-gratia compensation of ₹4,00,000 to the families of those who have died of Covid-19, are "genuine" and are under consideration of the government. PTI

## Centre lost sense of responsibility towards people: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged the Centre has lost all sense of balance and responsibility towards people. The Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "Power-drunk Modi government has lost all sense of balance and responsibility towards people. In an affidavit to the Supreme Court, the BJP government claims it doesn't have money to pay even ₹4 lakh as ex-gratia compensation to families of Covid victims." Does Modi Govt even feel the pain and suffering? No money for compensation to COVID-19 victim families but Rs 20,000 crore are being spent on Central Vista and a palace for prime minister. And where are the ₹3,89,662 crore collected in the year 2020-21 from the loot in prices of petrol and diesel?" he asked in another tweet.

# Nadda asks party workers to focus on Covid-related works

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping an eye on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and expected third wave in the country, BJP national president J P Nadda on Sunday reviewed the progress of party's work on the ground towards helping out those affected by the virulent second wave of the Coronavirus infection.



In the backdrop of lives lost due to the pandemic across the country and large-scale unemployment following the lockdown, the BJP has reassessed its approach and asked all its central and state ministers, MPs and MLAs to personally focus on Covid-19-related work in their respective areas and mitigate impact of the pandemic.

government.

The government has recently been criticised by the opposition for being caught off-guard during the second wave of the Covid-19 in April-May, leading to major casualties.

Nadda's meet will also focus on preparations for the third wave of COVID and be prepared with all that necessary to deal with the pandemic.

their best under the able guidance of the Prime Minister."

As part of its 'Sewa hi Sangathan', BJP has plans to train a woman and a youth worker each in two lakh urban neighbourhoods and villages in the country.

Six States are going to poll next year including Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Gujarat.

Nadda will now be meeting ministers every Sunday for the next 6 weeks to bring party work in sync with the government's development and welfare policies, an exercise that party has been doing in the first inning of the Modi-

Nadda assessed the work done under the programmes 'Sewa hi Sangathan' and 'Vaccination Drive' saying, "Today, a review meeting was held with all the national vice presidents of the BJP on 'Sewa Hi Sangathan', 'vaccination drive' and other programmes and all partymen are doing

The Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry election campaigns had invited public criticism of Governments and political leaders who were seen to be busy with 'power games', ignoring the surge in the Covid-19 second wave.

The review meeting by Nadda is an attempt to be alert, this time round, to the public sentiments, and ward off opposition attack in view of the approaching assembly polls.

# Chirag to launch 'aashirvaad yatra' from July 5

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Embroiled in a power tussle with his uncle, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) leader Chirag Paswan on Sunday announced an "aashirvaad yatra" from July 5, the birth anniversary of his father and party founder Ram Vilas Paswan, from Hajipur in Bihar. The move is to popular legitimacy in his battle for the party's ownership with the rival faction, headed by his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras.

The meeting chaired by Chirag also urged the Modi government to confer Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, on Ram Vilas Paswan, a popular Dalit leader from Bihar who died last year.

Accusing his family rivals of "stabbing" him in the back, Paswan made the announcement following a meeting of the LJP national executive which endorsed his leadership and hit out at the faction headed by his paternal uncle for working against the party's constitution.

He claimed that over 90 per cent of the national executive members were in the meeting. The decision to launch the yatra from Hajipur is significant as Paswan's father was elected to the Lok Sabha from there for eight times, and Paras represents the seat now in the House.

Paras, in turn, dismissed the meeting as an assembly of "rented crowd" and claimed that it held no legitimacy.

The Election Commission will now decide whether his group is the real LJP or whether the Chirag-led faction is right, he told reporters.

Chirag said Hajipur had been "karmabhoomi" of his father and the yatra will roll out across the state and culminate with a meeting of the party's national council.

As he fights an all out battle to reclaim his father's legacy with all other party MPs, including his cousin Prince Raj, siding with Paras, Paswan launched an emotional attack on the rival members of his family for not waiting for even the first death anniversary of Ram Vilas Paswan and stabbing him in the back.



Mawya Sudan, a resident of Jammu and Kashmir, has become the first woman fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force (IAF) from Rajouri district. Hailing from the village of Lamberi, of Border Tehsil of Nowshera in Rajouri, she was commissioned into the IAF as Flying Officer. Mawya has become the 12th woman officer and first from Rajouri to be inducted as a fighter pilot in the IAF. Pioneer photo

# Congress alleges scam in land purchase by Ram Temple Trust



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged a scam in the purchase of land by the Ram Temple Trust in Ayodhya and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Supreme Court to "fulfil their responsibility" by ordering a court-monitored probe to find the truth.

Supreme Court and its judges and the prime minister who formed the Trust, to find out the truth and investigate this.

"Shouldn't the Supreme Court take cognisance of the matter? The Supreme Court should discharge its duty... hold an audit of the entire transactions under its monitoring and punish the culprits," Surjewala said when asked if the party would move the court.

AICC chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that the "loot" of funds collected in the name of Lord Ram is "continuing" at the hands of BJP leaders in Ayodhya and questioned the "silence" of the prime minister and the Supreme Court.

"Now the question is whether the Supreme Court and the prime minister will discharge their duty, we leave it to their discretion," he said.

Surjewala said if it is anyone's responsibility, it is Prime Minister Modi's as he formed this trust.

He alleged that a BJP leader brought 890 metres of land in Ayodhya for Rs 20 lakh in February and sold it to the Temple Trust for a whopping Rs 2.5 crore, making a profit of 1250 percent in only 79 days.

"Lord Ram's temple is being constructed as per the orders of the Supreme Court. Is it not the responsibility of the

Supreme Court and the prime minister who formed the Trust, to find out the truth and investigate this. It is not only a question of morality, but it is also a question of constitutionality," he said, adding that the ball is now in the prime minister's court on what action he takes.

He said the people will never forgive anyone who loots donations in the name of Lord

Ram.

The Congress had earlier alleged that land purchased for Rs 2 crore was sold for Rs 18.5 crore to the Trust "within minutes", as per the land deed registered on March 18 this year, and demanded an SC-monitored probe into the "scam".

BJP leaders had hit out at the Congress, claiming those who were opposed to the Ram temple constructions were now trying to derail it by making false and misleading allegations.

Surjewala said with the "facts" now in the public domain, an investigation is required under the supervision of the Supreme Court to ascertain the truth.

Posing five questions to Prime Minister Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he asked, "What is the reason that Modi-Adityanath ji are completely silent on taking action against the sinners who openly looted funds for the construction of the Ram temple.

# Covid-19 cases falling in country, lowest in 81 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 cases in India continued to witness a declining trend in the country with 58,419 new cases recorded on Sunday, lowest in the last 81 days. In the same time span, 1,576 fatalities were reported which was lowest in 63 days, according to data released by the Government.

India recorded less than 60,000 new coronavirus infections after 81 days taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,98,81,965, while the active cases further reduced to 7,29,243. The death toll climbed to 3,86,713 fatalities.

The active cases further declined to 7,29,243 comprising 2.44 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate improved to 96.27 per cent. A net decline of 30,776 cases has been recorded in the Covid-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 18,11,446 tests were conducted on Saturday

taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of Covid-19 in the country to 39,10,19,083.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 3.22 per cent. It has been less than 5 per cent for 13 consecutive days, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate has declined to 3.43 per cent.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 38th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,87,66,009, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.29 per cent, the data stated.

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 the December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

# Covid-induced hyperglycemia patients can look towards ayurveda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Those who survived Covid-19 but are now battling with too much sugar in their blood, a condition called hyperglycemia that is a signature feature of diabetes, can look towards ayurvedic formulations like BGR-34 which are based on natural bioactive compounds with Dipeptidyl-peptidase-4 (DPP-4) inhibitory effects to manage the health issues.

Developed by one of the labs of the Council Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), BGR-34 has natural bioactive compounds of Daruharidra with DPP-4 inhibitory effects. In fact, as per a research published in the Journal of Drug Research, the primary source of DPP-4 inhibitors is the herbal plant Daruharidra.

betes patients. These are sourced from Gudmaar herbal plants.

According to a global analysis published in the journal, Diabetes, Obesity and Metabolism, at least 14.4 per cent of Covid survivors have reported hyperglycemia causing dysfunctioning of their immune response.

Though a plethora of medicines are available in the market to check hyperglycemia, DPP-4 inhibitors have been found to be most safe to arrest the condition, as per a recent study in Elsevier journal. Symptoms of hyperglycemia are frequent urination, excessive thirst, blurry vision, or unexplained weight

Similarly, the chemical element Trigonoside found in fenugreek, yet another herbal plant, too checks high blood sugar levels, as has been detailed in the journal, Environmental Challenge. BGR-34 too, among various other herbal ingredients, contains bioactive compounds of both these medicinal plants.

Giloy, Vijaysaar and Majeeth, all known for their anti-diabetic properties, are already found in BGR-34. Dr Rawat said that these studies are proof that the herbal formulation is also effective in treatment of hyperglycemia in covid survivors.

While nearly one in six people with diabetes in the world being from India which is reeling under Covid-19, cases of hyperglycemia caused by damage of the pancreatic beta cells, leading to insufficient insulin production, is on increase.

Dr AKS Rawat, scientist from CSIR's lab National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, which has developed the ayurvedic drug, said, "Because of this property, the Daruharidra was added in the herbal formulation BGR-34.

The scientists had researched extensively to study its efficacy."

Besides Daruharidra, BGR-34 has two other herbal elements that control hyperglycemia.

One of these is Gymnemic acids, which again, according to a ChemRxiv journal, controls hyperglycemia in the dia-

# Lakshadweep admin mulls shifting HC jurisdiction from Kerala to K'ntka

PTI ■ KOCHI/ NEW DELHI

The Lakshadweep administration, which has been facing widespread protests from the islands' people over some of its policies, has mooted a proposal to shift its legal jurisdiction from the Kerala High Court to the Karnataka High Court, officials said.

The proposal was initiated by the administration after several litigations were moved before the Kerala High Court against the decisions taken by

the islands' new administrator Praful Khoda Patel.

These decisions included revising standard operating procedures for Covid appropriate behaviour, introduction of the "goonda act" and demolishing hutments of fishermen for widening of roads.

Patel, who is the administrator of Daman and Diu, was given the additional charge of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep in the first week of December last year, when the former administrator

Dineshwar Sharma died after a brief illness.

This year, as many as 23 applications, including 11 writ petitions, have been filed against the administrator of Lakshadweep and also against the alleged high-handedness of either the police or the local government of the islands.

However, for reasons best known to the island's administration, which is under the spotlight over its handling of these issues, it has made a proposal for shifting its legal jurisdiction from the high court of Kerala to Karnataka.

Efforts to seek comments from the advisor of the administrator, A Anbarasu, and Collector of Lakshadweep S Asker Ali did not fructify.

Mails to their official e-mails and WhatsApp messages did not elicit any response to a question asking the rationale behind mooted of the proposal for shifting of legal jurisdiction.

The jurisdiction of a high court can be shifted only through an act of Parliament, according to the law.

"Parliament may by law constitute a high court for a Union Territory or declare any court in any such territory to be a high court for all or any of the purposes of this Constitution," according to Article 241 of the Constitution.

Section 4 of the same article mentions that "nothing in this article derogates from the power of Parliament to extend or exclude the jurisdiction of a high court for a state to, or from, any Union Territory or

part thereof". Talking to PTI over phone, Lok Sabha member Mohammed Faizal P P said, "This was his (Patel) first attempt to shift the judicial jurisdiction from Kerala to Karnataka." "Why was he so particular to transfer it... it's totally a misappropriation of the post. The mother tongue of the people on these islands is Malayalam," he said.

"One should not forget the name of the high court is Kerala and Lakshadweep High Court. This proposal was con-

ceived during his first visit to the islands," Faizal said and asked was there a need for this and how could he justify the proposal. Faizal said there have been 36 administrators before Patel and no one had this kind of an idea. "However, if this proposal will see any light of the day, we will oppose it tooth and nail on the floor of Parliament as well as with the judiciary," the Lok Sabha member from Nationalist Congress Party said.

He said the Save Lakshadweep Front (SLF) has been making appeals to the Centre for changing the administrator at the earliest.

"The SLF is a non-violent people's movement which has been requesting the central leadership to change Patel with someone who can be people's administrator," he added.

Legal experts from Lakshadweep said that Malayalam is the spoken as well as the written language both in Kerala and Lakshadweep and, therefore, the process could be streamlined.

## Kerala Covid situation still critical despite long-drawn lockdowns

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

There is no end in sight for the Covid-19 pandemic in Kerala despite the triple lock downs and double lockdowns slapped on the State since April 2021. The State diagnosed 11,647 new cases on Sunday while 112 persons succumbed to Covid-19 on a single day that took the total fatalities till date to 12,060.

The Test Positivity Rate, according to the press release issued by the Department of Health was 10.84 per cent. But elsewhere in Kerala, there were many regions with higher TPR, according to Government Medical Doctors.

More than 300 local self government bodies in the State have TPR of 30 per cent and high. There were 1.05 lakh patients across the State undergoing treatment for the pandemic.

Though the Government claimed that the situation is inching to normalcy, there has been no dearth of ambulances blaring their sirens ferrying critically ill patients from homes to hospitals.

The Government release on Sunday said that 1.07 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. Thiruvananthapuram topped the table of districts with the highest number of patients-1,600 while Ernakulam came close behind with 1,461 cases.

Monday will be crucial for Kerala as the lock down is being lifted in stages. All liquor outlets have been opened while bars, popularly known as watering holes too have started selling drinks, though in parcel mode. Leaders of Islamic organisations are expected to call on Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to seek his permission to get the mosques opened.

## KERALA GOLD SMUGGLING CASE

### Customs issues show-cause notice to 53 people

**Kochi:** The Customs Department probing the Kerala gold smuggling case has issued show-cause notices to 53 people including prime accused Swapna Suresh, suspended IAS officer M Sivasankar and two former diplomats in the UAE consulate, Thiruvananthapuram, official sources said here on Sunday.

The notices asking why action under Customs Act should not be taken against them in the smuggling cases were issued by Customs (Preventive) Commissioner Sumit Kumar on June 16. The case against them involves smuggling of a total of 167 kg of gold 23 times including the illegal trade of 30 kilograms gold worth nearly ₹15 crore that was seized by the Customs at Thiruvananthapuram Airport from a diplomatic bag on July 5, 2020, the sources told PTI.

## Assam among top 5 in Life on Land category of SDG Index

**Guwahati:** Assam's Environment and Forest Department has emerged as a front-runner in the Life on Land category of the 2020 edition of the Niti Aayog's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) India Index.

The index for SDGs, launched in 2018, evaluates the progress of states and union territories on social, economic, and environmental parameters. Among the 17 broad-based global SDG goals with 232 indicators,

Assam ranks fifth in the category 'Life on Land' with a composite score of 78 per cent, according to the Niti Aayog's report.

Arunachal Pradesh tops the list with a composite score of 93 per cent, followed by Madhya Pradesh 84 per cent, Odisha 83 per cent, and Telangana 81 per cent.

To be enlisted in the category of front-runners, a state or Union Territory needs to score in the range of 65-99, including both. PTI

## Amid Cong solo chant, Sena leader Sarnaik asks Uddhav to patch up with BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid the ruling Maharashtra Congress' latest posturing that it wanted to go it alone in the 2024 State Assembly polls, Shiv Sena leader Pratap Sarnaik has shot off a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, saying that the Sena must patch up with its erstwhile alliance partner BJP.

In a letter written to Uddhav who is also the Shiv Sena president, three-time MLA from Thane Sarnaik said: "The municipal corporation elections in Mumbai, Thane and Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation are round the corner. Our alliance with the BJP may have ended, but we as the erstwhile saffron alliance leaders are maintaining good relations between us. Instead of letting the relations between us deteriorate further, it is better we come closer to other."

We come together, it will benefit the party workers like me and the Shiv Sena in the long run. This is what I feel. It is for you to take a proper decision in the matter," Sarnaik said in a letter written to the Chief Minister on June 9. The June 9 letter made its way to the media on Sunday.

Alluding to the bickering within the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), Sarnaik said: "On one hand, setting aside politics, you (Uddhav Thackeray) are doing justice as the Chief Minister, while on the other, our alliance partners Congress and NCP have gone to town saying

that it is because of them that you have become the chief minister. And the Congress is talking about going it alone in the 2024 State Assembly polls."

"Instead of weaning away leaders and workers from other political parties, the Congress and NCP are trying to break the Shiv Sena. Simultaneously, some MVA Ministers and IAS officers are cosyng up to the BJP leaders at the Centre to ensure against the central investigating harassing them," Sarnaik said.

"In certain quarters of our party level, the talk that goes around is; the works of the Congress-NCP workers get done faster at the State Government level. But, despite having our party's Chief Minister in the state, the Shiv Sena MLAs are not able to get work done in various Government departments. The question that is being asked in the party circles is: whether the Shiv Sena broke its alliance with the BJP and formed the MVA to make the Congress- NCP stronger," Sarnaik said.

"At a time when the Congress and NCP are trying to weaken our party by weaning away our party workers, I feel personally that it is better that we get closer to Shri Narendra Modi. If the party does that, harassment being meted out to Sena leaders like Pratap Sarnaik, Anil Parab and Ravindra Waikar will stop. This is what the Sena workers feel," the Sena leader said.

## TN limping back to normalcy

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has succeeded in taming the Covid-19 pandemic to a great extent, according to the data for Sunday released by the Directorate of Preventive Medicine and Health.

The State logged 7, 817 new cases of Covid-19 on Sunday while the fatalities for the day stood at 182. Across the State, 1.66 lakh persons were subjected to RT-PCR tests. Coimbatore, the industrial capital of Tamil Nadu,

which had showed more than thousand cases on an average per day, registered just 904 new cases on Sunday while neighbouring Erode (870) and Tirupur (477) districts too showed that the Covid virus was getting flattened.

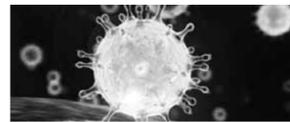
Chennai logged 455 cases while the death toll date rose to 31,197. At the time of going to Press, Tamil Nadu as a whole was in different stages of lifting of lock downs indicating that normal life is returning to the State though with restrictions.

## Maha infections rise to 9,361, deaths drop to 605

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Covid-19 deaths in Maharashtra dropped to 605 and the infections went up marginally to 9,361 on Sunday, even as 9,101 patients were discharged after full recovery from various hospitals across the State.

A day after the State logged 8912 infections and 682 pandemic deaths, the infections rose to 9,361, while the daily deaths came down by 77. Of the 9361 deaths reported on Sunday, 190 were current ones, while 415 were "old unaccounted" fatalities.



With 605 deaths reported on Friday, the Covid-19 toll in the state jumped from 1,17,356 to 1,17,961.

With 9,361 fresh infections, the total infections in the state rose from 59,63,420 to 59,72,781.

As 9,101 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the State after full recovery, the total number of peo-

ple discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year increased from 57,10356 to 57,19,457. The recovery rate in the state stood static at 95.76 per cent

The total "active cases" in the state dropped from 1,32,595 to 1,32,241. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.97 per cent.

Mumbai recorded 19 deaths and 747 infections. As a result, the Covid-19 toll in the metropolis increased from 15,279 to 15,298, while the infected cases in Mumbai went up from 7,19,266 to 7,20,013.

## 10 cr people to be vaccinated in UP by Aug-end

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government set a target of administering 7 lakh Covid vaccine doses per day which will be ramped up from July 1 and 10 crore people will be jabbed by the end of August.

"The administration has chalked out an action plan and made all arrangements to meet the target smoothly and swiftly," a Government spokesman said. Earlier, the state was administering about 4.5 lakh vaccine doses a day under 'Mission June'.

While chairing a high-level Covid review meeting on Sunday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated, "The decision of the prime minister to give free vaccines to all citizens above 18 years will boost the vaccination campaign. Taking advantage of this opportunity, we have to conduct our vaccination campaign to full capacity. Make preparations with a goal to

administer 7 lakh doses per day and then ramp it up to around 12 lakh doses from July 1," he said.

In this regard, the CM has ordered to increase the vaccination centres from 6,000 to 10,000. The Health department has directed the district magistrates to make all the arrangements accordingly. The cold chain capacity has been doubled in the state. From 80,000 litres, the capacity has been increased to 2.25 lakh litres to stock up the vaccine doses provided by the Centre, the spokesperson said.

He said from July onwards, to meet the target of 10 crore doses, the government will aim to administer nearly 12 lakh doses a day. Therefore, the next task for the state is to ensure that it has enough manpower and vaccine delivery centres. The services of more than 12,000 new nursing students will be taken for the purpose. The

UP Government has tweaked its strategy and adopted a 'cluster approach' to ensure maximum vaccination. The entire population will be divided into clusters. Focusing on rural areas, more than 97,000 revenue villages of all the development blocks in the state will be divided into clusters. The campaign promising 'ease of vaccination' aims to vaccinate one cluster a week in the village panchayat ghars. The date and place of vaccination will be given to the villagers in advance in the form of 'bulawa parchis'.

In each revenue village of the state, mobilisation teams will be constituted with gram pradhans, lekhpals, ASHA & Anganwadi workers, teachers of primary schools, panchayat secretaries and Yuvak/Mahila Mangal Dal. The cluster mobilisation teams will start the awareness drive three days prior to the pilot project.



People visit a crowded market near the historic Charminar after the Telangana Government lifted Covid-induced restrictions, in Hyderabad on Sunday PTI

## Malls, restaurants to open in UP from today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Restaurants and malls will open from Monday across the state as the government has announced further relaxation, extending the timings of markets from 7 am to 9 pm on weekdays and allowing full attendance in government offices. However, the guidelines issued late Saturday night by Chief Secretary RK Tiwari made it clear that all the relaxations would be withdrawn immediately in the districts where the number of active cases exceeded the 500-mark.

The weekend curbs will stay for while educational institutions, cinema halls, clubs, swimming pools and gyms will remain closed till further orders. According to the fresh guidelines to be enforced from Monday, all the markets can open from 7 am to 9 pm from Monday to Friday. Government offices will open with full attendance while restaurants and eating points will have to follow the 50 per cent capacity rule. Private com-

panies can also function under Covid protocol but they have been asked to promote work from home as far as possible.

The government also allowed the reopening of malls and roadside eateries, fast food joints and sweet shops. Vegetable markets will be open like before, but people have to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour.

The movement of UPSRTC buses has been allowed with some riders. The Transport department has been asked to carry out regular sanitisation of the buses. Only two passengers are allowed in three-wheelers and e-rickshaws while only four in cars.

In closed or open wedding venues, only 50 guests will be allowed at a time while more than 50 devotees are allowed to gather at religious places at a time.

The corona curfew was clamped in UP on May 1. The Government started extending relaxation from June 1 when the number of Covid cases started coming down.

## Sikkim reports 87 new cases, 2 more deaths

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Sikkim reported 87 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the coronavirus tally to 19,296, a health department bulletin said on Sunday.

The Covid-19 death toll rose to 293 as two more persons succumbed to the infection, it said. The new cases were reported from East Sikkim district (57), West Sikkim (22), South Sikkim (6) and North Sikkim district (2).

The Himalayan State now has 2,697 active Covid-19 cases, while 16,056 patients have recovered from the disease, the bulletin said.

At least 250 Covid-19 patients have migrated to other states, it said. Sikkim's Covid-19 recovery rate now is 83.2 per cent.

## Idol of Lord Vishnu unearthed from village in UP's Bahraich

PTI ■ BAHRAICH

A stone idol of Lord Vishnu was unearthed on Sunday morning during digging work undertaken at an old mound in a village here, police said.

Ramgopal, a resident of Anwarganj village under Nanpara tehsil, had brought some labourers to level his land. As they went about digging the earth, the workers stumbled upon a stone idol.

The labourers dug out the stone idol of Lord Vishnu, which was three feet high, Nanpara police station SHO Sanjay Singh said. As news spread of the finding, villagers gathered at the spot.

Later, police and administration officials arrived at the spot, took the idol in their custody, and deposited it in the tehsil treasury.

The SHO said the district administration has informed the archaeology department about the idol. PTI

## Minor girl raped in Bihar's Aurangabad

**Patna:** A 12-year-old girl, residing in a school hostel in Bihar's Aurangabad district, was allegedly sexually assaulted by the school owner, police said on Sunday.

As per the FIR registered with the women police station, the victim alleged that the accused Raju Kumar, the owner of the school, located in Daudnagar locality in Aurangabad, raped her for the last two days.

On Sunday, she managed to escape from the hostel and reached the nearest police station. When she revealed her ordeal, she was immediately sent to the women police station under police custody.

"The victim was the only girl student living in the hostel. Her father and mother are employed with a private firm in Gujarat. The owner knew the status of the girl and took advantage of it. He sexually assaulted the victim on Friday and Saturday night. The accused also threatened her to dire consequences if she revealed the incident to anyone," Suman Kumar, investigating officer of the women police station, said. "We have conducted medical examination of the victim which confirms rape. An FIR under POCSO Act has been registered against Raju Kumar. He is at large now," she added. IANS



Hindu devotees perform rituals while offering prayers in the river Ganga on the occasion of Ganga Dussehra at Sangam, in Prayagraj on Sunday PTI

## Temple in Karnataka dug up in 'treasure hunt'; 7 held

**Hassan (Karnataka):** Hunt for treasure purportedly buried under the sanctum sanctorum of a century-old temple in a village in Karnataka's Hassan district led seven people, including a priest, to try to dig up the structure, police said on Sunday.

This seven-member gang, which also included a prominent astrologer and Assistant Director of Co-operative Societies, however, developed cold feet after digging around a 10 feet pit in front of the chief deity of their village Bosmanahalli, abandoned their mission halfway through, and left the temple. All seven have been arrested.

According to the police statement, the arrested were identified as Manjunath, an astrologer from Bosmanahalli, L. Thippeswamy, a temple priest, Hassan Co-operative Societies Assistant Director Narayan, B. H. Jayaram, Chetan, Manjunath, and Kumar.

The police said that the entire treasure hunt plan was hatched by Manjunath, an astrologer from Bosmanahalli, who often used to visit the old Chowdeshwari (Parvatamma) Temple, of the village's deity, situated on the outskirts of the village.

"Most of the arrested are devotees of this temple. The astrologer persuaded these five gullible residents and a priest from a temple in Davangere district. Manjunath thought that under the lockdown, temples which are locked may not attract any notice of residents of this village, besides the incident will only come to public notice once lockdown measures are eased.

"Hence, they decided to carry out digging after performing 'homa-havana' (offerings poured in sacred fire while chanting vedic Mantras) on intermediate night of Friday-Saturday," a police officer said. IANS

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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Afghan landmine

All stakeholders are busy formulating plans so as to have the most power once the US exits

Afghanistan is a worsening quagmire of confusion with the immediately involved parties working towards their own individualist goals. The United States is singularly focused on vacating the military bases and moving tones of equipment as a prelude to the withdrawal of its troops before September 11. The Taliban, working to a post-withdrawal plan, are intent only on bringing maximum territory under their control because that alone would give them leverage in the future to either negotiate or grab power. The Afghan Government is caught between a withdrawing ally and an aggressive rival, looking for every scrap of support to be able to wield power after September. There is no dearth of friends for the Afghan Government in the region, but none with the clout to nail a permanent peace agreement with the Taliban. The primary, and only, concern of the world is the prospect of the return of terrorism to Afghan soil once the Americans leave. Even with them around, the US never once felt satisfied that the threat to its national security from terror groups in the country has abated. On the one hand, the Taliban are only waiting to turn the country into an Islamic State and, at worst, what they call a "Caliphate". They are already flashing their religious identity as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, intent on taking the country back into the dark ages with their irrational social codes. On the other, they have convivial relations with terrorist groups active in Afghanistan, including Al-Qaeda, and that makes their peace overtures suspect.



Despite signing the Doha Agreement with the US in 2020, the Taliban never attempted to formally distance itself from the terrorist group. India is at the forefront of nations wanting to ensure that terrorism does not raise its head in Afghanistan once again. It has no formal communication links with the Taliban and the word is that it may be reaching out to sections of the Taliban leadership that consider themselves nationalist and not under the influence of Pakistan. Much of the terrorist leadership is currently holed up in Pakistan; so is the orthodox and aggressive Taliban leadership for that matter. Having invested a lot in Afghanistan — it gave nearly \$2 billion in reconstruction aid already — India wants to have a greater say in the country's return to democracy. However, it will have to contend with Pakistan which to date played a subdued role because of the formidable American presence, and now plans a more direct role because of its links with the Taliban and the protection it extends to some terrorist groups. It is to be seen if the signs of a bilateral thaw in the India-Pakistan ties do not face rough weather because of their clashing positions over Afghanistan. An indication will be available at the meeting of the National Security Advisers of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan — virtual or in person — at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting next week.

### PICTALK



Girls perform yoga ahead of the International Yoga Day, in Surat

PTI

## The third coming

There is an urgent need for our citizens to heed experts and desist from reckless behaviour in public

The third wave of the COVID-19 virus is rapidly stealing upon us, if one were to go by either expert opinion or by the insouciant behaviour of our fellow countrymen in crowded public places. Barely has the nation's nose emerged from the sinking feeling that was the second wave of the Novel Coronavirus and its myriad variants, what with the accompanying horrors of the shortage of medical oxygen, hospital beds and ancillary medical supplies, the scary prediction now comes that the third wave could be far closer to us than we had imagined. Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences director Randeep Guleria has said in no uncertain terms that the third wave is inevitable in the "next six-eight weeks" if people don't adhere to COVID-appropriate behaviour. The virus can make a comeback within two months, much earlier than the trend noticed in India so far, if the unlocking process is not measured. Even though the vaccination drive is going on in full swing, with both the Centre and the State Governments doing their best



to make amends for the earlier oversight and the time lost because of it, there is still a disconcertingly huge window during which the virus can stage a dreadful comeback before the effects of the inoculation drive kick in.

So far, India has been able to fully vaccinate only about five per cent of its 950 million eligible population, leaving the other teeming millions vulnerable to infections and deaths. Needless to say, there is an urgent need for aggressive surveillance strategy in the COVID hotspots and even to again order lockdowns in case of significant surge in any particular area. Meanwhile, while the number of cases is still declining in the country, this is the right time to reflect upon past mistakes and take lessons for the future: Remember how the second wave took the complacent nation by surprise and swept the healthcare system off its moorings in many States? The drop in the infection rate in India surely is a positive sign, but that should be no reason for us to slacken our vigil. If there is a sudden jump in the numbers, god forbid, no healthcare system in the world can deal with such a large number of people simultaneously needing intensive care. We need to utilise this time to strengthen our healthcare facilities; each life is worth fighting for.

# Brutal tactics to keep the Uyghurs in check



PRAFULL GORADIA

Why can't the Hans of China learn from the example of Indian Hindus towards Muslims and be considerate enough to let the Uyghurs be?

Reports about the treatment of Uyghurs in general and their pregnant women in particular in Xi Jinping's China sound barbaric. If the purpose is family planning, fair enough, but it should be implemented by law and not by force. Cases were reported in this journal from Istanbul which mentioned several women who were up to six-and-a-half months pregnant being forcibly aborted, evidently posing a threat to their lives. True, Muslims are reputed to procreate much more prolifically than other people but that does not mean that the Government should resort to violent means to achieve smaller families.

According to the *Hadith* (Traditions), Prophet Muhammad once asked a man whether he was married. On being replied in the negative, Muhammad reacted by saying: "Then you are a brother of the Devil." In Islam, even ascetic orders are expected to marry rather than remain single. One of the Prophet's companions, Usman ibn Maz'un, wished to lead a life of celibacy; Muhammad forbade him. Normally such consent is given on condition of the celibate becoming a eunuch. In the same context, the Prophet exhorted his followers to marry women who will love their husbands and be very prolific: "For I wish you to be more numerous than any other people." (*Mishkatu'l Masabih* book XIII)

We in India have a long and enormous experience of being ruled by Muslim sultans and, of course, coexisting with them for centuries. This led to serious and prolonged oppression in the 50-year reign of Aurangzeb, which ended in 1707. There was a serious emotional parting of ways. In 1887, the then most prominent Islamic leader Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan of Aligarh fame declared in a public speech that the Hindus and Muslims were separate nations. He repeated his contention the following year.

The next eminence to pronounce the same sentiments in the early 20th century was Justice Syed Ameer Ali. Then in 1930, poet Mohammad Iqbal voiced



that Muslims should have a separate homeland even if inside an Indian confederation. Most Hindu leaders, Gandhiji downwards, ignored these statements and continued to believe that the Congress Party represented all communities. Rightly or incorrectly, because the Congress had members of all communities, the leaders presumed that all of their communities followed the Party. Eventually, Mohammad Ali Jinnah had the Pakistan Resolution passed by the Muslim League at its Lahore session on March 23, 1940. Yet, the Hindus took only limited notice. Nor did the British realise how serious was the Muslim desire for a separate homeland, a New Medina.

On August 16, 1946, Bengal Chief Minister HS Suhrawardy directed a massive pogrom, later called the Great Calcutta Killing; which over three days saw the bloody end of thousands of people. This was Jinnah's way of proving particularly to the British that Hindus and Muslims cannot coexist in the same country. India had to be divided. This is also based on the Islamic theology that Muslims need a Dar-ul-Islam, wherein the law laid down by Sharia is

INDIA STILL HAS MORE MUSLIMS THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY EXCEPT INDONESIA. THIS IS AN UNUSUAL PARADOX. IF SO MANY MUSLIMS CAN HAPPILY LIVE IN INDIA, WHERE WAS THE NEED FOR PARTITION? YET, THE HINDUS HAVE ACCEPTED THIS CONTRADICTION WITHOUT A PROTEST

the only land wherein Muslims can flourish and fulfil themselves. Today, India still hosts more Muslims than any country except Indonesia. This is an unusual paradox. If so many Muslims can happily live in India, where was the need for Partition? Yet, the Hindus have accepted this contradiction without a protest. My question is if the Hindus can be so tolerant, why cannot the Hans of China be considerate enough to let the Uyghurs be?

After all, China has to coexist with many other peoples and countries. There are 57 Islamic countries and they have not yet protested because of what? Possibly sheer fear or business interests. But for how long? Sooner or later, the Islamic fury must explode. In any case, I appeal to the Han race for tolerance in the cause of peace.

In a spirit of freedom and brotherhood, we allowed the Ayodhya litigation to go on for nearly a century, waiting for a court judgment. Then only we have begun to build a temple for lord Ram whom poet Iqbal had described as "Imam-e-Hind". The Muslims of Ayodhya were in favour of building the temple because it would multiply pilgrimage

and consequently bring prosperity. The fight was about an edifice which had no minarets, no *woozu* for washing hands and feet before proceeding to prayers. In fact, it must have been meant as a *mazar* in Babar's memory after he died.

India has had three Muslim Rashtrapatis, Zakir Hussain, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Abdul Kalam, plus several judges including Supreme Court Chief Justices and election commissioners appointed by, of course, Hindu Governments.

When it comes to elections, all adult citizens have the right to vote. There is no discrimination. In the bargain, Muslims in earlier elections voted *en masse* for one party and it won. The others were slack in casting their votes. But this was tolerant and no solution was applied to stop this practice. The easy solution was compulsory voting; that would have neutralised the *en masse* voting. But the Hindu ethos was too liberal for a drastic measure although nearly a dozen countries, led by Belgium and Australia, practise it.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Sir — In the first political engagement since the August 5, 2019, move by the Centre to end J&K's special status, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on June 24 give an audience to the region's mainstream leadership, including those who were incarcerated for opposing the Centre's move. Modi will chair the meeting. All the leaders have been asked to go for a RT-PCR test before attending the meeting.

It will be the second major peace move in J&K after the successful renewed ceasefire agreement in February this year with Pakistan, which has been demanding a roadmap on J&K to expand the engagement with New Delhi. The sudden move by the Centre also comes in the wake of pressure from the international community, especially the United States, to restore democratic and electoral processes in J&K, which remains under the Centre's rule since 2018. It is a step in the right direction but how far this move will succeed remains to be seen.

CK Subramaniam | *Navi Mumbai*

### SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY

Sir — Yoga means "to add"; to add to the good habits in life, to add to peace and prosperity. In the current scenario, the COVID pandemic has devastated almost everything but one thing remains that has helped life move on smoothly, and that's HOPE.

During the troubled days, yoga can be a step towards positivity, relaxation of mind and physical strength. The United Nations gave its nod to the idea on December 10, 2014, and from June 21, 2015, the entire world started celebrating the International Yoga Day. The theme for 2021 is "Yoga for the wellbeing". India has contributed a lot but the patent of that invention was in the hands of the white-skinned developed nations.

We have contributed zero, decimal and a lot more to the world. Several inventions by Indians were being taken away and credited to foreigners. However, we never criticised such moves because we wanted peace and prosperity, unity in diversity. Yoga is not

## Let Telangana schools remain shut



The Centre has advised the States to ease the COVID-19 curbs carefully since we are still living with the virus; it is not fully eradicated. All the States are accordingly easing curbs. In Tamil Nadu, the places of worship have been shut for a long time. Those who believe in God, seek peace and solace by visiting temples. I request the Government to open the temples for the public observing all the norms and COVID protocols. Meanwhile, the Telangana Government has lifted the lockdown completely. It is shocking that the State has asked the education department to open all categories of educational institutions beginning July 1. Playing with the lives of students

in these times of the pandemic is a matter of serious concern.

The first wave was severe. The second was ferocious and claimed many lives. The third wave is said to be round the corner. It is likely going to affect children the most. Our vaccination strategy is slow. Only 30 crore people have so far been inoculated. Another one crore are in the queue. Our wards, who are below 18 years of age, are yet to be included in the inoculation drive. It may take another few months to inoculate them since the vaccine supply is not commensurate to the population of India. Without masks or maintaining social distancing, people are seen moving around.

At this point, the move to reopen educational institutions seems to be worrisome, problematic and unproductive. It amounts to inviting trouble. It is hard to enforce discipline among students to adhere to the standing protocols against COVID. The heavens will not fall if schools are not opened right now, when the third wave is likely to hit the nation with more severity in a few weeks. The Telangana Government should roll back its decision of reopening of educational institutions.

Sravana Ramachandran | *Chennai*

of any particular religion but it's for the goodness of the entire humanity. Therefore, we all need to add yoga as an irreplaceable part of our daily routine and life. This will not only make us physically, but also mentally and spiritually, stronger.

Aman Jaiswal | *New Delhi*

### WEAR FACE MASKS TO SAVE LIVES

Sir — As India prepares to battle the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccinating as many citizens as possible with both doses is unquestionably the most rational way of countering the virus. However, it is equally important for each one of us to prove our pertinacity by wearing face masks.

A face mask is a crucial protective gear to safeguard ourselves. Scientific evidence goes deep into the containment of the Novel Coronavirus by wearing face masks. When

a person expels droplets into the air, they quickly evaporate and shrink to become tiny airborne particles, called "droplet nuclei".

But in a moist atmosphere, between a person's mouth and the mask, it takes nearly a hundred times as long for a droplet to evaporate and shrink into droplet nuclei. This means that nearly any kind of simple cloth mask is great for source control. The mask creates humidity, and prevents the virus-containing droplets from turning into droplet nuclei, allowing the fabric of the mask to block the droplets. Studies suggest that if 80 per cent of people wear masks in public, the COVID-19 transmission can certainly be halted.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | *Chennai*

## SOUNDBITE

The Congress believes that grant of full statehood to J&K as also holding elections... instead of a rule by Delhi, is the only way forward. So that people are able to elect their representatives



Congress general secretary — Randeep Singh Surjewala



The Government is in no rush to reopen the country's international borders.

Australia's Trade Minister — Dan Tehan



I look at it this way — I want my beard also to tell a story, to define me.

Actor — Arjun Kapoor



Psychologically, I think it (the draw) is a big boost and it definitely will put England on the back foot.

India women's cricket team skipper — Mithali Raj



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Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

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FIRST COLUMN

PEOPLE NEED TO TAKE INITIATIVE

World leaders keep meeting on climate change issue but there is no genuine commitment to the cause



VK BAHUGUNA

The Covid-19 lockdown last year had one positive fallout - the sky regained its brilliant blue as the perennial haze of pollution lifted and one could see the Himalayan range from far-off places like Delhi and Chandigarh. Metros like Delhi and Mumbai became pollution-free, wild animals started foraging for food in cities and towns, and rivers became cleaner. This is, however, a grim reminder that humanity must change its materialist, extravagant lifestyle and establish equilibrium with nature. That is the special message of the pandemic.

When the air pollution levels came down, there was a perceptible decline in respiratory diseases. One study said the improved air quality index on account of reduced human activities in Chennai was similar to that of European countries. The forests got a reprieve with reduced instances of forest fires, illegal felling of trees, and poaching. This writer noticed how migratory birds which normally returned home during February-March stayed back till May end. In zoos sans tourists the animals regained their natural composure and behaviours. In the Satpura Tiger Reserve of Madhya Pradesh, tigers, which had got used to regular movement of tourists, started liking their isolation and fretted upon seeing forest guards on patrols. According to Central



Pollution Control Board, the Ganga, Yamuna, and Gomati rivers' water became cleaner. Dolphins were sighted in the Ganga near Meerut.

These examples tell people to adopt climate-friendly behaviours in their day-to-day lives. Look at Jadhav Payeng from Jorhat, Assam who got the 'Forest Man of India Award' in 2010 for turning 550 hectares of barren land into a lush green forest.

National Governments the world over started climate change negotiations after the Kyoto Protocol came into being in 2005. However, there is no genuine commitment to climate change even though world leaders meet every now and then because of never-ending politics. In India too, despite good initiatives like the solar alliance, the bureaucracy is unable to stem the rot in the field of environmental conservation.

Let us consider some citizen's initiatives which can make a big difference to the environment. Let us go for water harvesting and recharging in every home. Climate change was responsible for about 74 per cent of flash floods and droughts in the last 20 years. In cities 90 per cent of rainwater goes waste because of excessive construction activities. In contrast, 90 per cent of the rainwater gets absorbed in forests, recharging the aquifers, streams, and rivers. Every household having a 200 sq. mt. area can recharge around two lakh litres of rainwater every year.

Second, each tree gives oxygen for 10 people to survive. Everybody should plant a tree every year. A big tree absorbs 21 kg of carbon dioxide (CO2) and in 100 years reduces one tonne of CO2.

Third, food wastage is the biggest environmental problem as it wastes water and food grains. In 2019, nine billion tonnes of food was wasted in the world, releasing 70.41 lakh tonne methane gas. If we stop this wastage, eight percent reduction in greenhouse emissions can be ensured. Four, we must stop the use of paper cups to save at least 65 lakh trees and billions of gallons of water. Five, we need to use electricity carefully because 40 percent of carbon emissions are due to electricity production. If we can switch off the wi-fi and laptops we can reduce the emissions by 16 percent. Six, cars contribute to huge carbon emissions and if we limit the car speed to 70 kmph, it will reduce emission by 8 percent. The principle is at the speed 100 kmph the emissions increase by 28 percent.

(The writer is Chairman, Centre for Resource Management and Environment. The views expressed are personal.)

Dealing with Delhi CM Kejriwal's 'ration mafia'



UTTAM GUPTA

The scheme mooted by the Delhi Government will only create more avenues for the middlemen to make money at the cost of the taxpayer

Arvind Kejriwal, Chief Minister, National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi has justified his much-trumpeted scheme for door-step delivery of ration on the ground that this will help rein in what he describes as 'ration mafia' while ensuring that every grain of the subsidized food reaches the person (read: the poor) for whom it is intended.

Who is this 'ration mafia'? How does it plunder the subsidized food? Can the scheme prevent it?

Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, the Union Government directs the Food Corporation of India and other state agencies to procure food from the farmers at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to a mammoth population of 800 million people through an elaborate network of fair price shops (in common parlance, these are called 'ration shops') at the subsidized price of ₹2, ₹3 and ₹1 per kg for wheat, rice, and coarse cereals, respectively. Each person is eligible to receive 5 kg of cereals per month.

Considering that the cost of procurement, handling, and distribution is higher (in fact, many times more) than these ridiculously low selling prices, the Centre reimburses the excess amount as 'food subsidy' to the FCI and other agencies and is paid from the Union Budget.

During 2020-21, a total of ₹463,000 crore was paid to FCI. Apart from regular payment of ₹215,000 crore, this included about ₹150,000 crore towards free food given to all the 800 million beneficiaries as also to the migrant labour during April-November, 2020 under the Aatmanirbhar package. The balance amount was used for paying off a good slice of the loan taken by FCI from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) to finance the shortfall in subsidy reimbursements by the Centre in the past. Additionally, ₹40,000 crore was paid to other state agencies under decentralized procurement (DCP).

During 2021-22, payment to FCI is expected to be about ₹302,000 crore including ₹202,000 crore being the budget allocation and an additional about ₹100,000 crore to provide for free food under Aatmanirbhar till November 2021 (announced subsequently to mitigate the impact of the second pandemic wave). A further ₹40,000 crore is available for DCP.

The scheme is pan-India, covering all the 28 states and eight union territories including the NCT of Delhi. The stuff unveiled by Kejriwal is merely an improvisation of this scheme. Unlike the latter wherein the beneficiary has to go to the ration shop for collecting 5 kg of cereals per month, under the former, the State Government will arrange for delivery of 4 kg of wheat flour and one kg rice at his/her doorsteps. Hopefully, he/she need not pay extra for getting 'wheat as flour' or receiving ration at home.

However, the delivery will be at a huge cost to the state exchequer by way of the Government having to pay vendors for picking up wheat from the ration shop, process it into flour and deliver back to the shop in round one, and then lifting the wheat flour plus rice and delivering the packet to each of the millions of beneficiaries at their homes in round two. This cost will have to be funded by the state as an 'additional subsidy' over and above what is given by the Centre.



THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM CANNOT BE SEEN IN ISOLATION FROM ITS SOURCE. IT HAS TO DO WITH PLENTY OF FOOD AVAILABLE 'VIRTUALLY FOR FREE' WHICH IGNITES THE GREED OF STAKEHOLDERS LEADING TO PILFERAGE AND OTHER ILLS. THIS FREE CULT HAS TO STOP

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



Fundamentally, the Delhi scheme being the same as the Centre's, if the charge (read: 'ration mafia') leveled by Kejriwal holds for the latter then this will also hold for the former. Let us examine. When the owner of a ration shop has in his stock wheat/rice meant for distribution to ration card holders (RCH) at ₹2/₹3 per kg, he may get a strong temptation to divert it to the open market where they can fetch a minimum of ₹25/₹35 per kg. He will take deliveries from the FCI godown in the name of a 'fictitious' RCH and sell all those quantities in the market raking in a clear bonanza of ₹23 and ₹32 per kg on wheat and rice, respectively. This indeed is happening on a massive scale all over India and has been recognized by the Prime Minister too. To stem the rot, the Modi Government has taken several measures including the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme which has at its core, the e-POS machine at all ration shops. Under this modus operandi, supply of the subsidized food to the beneficiary is made conditional upon him/her authenticating - using Aadhaar - taking delivery with the sale getting registered on the e-POS machine. This is uploaded onto the web portal on a 'real time' basis which should help in detecting

dubious sales if any. Since 2014, reportedly, the Government has weeded out close to 44 million bogus ration cards which are equivalent to 176 million beneficiaries (assuming four persons on a card) or nearly 20 per cent of 800 million covered under NFSA. This is a creditable achievement. However, considering the large-scale diversion which in some states could be as high as 50 per cent, there is still a long way to go. The menace of bogus ration cards is only a part of a larger problem in the public distribution system (PDS) as pilferage could be happening even at other levels in the supply chain; for instance, at the rake unloading points and godowns of the FCI. Reports of the disappearance of food stocks worth about ₹20,000 crore in Punjab in 2016 is a glaring example. The misuse of budgetary resources also manifests in other forms such as inefficiencies in handling operations of FCI/other state agencies and inflated claims (including bogus claims) towards various expenses. All this happens because, under the existing system, the agencies get reimbursement for the costs on an 'actual' basis. This indeed is the most serious flaw in the scheme. Camouflaged under the noble banner of 'food subsidy',

albeit, for the millions of poor, this often goes unchallenged even when irregularities are pointed out by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). The scheme mooted by the Delhi Government does nothing to address this flaw. It will only create more avenues for middlemen to make money at the cost of the taxpayer. What is the way forward? The solution to the problem cannot be seen in isolation from its source. It has to do with plenty of food available 'virtually for free' which ignites the greed of stakeholders leading to pilferage and other ills. This free cult has to stop. The Government should unshackle the food supply and distribution chains. It should put the subsidy currently built into the sale price of food, say, ₹32 per kg on rice (cost: ₹35 per kg minus subsidized price: ₹3 per kg) or ₹160 per person per month (under the NFSA, he/she is eligible to get 5 kg in a month) in the account of a beneficiary who can use it to buy from wherever he/she chooses. This is the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of subsidy. While fully protecting the poor, it can help in curbing the colossal loot and wastage of public money that is germane to the existing dispensation. Will Prime Minister Modi bite the bullet?

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I HAVE REQUESTED THE LOK SABHA SPEAKER TO REVIEW HIS DECISION (OF ACCEPTING PK PARAS AS THE LJP LEADER IN THE HOUSE). — LJP LEADER CHIRAG PASWAN



WE HAVE FORMED A NEW NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OF THE PARTY. ALL OTHER PARTY WINGS HAVE BEEN DISBANDED. — LJP FACTION LEADER PASHUPATI KUMAR PARAS

Re-inventing privacy in the digital market

Digital markets that emerged as State's attempts to ensure safety for lives of citizens now shape up benefitting organised and powerful corporates

The Covid-19 pandemic has facilitated the rapid expansion of e-commerce and digital trade, commerce, and financial transactions. At the same time, it put paid to socially interactive marketplaces and face-to-face contacts. Safety is the key concern that confines citizens to digital platforms and shrinks the space of personal liberty, social interaction, and human collectives and communities. One is reminded of Benjamin Franklin's warning, "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."



PRASENJIT BISWAS

(The author is a philosopher and political analyst based in Shillong. The views expressed are personal.)

ern the lives of private citizens in exchange for safety and security, it ends up benefitting the minions of the digital markets that set up a new normal for citizens. What philosopher Michael Sandel characterized as a transition from market relations in socially necessary fields like health, education, and human security to an overall 'market society' is seemingly taking a digital turn during the pandemic. This picture of digital markets restrains choice-based consent and limits it to partially-informed advantages. Digital economy tweaks choices, restrains access to essential resources, and dilutes ethical practices to market sentiments, even if it creates moral hazards. An AI-controlled collusive



behaviour on the part of human traders and customers is the outcome of uncontrolled digital deals that might tamper with the sovereign individuals. A moral hazard of such a digital marketplace is the way the bot called Tay on Twitter, which learned abuses from the trolls, heaped it back upon a

feminist activist. Both State and non-state actors use botnets to surreptitiously control infected devices to hack, spy, and disable targets. As botnets cannot be attributed with intent, it helps to distance the actus reus of the perpetrator and allow them to escape with impunity. As a result, botmasters enjoy economic incentives to spread these bot networks that can be used for mining cryptocurrency, credit card fraud and distributed denial of services, etc. The bots can further position themselves as autonomous agents (AA) by camouflaging their point of origin, while they can feed their masters confidential information so that the targeted victim suffers definitive harm in multiple socio-eco-

nomical parameters. Given this default and design difficulty in fixing liability on cyber-attackers, there is a greater risk for liberty and freedom of speech of internet users. In a sense, cyberspace itself can be used to curtail and abridge various freedoms like privacy rights and the right to dissent by deploying surveillance and secret watch. Digital marketplaces facilitated a direct connection between cyberattack and surveillance, as personal data breaches are the route through which these actions are carried out. Though cyberattacks are illegal, surveillance assumes both legality and legitimacy by subjecting users to irrevocable meta consent as the new social contract in digital, virtual, and

cyberspaces. The ecosystem of the digital market, therefore, constructs the human agency and utilizes underlying technological structures to give meanings to both security and surveillance mechanisms. Digital markets create contested information spaces where the defense of users' rights versus the powers of governmental institutions remain locked up in a battle of legitimacy. The digital marketplace makes it possible to reduce the human being to a node, or better, into datasets on its networks. The digital life of such a reduced person is endowed with nominal rights of privacy and liberty, as such rights are subjected to the arbitrary ordeal of policing, profiling, moralizing. This is how digi-

tal marketplaces make it impossible for the marginalized segments of society by making them 'illegible' in political and economic affairs, if not completely 'ineligible'. In the name of safety and security concerns, privacy breaches have been normalized by thinning down the line between legal surveillance and illicit attacks. The growth of digital trading and the increase in economic transactions in cyberspace now provides both the final reason and justification for increased control by both state and non-state actors. Once the right to privacy is breached in this manner, the resultant insecurity defeats all ethical-legal injunctions that could have given healthy immunity to digital markets.

Ex-Prez Karzai says US failed in Af

AP ■ KABUL

Afghanistan's former President said on Sunday the United States came to his country to fight extremism and bring stability to his war-torn nation and is leaving nearly 20 years later having failed at both.



Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai speaks during an interview with The Associated Press at his house, in Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday

In an interview with The Associated Press just weeks before the last US and NATO troops leave Afghanistan, ending their forever war, Hamid Karzai said extremism is at its "highest point" and the departing troops are leaving behind a disaster.

"The international community came here 20 years ago with this clear objective of fighting extremism and bringing stability...But extremism is at the highest point today. So they have failed," he said.

Their legacy is a war-ravaged nation in "total disgrace and disaster."

Pak to complete fencing of border with Afghanistan by June end: Min

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In the wake of looming uncertainty in Afghanistan due to the withdrawal of the US troops, Pakistan has announced that it would complete the fencing of its border with the war-torn country by the end of June.

Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed stated this on Saturday on the floor of the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The minister informed the house that 88 per cent work on the fencing of the border with Afghanistan has been completed and the "rest would be completed by June 30", it said.

The fencing of the 2,640 km land border with Afghanistan began in March 2017 after a spate of attacks from across the porous border.

Rocket falls near Iraqi military base housing US troops

Baghdad: At least one Katyusha rocket fell close to the perimeter of a military base that hosts US troops in northern Iraq on Sunday, Iraq's military said.

The rocket fell near the sprawling Ain al-Asad air base in western Anbar province but did not explode, the military said in a statement.

There was no significant damage, the statement said. An Iraqi security official said a fence at the perimeter of the base was minimally damaged. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Diplomats: Progress made in Vienna at Iran nuclear talks

AP ■ VIENNA

Top diplomats said Sunday further progress had been made at talks between Iran and global powers to try to negotiate and restore a landmark 2015 agreement to contain Iranian nuclear development that was later abandoned by the Trump administration.

They said that it was now up to the governments involved in the negotiations to make political decisions.

It was the first official meeting since Iran's hard-line judiciary chief won a landslide victory in the country's presidential election last week.

Some diplomats expressed concern that Iran's election of Ebrahim Raisi as president could complicate a possible return to the agreement.

Enrique Mora, the European Union official who chaired the final meeting of the sixth round of talks between Russia, China, Germany, France, Britain and Iran, told reporters that "we are closer to a deal, but we are not still there."

Israeli PM: World powers must wake up on Iran nuke deal

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday opened his first Cabinet meeting since swearing in his new coalition Government last week with a condemnation of the new Iranian president.



Iran's Governor to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Kazem Gharib Abadi, and political deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, from left, leave the 'Grand Hotel Vienna' where closed-door nuclear talks took place in Vienna, Austria on Sunday

He did not further elaborate on the nature of the technical issues.

Top Russian representative Mikhail Ulyanov said the members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, "took stock of the significant progress made at the Vienna talks, including at the sixth round, and decided to make a break to allow participants to consult with their capitals in preparation for what is supposed to be the final round of negotiations."

"There are a few controversial points which require political decisions. Apparently diplomatic efforts to find common language have been almost fully exhausted. So the time has come for political decisions," Ulyanov added.

had been greatly diminished and bin Laden was dead. America no longer needed boots on the ground to fight the terrorist threats that might emanate from Afghanistan, he said.

Still, the US' attempts to bring about a political end to the decades of war have been elusive. It signed a deal with the Taliban in February 2020 to withdraw its troops in exchange for a Taliban promise to denounce terrorist groups and keep Afghanistan from again being a staging arena for attacks on America.

There is little evidence the Taliban are fulfilling their part of the bargain. The United Nations claims the Taliban and al-Qaida are still linked. The architect of the US deal and current US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad says some progress has been made but without offering any details.

Karzai has had harsh words and uncompromising criticism of US war tactics over the past two decades in Afghanistan. Yet he has become a linchpin of sorts in a joint effort being launched by the US and Britain to get a quarrelsome Afghan leadership in Kabul united enough to talk peace with the Taliban. The insurgent group has shown little interest in negotiating and instead has stepped up its assaults on government positions.

The Taliban have made considerable strides since the May 1 start of the US and NATO withdrawal. They have overrun dozens of districts, often negotiating their surrender from Afghan national security forces.

But in many instances the fighting has been intense. Just last week a brutal assault by the Taliban in northern Faryab province killed 22 of Afghanistan's elite commandos, led by a local hero Col. Sohrab Azimi, who was also killed and widely mourned.

"The desire of the Afghan people, overwhelmingly, all over the country is for peace," said Karzai, who despite being out of power since 2014 has lost little of his political influence and is most often at the centre of the country's political machinations.

Diplomats, Western officials, generals, tribal elders and politicians on all ends of Afghanistan's political spectrum regularly beat a path to Karzai's door in the heart of the Afghan capital.

As the final military withdrawal is already more than 50% complete, the need for a political settlement or even a visible path to an eventual settlement would seem to be taking on greater urgency even as Afghans by the thousands are seeking an exit.

They say they are frustrated by relentless corruption, marauding criminal gangs — some linked to the powerful warlords in Kabul — and worsening insecurity. Few see a future that is not violent.

Oz accused of 'excessive and unnecessary' secrecy

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia's suppression of information seen as pivotal to a free and open media is at the centre of accusations that the country has become one of the world's most secretive democracies.

Last week, a former Australian spy was convicted over his unconfirmed role as a whistleblower who revealed an espionage operation against the Government of East Timor.

It's the latest high-profile case in a national system in which secrecy laws, some dating back to the colonial era, are routinely used to suppress information. Police have also threatened to charge journalists who exposed war crime allegations against Australian special forces in Afghanistan, or bureaucrats' plan to allow an intelligence agency to spy on Australian citizens.

Australians don't even know the name of the former spy convicted Friday. The Canberra court registry listed him as "Witness K". His lawyer referred to him more respectfully as "Mr K" in court.

K spent the two-day hearing in a box constructed from black screens to hide his identity. The public and media were sent out of the courtroom when classified evidence was discussed, which was about half the time.

The only sign that anyone was actually inside the box was when a voice said "guilty" after K was asked how he pleaded.

The Australian government has refused to comment on allegations that K led an Australian Secret Intelligence Service operation that bugged government offices in the East Timorese capital in 2004, during negotiations on the sharing of oil and gas revenue from the seabed that separates the two countries.

The government cancelled K's passport before he was to testify at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in 2014 in support of the East Timorese, who argued the treaty was invalid because Australia failed to negotiate in good faith by engaging in espionage.

There was no evidence heard in open court of a bugging operation, which media reported was conducted under the guise of a foreign aid programme.

K was given a three-month suspended sentence. If he'd been sent to prison, there were court orders designed to conceal his former espionage career by restricting what he could tell friends and associates to explain his predicament.

He had faced up to two years in prison. Since his offence, Australia has continued to tighten controls on secrecy, increasing the maximum sentence to 10 years.

Table with 23 rows and 2 columns: Relevant particulars and details. Includes information about the corporate debtor, registered office, and contact details for Santosh Sharma.

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS E-TENDER NOTICE. Tender Notice No: PCMM/CLW/Dankuni/E-Procurement/21-22/10 Dated: 17.06.2021. Details of procurement for various locomotive components.

Principal Chief Materials Manager, CLW, Dankuni. Like us on: www.facebook.com/clwrailways. Includes technical specifications for various locomotive parts.

Jordan's unprecedented palace drama moves to the courtroom

AP ■ AMMAN (JORDAN)

Jordan's version of a trial of the century gets under way Monday when a relative of King Abdullah II and a former chief of the royal court are to be ushered into the defendants' cage at the state security court to face charges of sedition and incitement.

They are accused of conspiring with a senior royal - Prince Hamzah, a half-brother of the king - to foment unrest against the monarch while soliciting foreign help.

The palace drama erupted into the open in early April, when Hamzah was placed under house arrest. It has since broken taboos in Jordan and sent jitters through foreign capitals, with Western powers rallying behind Abdullah, an indispensable ally in an unstable region.

"As far as I know, there has not been a case this big in the history of Jordan," said defense lawyer Ala Khasawneh. The state news agency Petra said the trial starts Monday.

The 41-year-old Hamzah is the central figure, though he is not facing charges. In clashing narratives, he is either a champion of ordinary Jordanians suffering from economic mismanagement and corruption, or a disgruntled royal who never forgave Abdullah for taking away his title of crown prince in 2004 in favour of the king's oldest son.

The indictment, leaked to state-linked media, alleges Hamzah "was determined to achieve his personal ambition" of becoming king. It says the prince and the defendants - Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a royal, and Bassem Awadallah, a former royal adviser - conspired to stir discontent.

Security agencies began monitoring them in mid-March, at a time of public uproar over an oxygen outage at a hospital in the town of Salt that killed eight coronavirus patients.

Hamzah met with bereaved families just after the king visited Salt.

# Govt open to more measures to boost economy: CEA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is open to coming out with more measures to boost the economy which has been hit by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, says Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) K V Subramanian.

He, however, added that the demand for a fresh stimulus package has to be considered against the backdrop of a host of initiatives taken by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget for 2021-22 presented in February.

The Chief Economic Advisor was responding to a suggestion made by some industry bodies that the government needed to come out with a Rs 3 lakh crore stimulus package to boost the economy which was badly hit by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic in April-May. According to an assessment by the Reserve Bank, the second wave has cost the nation about Rs 2 lakh crore in terms of output loss.

"Like last year, we do remain very open to coming up with more measures as well...But I think it is really important to take into account the big differences

between last year and this year when we talk about stimulus," he told PTI in an interview.

Elaborating his point, the CEA said that unlike the previous budget which was framed before the pandemic, the 2021 budget was presented amid the pandemic and had already incorporated significant fiscal expansion.

The focus is particularly on infrastructure spending which leads to construction activity and subsequently creation of jobs in the informal sector and demand generation, he said. It was witnessed during the January-March quarter of the last financial year, he added.

The significant capital spending by the government led to a 15 per cent increase in the construction sector in the fourth quarter and the gross fixed capital formation to GDP surged to 34 per cent, the highest in the last six years.

Emphasising that the final objective is to ensure that the economic recovery gathers pace, he said, the government will do whatever is necessary to ensure that.

With regard to food security for the poor, he said, the government has already

extended the free food programme for 80 crore population till November.

The extension of PM Garib Kalayan Yojana would cost about Rs 70,000 crore, he said, adding free vaccination for all is another important economic measure.

"Vaccine as you would appreciate is by far the most important from the perspective to get back into the path of economic recovery," he said.

On the effect of the second wave on growth, Subramanian said, there will be some impact but it is not likely to be very large.

The Economic Survey 2020-21 released in January this year had projected GDP growth of 11 per cent during the current financial year ending March 2022.

India's economy contracted by less-than-expected 7.3 per cent in the fiscal year ended in March 2021 after growth rate picked up in the fourth quarter, just before the world's worst outbreak of coronavirus infections hit the country.

The GDP print was better than expected contraction of 8 per cent for 2020-21 as projected by the Economic Survey.

## Sebi reconstitutes Takeover Panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has reconstituted its Takeover Panel, which looks into the applications seeking exemption from the mandatory open offer that an acquirer needs to make to minority shareholders.

The regulator has appointed N Venkatram MD and CEO, Deloitte India as the new member of the Takeover Panel, latest update with Sebi showed.

The panel, chaired by N K Sodhi, the former Chief Justice of the High Courts of Karnataka and Kerala, makes its recommendations to Sebi on such applications after which the regulator gives an opportunity to concerned parties before passing an order.

Sodhi was also the former presiding officer of the Securities Appellate Tribunal.

The other members of the panel are Darius Khambata (former advocate general, Maharashtra) and Thomas Mathew T (former chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India).

Sebi had first constituted a four-member Takeover Panel in November 2007, under chairmanship of former Bank of Baroda chairman K Kannan.

## Draft Cabinet note floated for 100% FDI in oil PSUs approved for disinvestment: Sources



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Commerce and Industry Ministry has floated a draft Cabinet note seeking inter-ministerial views on a proposal to allow up to 100 per cent foreign investment under automatic route in oil and gas PSUs, which have an 'in-principle' approval for disinvestment, sources said.

The move, if approved by the Union Cabinet, would facilitate privatisation of India's second biggest oil refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL).

The government is privatising BPCL and is selling its entire 52.98 per cent stake in the company.

Sources said that as per the draft note, a new clause would be added in the FDI policy under the petroleum and natural gas sector.

According to the proposal, foreign investment up to 100

## Air India has time till mid-July to challenge Cairn lawsuit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India has time till mid-July to challenge the lawsuit filed by Britain's Cairn Energy PLC demanding that a US federal court force the airline to pay a \$1.26 billion arbitration award it had won against the Indian Government in December last year, sources said.

Air India is controlled by the Indian Government so much that they are "alter egos", Cairn had said in the lawsuit filed with the US District Court for the Southern District of New York. The court should hold the airline company liable for the arbitration award, the company had said.

A three-member international arbitration tribunal that consisted of one judge appointed by India had unanimously in December overturned levy of taxes on Cairn retrospectively and ordered refund of shares sold, dividend confiscated and tax refunds withheld to recover such demand.

The government of India, despite participating in the arbitration proceeding over four years, has not accepted the award and has filed a 'setting aside' petition in a court in The Netherlands - the seat of the arbitration.

With Cairn seeking to recover the award from state-owned entities such as Air India, the government has said it will contest any enforcement. Air India has time till mid-July to file a plea contesting Cairn lawsuit, three sources aware of the matter said.

The airline, which is in the process of being privatised, is likely to argue that it is a separate entity and not the alter ego of the Indian government and cannot be forced to pay for any liability of the government, they said.

Air India spokesperson declined to comment on the story.

Cairn has identified USD 70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect award, which now totals to USD 1.72 billion after including interest and penalty.

The assets identified range from Air India's planes to vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India, and properties owned by state banks to oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, the sources said.

These assets are across several jurisdictions, they said without giving further details.

## Petrol crosses ₹97 in Delhi, diesel nears ₹88 after another price hike

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Petrol price in the national capital crossed ₹97 a litre and diesel neared ₹88 after fuel prices were raised yet again.

Petrol price was hiked by 29 paise per litre and diesel by 28 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

The hike -- 27th in seven weeks -- pushed fuel prices across the country to new historic highs.

In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of ₹97.22 a litre, while diesel is now priced at Rs 87.97 per litre.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges.

And because of this, petrol retails at over Rs 100 per litre mark in eight states and union territories -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Among the metros, petrol is already above Rs 100 in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

In Mumbai, petrol now costs Rs 103.36 a litre and diesel comes for Rs 95.44.

## Sebi bars PNB Housing shareholders from voting on ₹4,000 cr-Carlyle deal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a rare regulatory move, Sebi has restrained PNB Housing Finance from going ahead with shareholders' voting on the proposed ₹ 4,000 crore-deal with Carlyle group and directed the company to carry out the valuation process as per the relevant legal provisions.

The watchdog said the resolution regarding the deal, which was to be put for shareholders' vote on June 22, was "ultra-vires" of the company's Articles of Association (AoA).

The transaction, which has come under the lens of Sebi and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) following concerns raised in certain quarters, including by a proxy advisory firm, would eventually see private equity major Carlyle group taking control of PNB Housing Finance, which is a subsidiary of Punjab National Bank.

The company's meeting is scheduled for Tuesday (June 22) to take up the matter for approval of the shareholders.

"The current resolution bearing item no. 1 (issue of securities of the company and matters related therewith) of EGM notice dated May, 31,

## FPIs infused ₹13 k cr in Indian markets in June so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumped in a net ₹13,667 crore so far in June as Indian markets continued to remain attractive to overseas investors.

However, market experts noted that FPIs withdrew money from Indian equities this week.

According to depositories data, FPIs invested ₹15,312 crore in equities between June 1 and June 18.

"The US Federal Reserve has signalled that it will start raising interest rates in 2023. This caused a sell-off on a global level that caused some money to be withdrawn from Indian equities," said Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww.

However, India is not a destination where investors put in money based on short-term trends.

India has always been an attractive spot for FPIs and these short-term trends will have short-term effects only, he added.

In the longer horizon, India will continue to get invest-

## Aloe vera chemical may be of use in memory chips: IIT-Indore study

PTI ■ INDORE

A study by the Indian Institute of Technology Indore in Madhya Pradesh has found that aloe vera has an "electronic memory effect chemical" that may be useful in making memory chips and other data storage devices, an official from the premier facility said on Sunday.

The study was carried out by the Materials and Device (MAD) laboratory of the institution's physics department, he said.

"As part of our study, we used electric current in aloe vera fruit juice, which brought forth that it has an electronic memory effect chemical, and as per need, its conductivity can be increased and decreased," Dr Rajesh Kumar, Associate Professor of the Physics Department of IIT Indore told PTI on Sunday.

"Synthetic chemicals are used for making data storage devices like memory chips. If experts on the subject go for in-depth research, the natural chemical found in aloe vera fruit juice might open up a new vista in place of synthetic chemicals with which these devices are made," he informed.

Kumar said the study was conducted by the physics department's Materials & Device (MAD) laboratory with the participation of PhD student Tanushree Ghosh along with Suchita Kandpal, Chanchal Rani, Manushree Tanwar, Divesh Kumar Pathak and Anjali Choudhary.

## Labour Ministry mulls extending ABRY deadline till March 2022 to boost fresh hiring

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Labour and Employment is considering extending the timeline of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) till March next year from the existing June 30, in a bid to boost fresh hiring in the country amid the pandemic, said sources.

Under the ABRY approved by the Union Cabinet in December last year, the Government pays mandatory employees provident fund contributions of workers as well as employers for new recruits for a period of two years.

Under the scheme with an outlay of Rs 22,810 crore, workers recruited from October 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, were covered.

"The Ministry of Labour and Employment is in the process of circulating a Cabinet proposal for extending the timeline for ABRY till March 2022," sources told PTI.

The source explained that about 21 lakh new recruits are benefitted so far which is far less than government's expectation of 58.5 lakh.

Therefore, the labour ministry would push for extending the deadline of the scheme till March next year as the allocation of funds for the scheme was done keeping in mind the 58.5 lakh beneficiaries, the source added.

During the pandemic, the government took a series of steps to boost employment generation and to give relief to workers grappling with job loss and pay cuts.

The ABRY was one of those measures. Government had allocated Rs 22,810 crore for the entire period of implementation of the scheme from 2020 to 2023.

## Demand for talent will be key dependency for growth amid rapid digital shift: Rishad Premji

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The demand for talent will outpace supply and become a "key dependency" for growth as enterprises globally accelerate digital adoption with virtual. Wipro Chairman Rishad Premji said.

The Bengaluru-based company has effected "bold changes" in the last six months to help serve customers better and is well-positioned to leverage as well as enable digital transformations for its clients.

Premji said in the company's annual report for FY21. The former Nasscom chairman noted that technology is often at the forefront of economic recovery, but especially now, as the pandemic precipitated structural changes across industries and challenged established ways of working.

Whether it is digital commerce, online education, or telemedicine, technology-enabled business models have emerged across the board, with cloud technology as the cornerstone of this transformation, he added.

"With the rapid shift to digital, the demand for talent will outpace supply, and become a key dependency for growth. Already we see new delivery models, such as 'work from anywhere' and

'Crowdsourcing', become the mainstay. We expect virtual, remote, community-based, and distributed work models to be the future of work," Premji said.

He added that as vaccination efforts ramp up globally and economies start seeing a rebound, clients keen to invest in and accelerate their digital transformation and the key to success for IT players would be "to respond to this opportunity with speed and agility".

Premji said the company had triggered its business continuity plans to quickly enable remote working as the pandemic broke out, and less than 3 per cent of its global workforce currently is working from office.

"We have settled well into this new way of working and have continued to make our customers successful. We enjoy their confidence, and I have no doubt that a hybrid model may well be how we work in the future," he added.

Premji said global cooperation is critical, especially in view of the pandemic and that vaccines for COVID-19 are one of the greatest examples of collaboration and pioneering science.

"We must now work to scale the supply chain, build mechanisms for equitable distribution and drive an effi-

## Life insurers may see short-term pressure on profitability due to pandemic: ICICI Pru Life

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic life insurance industry may see pressure on its profitability in the short-term as the coronavirus pandemic has cast doubt on the certainty related to morbidity and mortality in the country, ICICI Prudential Life said in its annual report.

India became an epicentre with a spike in cases in the second wave of the pandemic, amidst shortage in medical supplies. There are concerns about the possibility of a third wave hitting the country, ICICI Prudential Life said in its annual report for 2020-21.

In FY21, the life insurance industry reported a modest 3 per cent growth in new business premium, said the report, adding the industry continues to get a higher share of household savings because of the increased attractiveness of life insurance savings products, the unique proposition of protection and annuity products among others.

In the short-term, the profitability of the insurance industry is expected to be an area of concern given the increase in mortality and morbidity rates induced by the pandemic. Even more

than a year after the pandemic first struck, there continues to be significant uncertainty regarding its absolute impact on mortality and morbidity experience," the insurer said.

The pandemic has posed multiple challenges for the Indian life insurers. The onset of the pandemic saw a sharp fall in equity prices, while interest rates also declined.

Insurers have exposure to equities in unit-linked and participating businesses. Thus interest rate movements impact their liabilities and guarantees based based schemes. While, a credit risk can impact their investments made in corporates.

The sharp movements in markets, coupled with any asset liability mismatches that insurers may have, can impact the solvency position.

The report said there are emerging risks related to environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues on the insurance industry of which climate change is a bigger challenge.

Apart from climate change, there are emerging risks associated with public health trends such as increase in obesity related disorders and demographic changes such as population urbanisation and ageing, said the

## DTPA says many teething problems in new IT portal

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Direct Taxes Professionals Associations (DTPA) claimed that many tax professionals are facing numerous problems or teething issues in the revamped Income Tax portal which was launched recently.

The DTPA in a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman claimed about 40 problems in the new income tax portal for filing of returns.

The DTPA has also urged the Finance Minister to extend by two months date for payment of tax under Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme as also date for furnishing TDS/TCS statements and for other compliance which are due by June 30 as offices are non-functional in most states due to COVID-19 pandemic.

DTPA Representation Committee chairman Narayan Jain said, "No option for Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme (VSV) altogether despite the scheme is still on for payments, unable to file TDS/TCS statements, form 10A for making application for fresh registration of societies and trusts etc, under Sec 12AB and 80G not also available in

this portal while its last date is June 30."

He told PTI that "IT acknowledgements and Intimation under Sec 143(1) cannot be downloaded, DIN Number is not getting auto-populated, IT payment challan numbers not getting validated, digital signature certificate not getting registered or updated, new incorporated companies or firms are not able to get registered, e-proceedings tab not working".

DTPA president NK Goyal said that many taxpayers have got notices from National Faceless Assessment Officers and Faceless CIT (Appeal) but taxpayers are unable to comply in the absence of e-proceeding tab in the portal.

Taxpayers are also unable to file Income Tax Returns for AY 2020-21 and of earlier years as there is no facility or options even for furnishing income tax return under Sec 148 or making application against issuance of notices u/s 148, Goyal claimed.

Professional urged the government to resolve these issues immediately as the date for compliance is approaching.



**Bollywood**  
 'I am mindful of the fact that I feel centered within my own self.'  
 —Malaika Arora Khan

# WALK INTO THE FUTURE

**RACHNA AGGARWAL** ideates on changes the post-pandemic world's entertainment sector can adopt to ensure the health of its patrons while retaining the joy of an outing

Over the past year, we have invariably seen the decline of the entertainment real estate industry due to the pandemic. As people are turning to the internet to help fill the void, OTT platforms are booming, and theatres and cinema halls have been left abandoned, grim and desolate. All other service sectors like salons and restaurants are opening up, but entertainment zones remain at the bottom of the list, given the crowds that throng these places, leaving them jam-packed and gasping for air.

Industry experts have been trying to put together new rules for theatres that help offset the adverse effect of the pandemic by distancing people through strategic and well-planned seating. One or two seats left between each occupied seat compel people to stay at a distance. However, when families go out to entertain, their sole purpose is to spend time together instead of being alienated, thereby failing the distancing approach. Entertainment spaces are social areas and a system that tries to separate people becomes the antithesis of its typology. Moreover, ailments similar to COVID-19 in the years to come will remain highly infectious and airborne. So, if one needs to rethink



entertainment design, one needs to go way beyond this basic concept.

Bearing in mind the collapse and turmoil caused by the malady in entertainment industries, one can't expect a sweeping upgrade in these spaces at the moment. Therefore, allotting more area per person is not an option, as it has substantial cost repercussions. How, then, can one stay in the domain of cost-effectiveness and yet keep the spaces safe during these unprecedented times?

When we think of virus transmission, the first thing that comes to our mind is the spread caused by coming in close contact with someone or touching surfaces which have been in contact with someone else who was infected. A practical solution to keep surfaces touch-free and uncontaminated is automation. Sensors and automation technology must be integrated within every micro-system, allowing people to move through doors and

carry out mundane tasks without having to lay a finger on any object. One such example is washrooms. When we open the door to a restroom, we need to press the push-plate that has also been touched by many others, making it a virus hotspot. A door that senses you and opens on its own and sanitary fixtures that can function with the wave of a hand can dramatically reduce virus transmission and enable hygienic safety to a large extent.

Nonetheless, some surfaces like seating upholstery or carpets can't be left untouched. To optimise their hygiene value, we need to become mindful of the specifications of the materials we use. Stainless steel was considered a hero material for clean, hygienic spaces, employed everywhere from small door handles to bulkier furniture pieces. The most sought-after metal has now ironically become one of the least preferable ones, quickly being replaced by alternatives to avoid creating habitable sur-

faces for the virus. Swinging away from steel surfaces and carpet materials that are a breeding ground for biological entities, we need to shift our focus towards materials like Flotex, which have a high surface tension, making it difficult to absorb any particles. An alternative is utilising surfaces that can be sanitised in a jiffy at regular intervals. Laminate companies are already leading in the race with newer technologies that enable such safe resources.

The air in urban cities was previously chock-full with pollutants, and the influx of the virus added to the problems, making it much worse. Air purification systems which regulate the PM level of air are now passé; we must upgrade to technologies that can eliminate biological aerosol contents from the air. Air conditioning will become a crucial element since controlling the viral load suspended in these enclosed spaces is tricky when people spend several hours inside the room. Owing to several hazardous accidents that have occurred in the past, the fire safety certification has become a compulsion for all buildings to ensure public safety. The recent turn of events will bring in a 'new norm' wherein air quality certification will be required to gain people's confidence and trust.

Perhaps, a technology that can accommodate social interaction as well as social distancing within the same realm, is a 'bubble' or 'pod system' that can be installed for families to spend

some leisure time while remaining confined within their micro-environments. Similar to this concept is the idea of a drive-in cinema from yesteryear that has begun trending again. But it does not come without cons, as these cinemas take up ample area and only function in a limited capacity for a limited number of hours during the day.

Another way to relook entertainment design is to change how we perceive these spaces. In the prosaic model, we are accustomed to enclosed rooms that are glammed-up with artificial mood lighting. Breaking this conventional style, lobbies can be redesigned into porous structures that open up to the outside world, allowing breeze and sunlight to wash the interiors. It ultimately boils down to people's choice — whether they prefer open, airy spaces or enclosed ones.

While the world is struggling to release itself from the clasp of the pandemic, people are trying to find newer ways to go out, interact and redeem the lifestyles they had in the pre-pandemic times. While eradicating the deadly disease stays a far-fetched dream, there will be innovations and ideas galore to restore our entertainment spaces to their lived-up state, bustling with people and energy that once offered us some recreational pleasures...

*(The spokesperson is founder and design ideator of an award-winning architectural and interior design firm.)*

## WEBBED



**SAMANTAR S2**  
 S1 of this original Marathi series revolved around the life of Kumar Mahajan, who realises that he is living a life that some other man named Sudarshan Chakrapani has already lived. After S1 ended in a cliff hanger, watch the forthcoming season to know what happens next. It releases on June 24 on MX Player.



**SEPTEMBER MORNINGS**  
 The life of a transwoman who has just gained her independence takes an unexpected turn when an unknown son she had with a woman 10 years ago shows up out of the blue. This series releases on June 25 on Amazon Prime.



**BOSCH S7**  
 Based on Michael Connelly's best-selling novel *The Burning Room*, the final season of Bosch puts Detective Harry Bosch's famous motto center stage — "Everybody counts or nobody counts." Releases on June 25 on Amazon Prime.

# With fame comes great sacrifices

While many of us fancy the idea of being a Bollywood actor, it's definitely not as easy as it looks on the outside. By TEAM VIVA

Our B-town stars devote an incredible amount of hardwork and dedication to do justice to their on-screen characters. Celebrating the zeal of such film stars, today we list down 4 Bollywood actors who underwent major physical transformation for their roles. Take a look...

### ADITYA ROY KAPUR

Just when the nation tried to label Aditya as the chocolate boy next door, the versatile actor left cinelovers with his massive physical transformation for his blockbuster release *Malang*. A dark thriller which won the audiences with its unpredictable and edgy storyline, *Malang* turned out to be a game changer for Aditya. It was impressive how the actor underwent a massive physical transformation to perform deadly, high octane action sequences in the film wherein Aditya was seen in two extremely distinct looks in the film, one being lean and the other being a bulky avatar. Even for his next *Om*, Aditya has worked hard to achieve the desired look.

### RANVEER SINGH

Known to be a director's actor, Ranveer has time and again undergone physical transformations for his role in various films. The actor had worked really hard on his body for Rohit Shetty's cop drama *Simmba* and underwent weight training to attain a beefed-up body. And yet again, not too long ago, Ranveer worked hard on his physical appearance and looks for his upcoming film *83*, for which he developed a lean physique. We hear that besides the intense workout sessions, the actor also had a meticulous diet regime in place for the same.

### RANBIR KAPOOR

Ranbir has earned himself a spot in every top filmmaker's wishlist with his performances. The actor who will be next seen in *Brahmastra*, opposite girl-

friend and actor Alia Bhatt, underwent a solid physical transformation for his critically acclaimed film, *Sanju*. In order to get the required bulked up look for the Sanjay Dutt biopic, Ranbir used to have eight meals a day and woke up at 3 AM to drink a protein shake, along with intense workouts.

### VICKY KAUSHAL

Last seen in *Bhoot Part One: The Haunted Ship*, Vicky is known not just for his exemplary acting skills but also for his incredible physical transformations. For the superhit film, *Uri: The Surgical Strike*, Vicky went through a complete change and gained 15 kilos to portray the role of a military man. In order to get the right look for his character in the film, Vicky followed a strict diet regime and did immense training, building muscles for the desired sculpted structure. Next to be seen in *Sardar Udham Singh*, we hear he will be again seen in a never seen before avatar.

Singer, music director, record producer and occasional actor, Shekhar Ravjiani happens to be a busy man. Currently in Singapore, he talks about his School of Music, which will celebrate its one year anniversary tomorrow.

**■How has your experience been providing personalised musical training to handpicked students across 21 campuses of the Global International Indian School?**

It has been an exciting and satisfying journey. We are celebrating one year of GIIS-Shekhar Ravjiani School of Music, and I want to say despite the pandemic-related challenges, this has been a successful journey.

The School of Music was a meeting of minds for me and GIIS, as both parties wanted to encourage talent in youngsters. Children are our future, and I realised that many of them are blessed with oodles of talent.

The first year had 14 graduates from Singapore, Japan, UAE and Malaysia. Each one of them was mentored by me. We had one-on-one sessions wherein I listened to them, shared my inputs, gave them assignments on the parts they needed to work on et al. Six of them have now been selected for the second level of the mentorship programme for 2021.

This year, we have seen a five-fold increase in the number of aspirants and we are excited at the prospect of working with more children.

**■While online classes are a handy tool in the backdrop of**

# Melodies of life

On the occasion of World Music Day, SHEKHAR RAVJIANI takes a break from work for a quick chat with CHRISTY VARGHESE



**the pandemic, did you experience any difficulties while virtually imparting musical training?**

I agree virtual classes cannot replace physical classes, no doubt. However, given the situation, virtual classes worked out fine. GIIS is a smart school. Its infrastructure is state-of-the-art. The founders have really invested in making it a school of the future. GIIS gave us a great licensed platform to hold virtual classes, gave us audio-visual equipment that was of excellent quality, and the students were given ample time and resources to practise and perfect their art. Of course, there were some technical glitches like

internet lag, but that was nothing compared to what the students walked away with. Overall, there were more positives than there were hiccups, and I am glad we did not let the pandemic dampen our spirits.

**■Do you have any plans for your music school in the near future?**

This music school is my dream, so of course, I have a lot of ideas for the school and its talented students. As of now, I am working on pushing them to the next level through proper exposure and guidance. We have planned some collaborative activities with established members of

the industry for the students to get hands-on experience. It is going to be an amazing experience for them and this is just the beginning of our school's journey.

In the future, we will ideate on many such avenues to give the best to our students. Depending on the type of talent pool we acquire, we will determine the type of platforms they will have exposure to. We would not like to disclose much at this time but we are brainstorming and we are positive that many more avenues will open up in the foreseeable future.

**■We would love to know what are the forthcoming projects you are working on.**

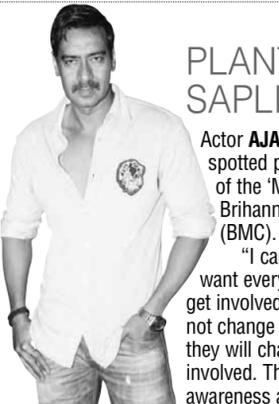
We are currently working on the music for *Pathan* and *Jayeshbhai Jorda*. Both of these films are set to release later this year.

I also have an extremely interesting surprise in store, something you will be hearing about, soon.

**■What is your message to people on the occasion of World Music Day?**

In a world filled with uncertainty and anxiety, I believe that music has the power to help us all feel centred and loved. Our country has an undiscovered treasure trove of musical talent that is waiting to be heard. I urge music lovers to open their minds and hearts to these musicians and help them find their audience. It is also my dream that more and more kids pursue their love for music and I hope to do my bit in making this happen.

## TRENDBLAZER



### PLANT SOME SAPPLINGS: DEVGN

Actor **AJAY DEVGN** and son Yug were spotted planting trees in Juhu, as part of the 'Mega *Vriksha* Campaign' by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

"I can only try and set an example. I want everyone including all the kids to get involved in this initiative. Things will not change just because I am doing it, they will change when everyone gets involved. The least I can do is create awareness about it."

### fairtalk

SHAMA SIKANDER



'This pandemic gave me the time to do a lot of meditation and yoga. I request parents to enroll their children for yoga classes as this would lead them to experience the magic of meditation and change their world for the better. We need to lay enough emphasis on mental health.'

### dailytalk

TAHIR RAJ BHASIN



'It's great to see Mumbai regaining normalcy, and for the industry to restart. Mumbai has a very different energy and I have loved every bit of my time here. It is a city that has given me wind beneath my wings to aspire and soar creatively, so it really feels great to be back at work here.'

### DETERMINED TO MAKE IT TO 100: DICK

American actor, comedian, writer, singer and dancer **RICHARD WAYNE 'DICK' VAN DYKE**, 95, is determined to make it to his milestone birthday in 2025.

"The song says, 'I hope I die before I get old'. And I thought, what a sad thing. Old age can be a great time! The point is to enjoy life. I'm looking forward to 100. George Burns made it and I'm gonna do it too," Richard told *Closer US* magazine.



On the occasion of International Yoga Day, H H SWAMI MUKUNDANANDA says these uncertain times are a reminder that our well-being is connected to those around us and vice versa

Another nature is a constant reminder of living in harmony. A forest, for instance, "has an amazing ability to communicate and behave like a single organism," says Dr Suzanne Simard, professor of Forest and Conservation Sciences at the University of British Columbia. Her research studies reveal how underground fungi networks of forests facilitate plants and trees to exchange water, nutrients, defence signals, and much more.

Along somewhat similar lines, the science of Yog has ventured deep and revealed to us that this whole creation is one system and that we are an integral part of one sublime energy. The spirit of yoga is the spirit of unity and union. We have a very subtle, yet deep and symbiotic relationship with one another at different levels. Hence, International Yoga Day not only emphasises the sense of oneness and wholeness within an individual but also our intertwined wellness and existence in this universe.

**We all are one**  
 Now more than ever we need to help one another achieve all-around wellness while navigating through these formidable times. If we work in unison with one another, cooperate, and share vitality, we will eventually conquer the virus. We have succeeded in doing so before — our coordinated efforts eradicated smallpox, which once killed 35 per cent of its victims. Developing a vaccine against COVID-19, although the most pressing challenges of our time, is a remarkable achievement of medical science. It is heartwarming to watch the global community donate vaccines to COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access), a global initiative unlike any other. However, success depends upon the



**UNITED, WE ARE STRONGER & HEALTHIER**



percentage of the global population that accepts vaccination. As they say, no one is safe, unless everyone is safe.

**Enhancing the psychological immune system is equally important**  
 The psychological immune system encompasses all our cognitive mechanisms, which fortify us from experiencing despondent or low-spirited emotions. Over the past 16 months, I have been witnessing several members of our spiritual congregation remaining strong and soldiering through the pandemic. It is the wealth of scriptural knowledge and practise of yoga that has been their paramount aid in riding out the pandemic. The science of yoga provides a holistic approach to develop not only physical resilience, but also mental, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual vigour.  
 Perils and arduous circumstances

are an integral part of our journey in this world. While some hardships are predictable and preventable, others are inescapable. A degree of emotional maturity is necessary to develop an adequate reserve of mental energy to come up with creative solutions to the problems that arise in life. Empowering the mind through meditation brings stability to emotions. Most ailments have their roots in the mind. When one harbours anxiety, tension, fear et al, it disturbs the mental sheath (one of the five sheaths in the body). This disturbance is then passed on to the pranic sheath, which then manifests in the physical sheath of the body as disease. Meditation on God heals the various ailments of the mind, resulting in the enhancement of vital energy and the improvement of physical health.

**Nurture positive inner ecology with yogic practices**  
 Sage Patanjali has given us five *niyama* (observances) that help us live in peace: *saucha* (purity of thought), *santosh* (contentment), *tapas* (self-discipline), *svadhyaya* (contemplating on the self/self-reflection), *isvarapranidhana* (devotion and surrender to God). Engaging in these practices sincerely, especially devotion and surrender to the Supreme Lord will ignite the lamp of wisdom.

There is a tremendous organisation manifesting around us in every aspect of God's creation — from a tiny atom to our DNA. If we transcend our internal imperfections, we can then discern the perfect world. This world is perfectly designed in a manner to bring about the gradual flowering of the consciousness of the soul over the continuum of lifetimes. The entire universe prods us towards the evolution of consciousness. The challenges that we come across are a part of the process that enriches us internally.

A caterpillar takes on strong wings, transforming into a beautiful butterfly only after going through the struggle. Similarly, this creation hurls processes at us to bring about transformation. If we can perceive this aspect of God's design, and align ourselves with it, we begin to understand his grand plan for us. When this dawns upon us, we not only take everything in our stride but also learn the art of dedicating our deeds to the Lord.  
*(The writer is an author, a yogi, world-renowned spiritual teacher, an authority on mind management, IIT & IIM alumnus and the founder of JKYog.)*



## Supreme union

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI feels that yoga can do what people waged wars for — help achieve world peace

Yoga. The word has now become omnipresent and is literally on everyone's mind. It's unbelievable how this euphoria has touched the hearts of people across 192 countries. This whole thing started with our PM, Narendra Modi's address at the United Nations in 2014 where he expressed his wish to dedicate one day as the International Day for Yoga. To everyone's surprise, the UN agreed to sanction the event and nine months later, the entire world was preparing for a yoga spectacle and a couple of Guinness world records too.

Yoga as a method and practise has evolved over centuries since the time it was developed in ancient India. As of today, for a seeker, there are so many forms and branches of yoga to choose from, hence at times, one gets confused as to which would be best for them. However, from a practical point of view, real yoga is not the one that just gives temporary health and happiness but one which transforms the world into one with no behavioural ailments, mental tensions or worries. It won't be wrong to say that it is an ideal method of curing physical and psychological disorders for several births. Today it is being stated by political pundits that yoga is the best soft power that India possesses to bring the world together and end the increasing trend of violence.

Of all the yoga techniques taught by various *yogis* over centuries, Raj yoga has been termed as the king among them all. Before practising this unique method, an aspirant needs to have a clear image of the supreme. The holy Gita says 'An ideal *yogi* is the one who has purity and chastity in thought, word and deed, who has knowledge and wisdom. One whose mind is subdued and remains constantly in soul-consciousness and *yogic* meditation. One who has conquered temptation of senses, who has cast aside ego, lust, anger, attachment and neither grieves at loss nor is jubilant with success. Someone in whose eyes all are equal, who is selfless and peaceful, whose diet is pure and in whose life there is austerity, who is upright, who knows the Almighty in his true essence and performs all deeds while in yoga with the Supreme'. So, to become an ideal *yogi*, one needs to, first of all, understand the nuances of the definition that is mentioned above and then start his/her journey.

Yoga in an actual sense means union or link. It is a union of the self (soul) with the Supreme (Almighty) for which there is a prerequisite that an aspirant needs to follow. One must understand that we are the soul and not the body. All our physical and mental sufferings are a result of our failure to remain in soul consciousness, and this has made our lives miserable. However, through Raj yoga, we can change this situation because every soul is pure and peaceful, in its original nature, and with proper guidance and practise it is possible to live a life without stress, worries and tension. Dedicating few minutes daily to Raj yoga is a meaningful expression of caring for yourself that can help you move through the mire of feeling unworthy. It involves the turning of one's mind and love towards the direction of the Almighty, to communicate with him.

Thus, it is a technique of self-exploration, leading to the experience of heightened and expanded awareness, reaching God and letting your soul focus on him. In short, the principal objective of Raj yoga is to bring the self in conscious touch with the Almighty, thus making it increasingly aware of its divine origin, divine destiny and its divine nature. So, be a Raj *yogi* and rediscover yourself.



In October, after the body of a COVID-19 patient in Sundergarh town, the district headquarters of Sundergarh in Odisha, reached 'Ranibagicha Swargadwar' cremation grounds, the administration realised there was no one present to help with the cremation. The son of the deceased waited from morning till 4 in the afternoon when the sub-collector and executive officer of Sundergarh Municipality contacted Siddhant Panda, Shishir Kumar Behera, Manoj Kumar Tripathy and Kamlesh Kumar Nathani. The four friends, wearing the PPE suits, cremated the body. The next day, the media covered the story and named these Samaritans *Shamshan Bandhu* (friends at cremation ground).

Their journey of cremating dead bodies began two decades ago. "In those days, when a person died in our colony or *sahi*, all the male members would join to help shoulder the body to the cremation grounds and console family members of the deceased. We had joined one such instance, back then," said 48-year-old Siddhant, who was 28 at that time. Whenever there was a call from their locality or neighbouring colonies these four friends would extend support. Initially, it was this interest that later transformed into dedication. "My mother would often say that *Shamasane je sa bandhabah* — a real friend is the one who stands with you during the funeral. We never stepped back from our mission," said Siddhant. They also helped

## Unsung heroes

RAKHI GHOSH brings to the fore a story of four Samaritan friends who have been cremating COVID-19 infected bodies in a small town in Odisha



with the cremation of abandoned bodies. "In a small tin box, we would collect money from shops and people to cremate those who had no one to help them. During that time we relied on crowdfunding till we set up our respective businesses in 2003. Since then, we stopped collecting money from others and spent it from our pocket. This comes between ₹4,000-5,000 for the cremation of one abandoned body," informed Shishir. To date, they have cremated nearly 700 bodies from Sundergarh town, which has a population of 45,036 (2011 Census).

panemic, Siddhant said, "We have seen people become inhumane. The fear of infection was such that the relatives didn't come to even light the funeral pyre and claim the ashes. Out of the 240 Covid-positive deaths, we lit the *mukhagni* (funeral pyre) of 56 people." To date, the relatives of the deceased have not turned up to collect the *asthi* (ashes), kept in different earthen pots with names and mobile numbers of the departed persons. "We keep calling their family members to collect the ashes, no one turned up to receive these as they fear the infection," said Siddhant. They shared that they wait for a few days more, if no one turns up they have decided to proceed with the *asthi visarjan* (immersion of the ashes) themselves. "We don't want to disrespect the dead and once the lockdown eases, we would perform *samuhik visarjan* (collective immersion) of the ashes," said Manoj.

**CHALLENGES DURING THE PANDEMIC**  
 Talking about the challenges while performing this work during the Covid-19 pandemic,

Siddhant shared, "It was terrible during the peak period. In May, every day nearly 12-15 bodies were coming to the cremation ground. In the morning, we would light the funeral pyres for four bodies then after finishing the ceremony (*Agni Shanti*), we would get another call from the municipality informing us that some more bodies were on the way to the crematorium. There was no rest till midnight." As per Manoj, the most difficult part during the peak period of the second wave was to perform the work wearing a PPE suit in the scorching heat of 44 to 45°. "We had to stand for three-four hours in front of the pyre. We couldn't drink enough water as urinating after wearing PPE was a challenge. Sometimes, we felt suffocated while working for long hours," he added.

These four friends have been conducting this work following all the necessary COVID-specific protocols. The local administration has provided them with a vehicle to carry the dead bodies and PPE kits to perform the work. "After the work is done, we come to the room provided by the municipality where we disinfect ourselves, take off the PPE kit and after a small break, get ready for the next round of cremation work," said Manoj. Besides appreciating their work, Abhimanyu Behera, sub-collector of the district, declared them as COVID-19 Warriors and vaccinated them on a priority basis.

When the family has abandoned their dead relatives, other community members have come

forward to support their funerals. They have donated 70-80 tonnes of wood, ghee, sanitiser, water bottles and other things which are necessary for the cremation. These four friends, however, need more hands to support them.

### FAMILY SUPPORT GETS THEM GOING

When asked how their family and neighbours react to their work, Siddhant said with a smile, "Last year, when media highlighted our work, my father-in-law and brother-in-law asked us to not undertake the task as they believed cremations should be performed by people belonging to the lower caste." His wife, however, stood by his side. Manoj — a Brahmin — also faced such issues. "This work gives us satisfaction, so we never pay heed to what others think of it," he said. Kamlesh explained, "We receive calls from all over the district as people understand the importance of the work we do. Sometimes, we travel to different corners of the district to bring infected bodies for cremation."

Seeing their dedication, the local administration and other organisations have felicitated them and their work. When they were asked about the name of their organisation, both Siddhant and Manoj laughed saying that they have been doing this work voluntarily and never thought of giving any name to it. It was the media that named them *Shamshan Bandhu*, a name people now associate with them. A name they are happy with.  
 (Charkha Features)

**The unexamined life is not worth living. —Socrates**

### HOW TO BUILD A GOOD TEAM AT WORK

Find it hard to manage your team? Encouraging employees to learn on the job and voice their ideas and suggestions for change can build teams that are more effective and resilient in the face of unexpected situations, according to new research.  
 The study, led by researchers from Rice University in the US and University of Windsor in Canada, examined what makes employees more resilient and fosters learning in the workplace. The researchers specifically examined the interactions of 48 teams from five Canadian technology startups. They found that teams were more effective and resilient if their bosses encouraged employees to take risks, make suggestions and learn from the process.  
 Creating a work environment centred around learning and open communication is helpful as teams grow and take on new tasks, said Danielle King, Assistant Professor of Psychological Sciences at Rice University.

### SINGLE DOSE SUFFICIENT FOR INFECTED

A single dose of vaccine is sufficient for those who were already infected by Covid-19, revealed a study by Hyderabad's AIG Hospitals.  
 The hospital announced that it conducted a study on 260 healthcare workers who got vaccinated between January 16 and February 5 to assess the immunological memory response in all those patients. All patients were given the Covishield vaccine. The observations have been published in the *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, a peer-reviewed journal.  
 The previously infected group showed a greater antibody response to a single dose of vaccine compared with those who had no prior infection.  
 It also revealed that the memory T-cell responses elicited by a single dose of vaccine were significantly higher in the previously infected group compared with those who had no prior infection.

### RISKS OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION

Older adults who struggle to fall asleep and experience frequent night awakenings are at high risk for developing dementia or dying early from any cause, a new study suggests.  
 The findings, published in the *Journal of Sleep Research*, indicated that people who reported routinely experiencing difficulty falling asleep had a 49 per cent increased risk of dementia.  
 And those who often woke in the night and had difficulty falling back asleep had a 39 per cent increased risk of dementia, reports CNN.  
 "We found a strong association between frequent difficulty falling asleep and nighttime awakenings and dementia and early death from any cause, even after we controlled for things like depression, sex, income, education and chronic conditions," said researcher Rebecca Robbins from Harvard Medical School.

### CLIMATE CHANGE ALERT: NASA

Raising an alarm over human-caused climate change, NASA-led research has revealed that the amount of heat trapped by Earth's land, ocean and atmosphere has doubled over the course of only 14 years.  
 Scientists at NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the US found that Earth's energy imbalance approximately doubled during the 14-year period from 2005 to 2019.  
 To reach this conclusion, scientists compared data from two independent measurements — NASA's Clouds and the Earth's Radiant Energy System (CERES) and data from a global array of ocean floats called Argo that enable an accurate estimate of the rate at which the world's oceans are heating up.

### POST-COVID GREY MATTER LOSS

An analysis of brain scans from people once infected with Covid-19 suggest a consistent pattern in loss of grey matter over time, say researchers.  
 The researchers affiliated with the University of Oxford posted findings ahead of peer review to medRxiv, drawing on data from the UK Biobank.  
 "Our findings thus consistently relate to loss of grey matter in limbic cortical areas directly linked to the primary olfactory and gustatory system," or areas in the brain related to the perception of smell and taste, the authors wrote.  
 The team compared brain scans taken pre-pandemic to scans taken about three years later among 394 COVID-positive patients.



**Matches Today**

9:30 pm	9:30 pm	12:30 am	12:30 am
vs	vs	vs	vs
9:30 pm	9:30 pm	12:30 am	12:30 am

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BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | JUNE 21, 2021

# STAR WARS



## Spain face threat of early exit

**AFP ■ SEVILLE**

Luis Enrique admitted he expected more from Spain at Euro 2020 after a 1-1 draw with Poland on Saturday left his team facing a fight to reach the last 16.

Gerard Moreno missed a penalty and Alvaro Morata squandered the rebound as Spain's scoring woes struck again, with Robert Lewandowski's header earning Poland a valuable point in Seville.

After starting with a stalemate against Sweden, Spain sit third in Group E and may well now have to beat Slovakia in their final game on Wednesday to avoid an embarrassing early exit.

"I was expecting more," said Luis Enrique. "I was expecting six points and zero goals conceded. But this is the situation."

"We're coming into the crunch match now and if we want to progress we need to win. If we win, we'll go through. If not, we'll be out. That's the reality."

Morata poked in from close range to put Spain in front but Lewandowski's 60th goal of the season pulled Poland level before Moreno's penalty hit the post.

The rebound came quickly to Morata but with Wojciech Szczesny committed down to his right, the goal was open for the striker to score his second.

Instead, the whistles that accompanied Morata against Sweden last week were saved for the whole Spanish team at the final whistle.

Poland, meanwhile, formed a huddle on the pitch before going to over to salute their supporters, after the deadly Lewandowski came up trumps again to keep his own team's hopes of progress alive.

Luis Enrique had launched



Poland's Robert Lewandowski, right, celebrates after scoring his side's first goal against Spain at La Cartuja in Seville **AP**

a passionate and prepared defence of Morata on Friday as he said the team would be "Morata and 10 others".

But he also replaced Ferran Torres in the starting line-up with Moreno, the Villarreal striker whose 23 goals was second only to Lionel Messi last season in La Liga.

Morata's best moment came in the 25th minute and it could hardly have been easier, even if a little shuffle put him in the right position to poke in Moreno's shot from the right.

The offside flag went up and Spain's players appeared to expect the cancellation but instead the goal stood.

Poland came again though and twice went close before half-time, Karol Swiderski hitting the post with a curling shot that came back for Lewandowski, but he smashed

at Unai Simon, who saved.

Lewandowski made no mistake nine minutes after half-time, peeling to the back post, nudging Aymeric Laporte to make the space and glancing a deft header into the corner.

Spain should have restored their lead after being gifted a dubious penalty for Klich leaving a late foot on Moreno.

Moreno stepped up but drove his penalty against the post and with the goalkeeper on the ground, Morata could have scored too but scuffed the rebound wide.

Moreno was taken off not long after while the openings kept coming for Morata as Torres chested down to him but Szczesny smothered the finish and the collision caused Morata to hobble off with four minutes left. He was applauded this time but the whistles came shortly after.

## 'Bubbling' Germany back on track: Müller

**AFP ■ MUNICH**

Thomas Müller said confidence is now sky high in the Germany camp after getting their Euro 2020 campaign back on track with a 4-2 thumping of holders Portugal on Saturday.

"We are allowed to feel a little euphoria," said Müller after Germany moved second in Group F, level on three points with Portugal and a point behind leaders France.

"It's just fun playing in this atmosphere. The cauldron is boiling."

Germany now need to beat Hungary in Munich on Wednesday to be sure of reaching the knock-out stage.

"Now we have the three points, we are well in the tournament and have it in our own hands," added Müller.

"We mustn't get carried away and become arrogant — but we must believe in our quality."



Red Bull driver Max Verstappen reacts after winning the French F1 Grand Prix at the Paul Ricard racetrack in Le Castellet on Sunday **AP**

## Max wins French GP to extend c'ship lead

**AP ■ LE CASTELLET**

F1 championship leader Max Verstappen overtook Lewis Hamilton on the penultimate lap to win the French Grand Prix on Sunday and extend his lead over his title rival to 12 points.

Verstappen used the DRS system to catch Hamilton on Lap 52 and pass him on the inside before zooming off to clinch his third win of the season and 13th of his career. A bonus point for the fastest lap made it a great day for Red Bull, which had never beaten Mercedes on the Paul Ricard circuit in southern France.

It was a close call, though, with Red Bull's gamble on a two-stop strategy for Verstappen countered by a one-stopper for Hamilton as Mercedes kept him out on the same tires.

With five of 53 laps left, Hamilton was only 3.5 seconds ahead.

Verstappen quickly ate into that lead, kept calm and then positioned himself perfectly to attack on a long straight in the way Hamilton has done countless times in his record 98 wins.

"When we made the call to do a two-stop, luckily it paid off," Verstappen said. "We had to work hard for it."

Verstappen, who won by 2.9 seconds, has 131 points to Hamilton's 119 after seven races.

Red Bull's Sergio Perez sneaked past a dejected Valtteri Bottas to take third place and strengthen Red Bull's lead in the constructors' championship: 215 points to 178.

"We pulled the trigger and we went with the two-stopper (for Verstappen) and it worked. And great job from Sergio making the one-stop work," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said. "It's a team effort, the strategy guys are working the numbers and they go for it."

Verstappen has already matched his career best for a season with three wins and is emerging as a massive rival for the defending champion Hamilton, who is trying to win a record eighth F1 title to move one ahead of Michael Schumacher.

## 'Barca move will give Depay something extra'

**Amsterdam:** Netherlands coach Frank de Boer is hopeful Memphis Depay's Euro 2020 form will be positively impacted after the confirmation the striker will play for Barcelona next season.

Depay has long been linked with a move to the Camp Nou and on Saturday Barcelona announced the 27-year-old had signed a two-year deal to join on a free transfer from Lyon.

"Maybe the transfer to Barcelona will give him something extra to help him perform at his best," De Boer told reporters ahead of the Dutch team's final Group C game against North Macedonia.

"We need Memphis at his best to go as far as we want in this tournament but we have confidence in him and he is a confident player."

Depay, who scored 20 goals in Ligue 1 for Lyon in the season just finished, converted a penalty in the Netherlands' 2-0 win over Austria.

However he has come in for some criticism from some fans and media for failing to take other chances.

"I think Memphis is his first critic and I'm sure the criticism doesn't affect him," De



Boer said of the former Manchester United player, who is a huge star in the Netherlands.

"He knows if he played well or not so let's hope for the Netherlands that he can reach the level that we have in mind."

The Oranje have already secured qualification for the last 16 as winners of Group C after beating both Ukraine and Austria in their first major tournament since the 2014 World Cup.

"When we are doing well we can beat anybody. Hopefully we can grow into the tournament and we still have some better performances to come," said De Boer, whose team will play in Budapest in the first knockout round against one of the best third-placed sides on June 27.

Victory there would set up a quarter-final in Baku against the runners-up in either Group A or B.

"We know our path to the final and to get to the final you have to win every game, so I don't really care who we play next," De Boer said. "We have no influence on it." **AFP**

## Shafali will be very important for us in all formats: Mithali

**PTI ■ BRISTOL**

Shafali Verma's spectacular debut has caught the imagination of the Indian women's team Test skipper Mithali Raj, who feels the teenager would be a key member of the side in all the formats of the game in future.

The 17-year-old, who had smashed a stroke-filled 96 in the first innings, made 63 in the second innings, to become the youngest woman and fourth overall to score twin half-centuries in her debut Test and was rightfully adjudged player-of-the-match.

"She will be very, very important to the Indian batting unit in all formats. She beautifully adapted to this format," Mithali said in a virtual media interaction after India, following on, salvaged a draw in the one-off Test against England.

"She didn't go like how she would go bonkers in the T20 format. She played sensibly against the new ball and it's great to have her."

Asked what prompted the Indian team management to hand Verma a Test debut in England, Mithali said: "She has great range of shots, and she



Shafali Verma receives her Test cap from Indian skipper Mithali Raj before the start of first day play of Women's Test match against England in Bristol **@BCCIWomen**

can be very, very, effective in a format like this if she gets going. In no time, we could see that the score would be somewhere else if she gets going.

"Once we knew that it's a used wicket and there won't be much of a movement, we thought it would be a good time to give her a Test debut and she lived up to it."

Mithali rated the young opener's knock in the second

## Knight supports 5-day Test match

**PTI ■ BRISTOL**

England captain Heather Knight has hailed the one-off Test against India as a great advertisement for the women's game and said she would support five-day matches, instead of the current four-day contests.

"What a brilliant game of cricket. It was unfortunate it didn't have the dramatic and exciting finish that it could have done but what a game of cricket," Knight said after the match.

"It's been a great advert and shows that women's Test cricket has a place in the game... Maybe even play a five-day Test match."

Asked if she would be open to women playing five-day Tests, Knight said, "I would definitely be open to it. There has been a lot of draws in women's cricket, so it's definitely something that should be looked at."

"(We were) almost robbed of that finish because there wasn't an extra day and we didn't have the time in the game. So, yes, something I'd definitely be open to."

"I think if there was another day what a great finish it would have been," said Knight who hit 95 in England's first innings and took three Indian wickets in the match.

## Jamieson 5/31 holds India to 217

**PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON**

Kyle Jamieson continued his Klove affair with the Indian team, tormenting the star-studded line-up with disconcerting bounce and swing as New Zealand bowled out the opposition for 217 on day three of the World Test Championship final here.

Jamieson decimated India with marvellous figures of 22-12-31-5 as New Zealand took control of the Test match by reaching 36 for no loss at tea. Openers Devon Conway (18 batting) and Tom Latham (17 batting) negotiated the Indian pace attack pretty well.

However, it was 6 feet 8 inch tall Jamieson, who after last year's series in New Zealand, has once again turned into a nightmare for the Indian batsmen.

Having removed Rohit Sharma on Saturday morning, Jamieson was relentless with his length and the bounce did the rest with clever traps laid for skipper Virat Kohli and the dangerous Rishabh Pant.

Kohli and his deputy Ajinkya Rahane walked into a nicely laid trap as India failed to reach 250, a good total in the prevailing conditions as per batting coach Vikram Rathour.

The overcast conditions made batting difficult and the likes of Jamieson, Trent Boult



New Zealand's Kyle Jamieson, right, appeals successfully for the wicket of India's captain Virat Kohli, left, during the third day of the WTC final in Southampton **AP**

(21.1-4-47-2) and Neil Wagner (15-5-40-2) indulged in a 'who blinks first' game with the Indian batters and came out trumps with some incisive seam, swing and short pitched bowling.

Kohli (44, 132 balls) couldn't add a single run to his overnight score as his RCB teammate Jamieson made life

difficult for him.

Boult and Jamieson kept bowling outside the off-stump channel and Kohli kept on leaving before the lanky seamer went slightly wide off the crease and got one to aim at rival skipper's boot laces.

Rishabh Pant (4) didn't score a run for 19 balls and then got a boundary with a flick through mid-wicket. Two balls later, he took the bait when Jamieson angled one on the imaginary fifth off-stump. He went for an expansive drive only to be snapped in the third slip by Tom Latham.

Once the 61-run stand with Kohli had ended, Rahane (49, 119 balls) sensed that the scoreboard needed a move on and started playing a few shots.

But perhaps, the milestone was working on his mind and despite playing a mistimed pull-shot one ball earlier, Wagner with his signature short ball prevented him from reaching a well-deserved fifty.

Rahane's disappointment was evident as he fell into the trap to play the pull-shot despite knowing that Wagner had kept a deep fine leg and long leg for the shot.

Ravichandran Ashwin (22, 27 balls) threw his bat around and got some useful runs but was never going to last long as Tim Southee (22-6-64-1) took care of him just before lunch break.

Post lunch break, Jamieson removed Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah off successive deliveries but Mohammed Shami prevented him from completing a hat-trick.

## TOCOG working on safe stay & training of Indian athletes

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The Tokyo Olympic organisers are working on how to ensure safe stay and seamless training of the Indian athletes inside the Games Village, according to a letter they have sent to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

The Indian athletes and officials travelling for the Olympics have been asked by the Japanese Government to undergo daily Covid-19 tests for a week prior to their departure and not to interact with anyone from another country for three days upon arrival, strictures that have left the IOA fuming.

Stricter regulations have been put in place for all travellers — including athletes, coaches and support staff — of 11 countries, including India,



Seiko Hashimoto, left, president of the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee, and Saburo Kawabuchi, mayor of the Olympic Athlete Village, pose for a photo during a media tour at the Olympic Village for the Tokyo 2020 Games **AP**

where different variants of Covid-19 have been identified, within 14 days of their arrival in Tokyo.

Termining the rules as "unfair and discriminatory", the IOA had written to the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (TOCOG) to ensure that mechanisms to prevent Covid-19 do not have any "adverse and detrimental impact" on performance of athletes.

In reply to the IOA letter, TOCOG said: "Tokyo 2020 is working to define how athletes of your NOC as well from other 10 countries and all other 195 NOCs can stay safe in the Villages and have training."

"We hope to provide you with those information and discuss together as soon as possible we develop it," the Games organisers said in a letter to the IOA.

The IOA, on its part, said that its president and secretary general were in discussion with TOCOG and seeking clarifications on the conditions imposed on the Indian contingent for Tokyo Olympics.

## Uganda Olympic team member tests +ve on arrival in Japan

**AFP ■ TOKYO**

A member of the Uganda Olympic team has tested positive for coronavirus on arrival in Japan, just over a month before the pandemic-postponed Games, officials said.

The first group to arrive from Uganda — a nine-strong party, including boxers, coaches and officials — landed at Tokyo's Narita airport on Saturday. They are the second team to arrive after Australia women's softball squad on June 1.

But one of the African nation's delegation tested positive during screening at the airport, a Government official told reporters. The person tested twice but their condition



Members of Uganda's Olympic team prepare to leave for Osaka **AP**

officer, told reporters, renewing a pledge to take strict measures against infections.

Public broadcaster NHK said the group had all been vaccinated and tested negative in Uganda before they came to Japan.

The team was originally due to have arrived in Japan on June 16, but their flight was cancelled following a surge in Covid-19 cases in Uganda, local media said.

The other members of the Ugandan party have already left the airport for Osaka, western Japan, where they will train ahead of the Games.

This was the first case showing positive Covid test results among Olympic arrivals from overseas, local media said.

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