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BULLYING IS
NORMALISED:
NEHA SHARMA
10 VIVACITY

'New, inclusive Af Govt soon'

Now we live in a completely independent Afghanistan, says Taliban as ISI chief takes 'emergency' trip to Kabul to resolve an internal crisis in warring outfit

AGENCIES ■ KABUL

Even as the world watches the developments in Afghanistan with bated breath, the Taliban on Sunday said that the new Afghanistan Government will be announced soon and it will be "an inclusive" one. "Now we live in a completely independent Afghanistan. The new Government will be announced very soon," said Anaamullah Samangani, a member of the Taliban's cultural commission, reported Tolo News.

Although Samangani did not give details about the structure and features of the future Government, he said, "It will be an inclusive Government and all the people will see themselves in it." Ironically, Samangani's remarks come amid a visit by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lieutenant-General Faiz Hameed, who arrived in Kabul on Saturday with a delegation of senior Pakistani officials.

Pakistani media reported that Hamid arrived in Kabul at the invitation of the Taliban and the Intelligence chief had to take an "emergency" trip to

Kabul to resolve an evolving internal crisis in the Taliban after reports emerged about a clash between factions in which the group co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar suffered injuries.

The Taliban, which captured Kabul on August 15, has been delaying the announcement of the Government formation in Afghanistan over the past few days. While the group has not issued a statement over it yet, reports have emerged claiming that the Government formation has been delayed due to differences between the Taliban and the Haqqani Network over power-sharing.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the top Taliban leader who is set to head the new Afghan regime, was injured during the clash and is currently getting treated in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, former Afghan Vice-President Amrullah Saleh has asserted that the Taliban are being micromanaged by the ISI, adding that Islamabad is in charge of the war-ravaged country effectively as a colonial power.

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A Taliban soldier patrols the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan on Sunday

AP

Taliban could hand over airbases to China, Pak

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In what could have serious security implications for India, the Taliban could hand over the Bagram airbase to China and Kandahar base to Pakistan for operational purposes.

While a team of aeronautical engineers of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is inspecting all the five airbases in

Afghanistan, including Kandahar, Bagram and Kabul, a delegation of Chinese leaders held a meeting with the Taliban top hierarchy to discuss various security-related issues, including the possible takeover of the Bagram military airfield, sources connected to the ongoing developments said.

"The Kandahar base will give an operational military edge to Pakistan for better

coverage of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) for security purposes and targeting Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in times of conflict with India.

The Bagram base, on the other hand, will give Beijing an additional airbase to contain India and also secure its investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," a counter-terrorism expert said.

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'Kisan mahapanchayat is Mission UP-U'khand'

Farmers threaten to campaign against BJP in Assembly polls if woes not addressed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI

Dubbing the 'Kisan mahapanchayat' as 'Mission Uttar Pradesh-Uttarakhand', thousands of farmers from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and neighbouring States gathered at Muzaffarnagar for a meeting aimed at "saving the country". The farmer leaders slammed the Government for "selling the country to corporate".

The farmer leaders threatened that if their issues were not addressed, they would campaign against the BJP in next year's State elections in UP. They dubbed the Mahapanchayat as "Mission Uttar Pradesh-Uttarakhand", indicating their plans to focus on the two BJP-ruled States where elections will be held next year.

While addressing the Mahapanchayat, Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait called Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders "rioters" and said the party should be given a drubbing in the 2022 UP Assembly polls. The farmer unions also announced that the



Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait addresses the 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' over the ongoing farmers' agitation against the Centre's farm laws, in Muzaffarnagar on Sunday

PTI

upcoming Bharat Bandh will be observed on September 27 instead of September 25 that was announced earlier.

"He (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) is selling everything. We will tell people what all is being sold off. There will be publicity of the PM. Electricity, water, etc are being sold off. Is it wrong to tell people these things", Tikait asked.

He claimed the country's railways, airlines and airports were being "sold" along with "privatisation of electricity" and "sale of roads".

"The banks are being sold just like FCI land is being given to Adani. 'Sale of India' boards have been put up and the purchasers are Ambani and Adani", he alleged referring to the top industrialists. He also

claimed that the State-run energy giant Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and fuel retailer Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) are in "danger".

Asserting that these meetings will be held across the country, Tikait said they have to stop the country from getting sold. "Farmers should be saved, the country should be saved; business, employees and youth should be saved — this is the aim of the rally."

The second Mahapanchayat will be held in Varanasi (which is Modi's Lok Sabha constituency) as well as in Lucknow, Tikait said. "When the Government will invite us for talks, we will go. The farmers' agitation will continue until the Government fulfills our demands."

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CAPSULE

RATING SHOWS SUPPORT TO PM'S POLICIES: BJP

New Delhi: BJP leaders on Sunday cited a global survey, which ranks PM Narendra Modi as the leader with the highest approval rating, to assert that this shows popular support to his pro-people policies. Union Home Minister Amit Shah hailed the finding of the survey. **P2**

UP CONG WILL ALLY ONLY WITH SMALL PARTIES

New Delhi: Virtually ruling out an alliance with the SP and BSP for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, Congress' state unit chief Ajay Kumar Lallu said his party will forge alliances only with small parties. **P5**

ATHLETES SOAR HIGH IN BEST-EVER PARALYMPICS

Tokyo: Inspirational, incredible and indomitable. India's paralympians managed to be all these and much more in an epoch-making campaign at the Tokyo Games where an unparalleled 19 medals, including five Gold, helped them sign off 24th in the overall tally — the highest ever.

GUINEA ARMY CLAIMS IT HAS TAKEN OVER

Conakry (Guinea): A Guinean Army colonel seized control of State television on Sunday and declared that President Alpha Conde's Government had been dissolved.

Case against Baghel's dad for hate speech against Brahmins

C'garh CM says no one is above the law, father apologises

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Raipur Police registered a case against Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's father, Nand Kumar Baghel, for making derogatory comments against a community.

Following a complaint filed by the Sarv Brahmin Samaj, the DD Nagar Police registered an FIR late on Saturday night against the 86-year-old Nand Kumar Baghel, Ajay Kumar Yadav, Senior Superintendent of Police, Raipur, said on Sunday.

The case was registered under Indian Penal Code Sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence,



language) and 505(1)(b) (with intent to cause, or likely to cause, fear or alarm to public, or to any section of public whereby any person may be induced to commit offence against the State or against public tranquility).

The Sarv Brahmin Samaj in its complaint alleged that the CM's father recently made an appeal to people to boycott Brahmins by terming them as foreigners, and also asked people to not let them enter their villages, the FIR said.

It also accused the senior

Baghel of making derogatory comments against Lord Rama earlier, the FIR added.

The organisation also said a video of the purported comments was available on social media platforms.

On Sunday morning, Chief Minister Baghel said, "No one in the ruling Government is above the law, even if it's my father."

"The State Government respects the feelings of people of all caste, creed, religion, class and every community," Baghel added.

Social harmony has been hurt due to the remarks made by my father against a particular class and I am also deeply saddened by his statement, the anguished Chief Minister stated.

Meanwhile, the senior Baghel has tendered an apology for his remarks against the community.

He said in his social media post: "I am not against anyone, but I am ready to go jail for SC, ST, OBC and minority people. As long as there is life, I will fight for their rights."

Nipah victim dies amid Covid spike in Kerala, 18 contacts under watch

2 health workers who tended to boy also show Nipah symptoms

PNS ■ KOCHI

While battling the Covid-19 upsurge, Kerala is in for a double whammy as a 12-year-old boy died at Kozhikode following a Nipah virus attack on Sunday. Health Minister Veena George who rushed to Kozhikode told reporters that all three samples of the boy were found to be positive for Nipah virus by the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune. At least 18 close contacts, mainly relatives and health workers who looked after the boy and 150 secondary contacts were identified and quarantined. Among the first group two health workers later showed symptoms of Nipah, the Minister said.

The boy came from Choolur in Chathamangalam panchayat and was admitted to



Health workers bury the body of a 12-year-old Nipah virus victim, at Kannamparambu cemetery in Kozhikode on Sunday

PTI

hospital on September 1. Former Health Minister Shailaja said that there was no need to panic as the State was fully prepared to counter the Nipah attack. Department of Health officials said that the Union Government has deputed a team of experts to take stock of the situation arising out of the presence of Nipah virus in Kerala. On Sunday,

26,701 new people in Kerala were diagnosed with Covid-19 from 1.55 lakh samples tested during the last 24 hours, said a release by Health Ministry. It is slightly less than the 29,682 people who had tested positive on Saturday from 1.69 lakh samples tested.

The Test Positivity Rate on Sunday stood at 17.17 against 17.54 on Saturday. The pan-

demically claimed 74 patients taking the death toll till date to 21,496. Kozhikode district had the highest number of new cases on Sunday at 3,366 while Thrissur had 3,214, Ernakulam 2,915 and Malappuram 2,568 cases.

As on Sunday, there were 2.47 lakh Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in the State.

Actor held for helping lover cheat people

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police has arrested the girlfriend of Rohini jail inmate Suresh Chandrasekar, for allegedly supporting her partner in duping people.

The accused identified as Leena Maria Paul, who is a South Indian movies actress, was arrested a day after Chandrasekar was produced before a Delhi court and sent to police custody for 16 days.

Suresh was arrested for allegedly duping Aditi Singh, wife of Shivinder Singh, the former Fortis Healthcare promoter of ₹200 crore besides ongoing investigations against him in several cases across the country.

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'Panchjanya article not linked to RSS'

Sangh distances itself from report calling Infosys 'anti-national'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RSS on Sunday distanced itself from an article that appeared in a magazine associated with the organisation, *Panchjanya*, which alleged that Indian software major, Infosys, was with "anti-national" forces and messed up the Government's Income Tax portal.

In the latest edition of the journal which is also considered a mouthpiece of the RSS, a cover story on the Bengaluru-



based firm founded by Narayana Murthy seeks to raise the question whether an "anti-national power" is trying to hurt India's economic interests through it.

The all-India Prachara Pramukh of the RSS Sunil Ambekar took to Twitter to clarify the organisation's position vis-a-vis the article and its allegations against Infosys.

Ambekar tweeted that the views expressed in the piece are not of the organisation but that of the author.

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BJP leader warns Akhtar over RSS-Taliban remarks

Says won't allow screening of films till he apologises

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Taking serious exception to lyricist Javed Akhtar's statement drawing a comparison between the Taliban and Right-wing organisations in India like the RSS, the VHP or the Bajrang Dal, three-time Mumbai MLA Ram Kadam on Sunday threatened that "no film of Javed Akhtar" would be allowed to be screened till the lyricist-screenplay writer apologises with "folded hands" to the members of the Sangh Parivar for his objectionable remarks. BJP workers also



staged a protest against Akhtar in front of his residence in Mumbai.

In a video put out on his official Twitter handle, Kadam said: "Before comparing the Taliban with the Right wing organisations", Javed Akhtar should have at least known that the people linked to the Sangh Parivar are governing the country and are following the Raj

Dharam. If the Taliban ideology existed here, would he have made such statements. The answer to this question shows how hollow Akhtar's remarks are."

"Till such time he (Akhtar) apologises to the members of the Sangh Parivar with folded hands, we won't allow any of his films to be screened in the land of Ma Bharti", Kadam said.

Kadam, who is a three-time MLA from Ghatkopar (west) in north-east Mumbai, had also threatened to lodge a complaint with the Chiragnagar police station at Ghatkopar against Akhtar. "By lodging the complaint with the police, we will force the Maharashtra Government to register an offence against Akhtar," Kadam said.

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Ravi Shastri tests Covid +ve, isolated

London: India head coach Ravi Shastri has tested positive for Covid-19, resulting in his isolation along with three other support staff members who were deemed his close contacts, the BCCI revealed on Sunday.

The 59-year-old Shastri returned positive in a lateral flow test (Rapid Antigen Test) and will stay in isolation till his and other RT-PCR test reports come clear.

The support staff members who have been isolated are bowling coach Bharath Arun, fielding coach R Sridhar and physiotherapist Nitin Patel.

The playing members have, however, tested negative in two lateral flow tests conducted on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. All the players and the support staff are fully vaccinated. **PTI**

Nepal Govt warns citizens against any action that may hurt friendly nations

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Nepal Government on Sunday warned its citizens against carrying out any "reprehensible and disgraceful" actions that may hurt the dignity of friendly nations after some people burnt effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during protests in the country.

In a statement, Nepal's Home Ministry said that in the past few days, "the activities of chanting slogans, holding demonstrations and protests and burning effigies to tarnish the image of the neighbouring friendly nations' Prime Minister has caught" its attention.

The Home Ministry statement, however, did not identify the leader.

‘PM’s approval rating big support for his policies’

New Delhi: BJP leaders on Sunday cited a global survey, which ranks Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the leader with the highest approval rating, to assert that this shows popular support to his pro-people policies.

The data by Morning Consult, which regularly tracks popularity ratings of a host of global leaders, has put Modi with 70 per cent approval on the top of a list which included US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

"The highest ranking for the country's top leader Narendra Modi in the global approval ratings is a matter of pride and honour for the country. This is a result of people's



blessings to his welfare policies for the masses," BJP president J P Nadda said.

The party's chief spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Anil Baluni said India's prestige has risen in an unprecedented manner under

Modi.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "Global leader with highest approval ratings, that's our Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji with 70 per cent approval ratings. Congratulatory." PTI

MP: First year students of MBBS to now read about Hindutva icons, Ambedkar

Bhopal: MBBS students in Madhya Pradesh will be lectured about RSS founder KB Hedgewar, Bhartiya Jana Sangh leader Deendayal Upadhyaya, Swami Vivekanand and B R Ambedkar as part of the first-year foundation course, State Education Minister Vishwas Sarang said on Sunday and added the move is aimed at instilling social and medical ethics among the students.

The move evoked a sharp reaction from the opposition Congress which accused the BJP of trying to "thrust" its agenda on the people.

The BJP, however, justified the move, saying all the sections of society should know about the patriots who are the "ideals for the nation".

Hedgewar and Upadhyaya are hailed in high esteem, apart from

other Hindutva leaders, by the Sangh, believed to be the ideological mentor of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP).

The minister said the first year MBBS students will also learn about Maharshi Charaka, one of the principal contributors to the Ayurveda, and sage Sushrut, known as the father of surgery in India.

"The students of the first-year course of MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) will be lectured about Hedgewarji, Upadhyayji, Swami Vivekanandji, Ambedkarji and other great personalities. Lessons on these great personalities will inculcate values, principles, social and medical ethics in the students," Sarang told PTI.

Easing of Covid curbs to depend on O2 availability, says Maha CM

Mumbai: Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said the easing of Covid-19 restrictions in the State will be based on the availability of oxygen and it was 'up to the people to prevent or invite a 'third wave' of the pandemic".

Inaugurating a virtual medical conference, Thackeray asked political parties to refrain from indulging in politics and demanding reopening of places where crowds cannot be avoided.

Medical practitioners from various parts of the state as well as State Covid-19 task force members attended the virtual conference.

"Don't play with the lives of people. Hold agitations, but against Covid-19. It is up to us to prevent a third wave or invite it," the Chief Minister said. He claimed Maharashtra is the only state which has upgraded its health infrastructure to tackle the pandemic "like no other country has done".

"We are only falling short of oxygen production, which takes a little longer. At present, our daily oxygen production is

around 1,200 to 1,300 metric tonne which is used for industrial as well as medical purposes. For the industrial purpose, oxygen is required in steel, glass and pharma sectors. We need 150 metric tonne daily for non-Covid-19 patients and 200 metric tonne for Covid-19 patients," he said.

During the second wave of Covid-19, the State required 1,700 to 1,800 metric tonne oxygen daily, which it had to procure from other states, the CM said.

Thackeray said he has given instructions to increase the oxygen production in the state to 3,000 metric tonne from the present 1,400 metric tonne.

"But, that will take time. We may not get enough oxygen from other states if the number of cases there increase," he said.

The Chief Minister said even though the second wave of Covid-19 is "under control", there is a slight increase in the number of daily cases in the last few days.

"We have to avoid crowding...have patience. We should not be required to close the places which have been opened up now," he said. PTI

Minor Raj girl alleges rape by dad

Her brother kills self after coming to know of it

Jodhpur (Rajasthan): A minor girl was allegedly raped by her father in Jalore district of Rajasthan and her brother committed suicide after he came to know about it through an audio clip wherein she is purportedly narrating the whole episode to her aunt, police said on Sunday.

The police have begun investigation into the matter after the 32-minute audio clip went viral on Saturday.

On the same day, the girl's brother committed suicide by jumping into the Narmada

canal in the Sanchore area of the district, a police officer said.

The girl's father had fled from home before a police team reached there, the officer said, adding that a hunt for him was on.

According to the police, the statement of the girl was being recorded.

In the purported audio clip, the girl tells her aunt that on one occasion her father took her in his car on the pretext of buying her a mobile phone and raped her. PTI



A woman artist gives final touches to an idol of Lord Ganesha ahead of Ganesh festival, in Karad on Sunday

PTI

105 fresh cases of dengue, viral fever surface in UP’s Firozabad

Firozabad: As many as 105 patients of dengue and viral fever were admitted on Sunday to the government medical college in UP's Firozabad, where the diseases have claimed 51 lives so far.No death was reported on Sunday. Meanwhile, a village panchayat official was suspended for laxity.

The principal of the medical college, Dr Sangeeta Aneja, said, "Today, 105 new patients of dengue and viral fever were admitted while 60 people recovered."

As of now, 447 patients are admitted to various wards, she said. She added, "The death toll

stands at 51. No child died in the past 24 hours in the medical college."

Meanwhile, a panchayat development officer of Matsena village, Deepak Yadav, was suspended for laxity, the district administration said.

Nodal officer Sudhir Kumar Bobde also visited affected areas such as Sudama Nagar and Ailan Nagar, enquiring about people's well-being and urging them to inform the Health Department in case of dengue and viral fever.

He asked the public to refrain from storing excess water. Pragatisheel Samajwadi

Party (Lohia) chief Shivpal Singh Yadav too visited the medical college and enquired about the well-being of the patients admitted there.

Shivpal told reporters that over 200 patients of dengue and viral fever come everyday to the hospital.

"There is a shortage of beds and the medicine given is of not good quality," he alleged. Firozabad, which is around 50 km from Agra and 320 km from state capital Lucknow, has been battling an outbreak of dengue and deadly viral fever for the past two weeks, with most of the victims being children. PTI

‘New, inclusive Af Govt soon’

From Page 1

In a piece in the *Daily Mail*, Saleh, who has declared himself as caretaker president of Afghanistan and is now leading the Resistance Front against Taliban in Panjshir Valley, writes the Taliban's spokesperson receives directions, literally every hour, from the Pakistani Embassy.

"It is the Pakistanis who are in-charge as effectively a colonial power. But this is not going to last... They may have territorial control, but as our history has shown, control of land does not necessarily mean control over the people or stability," Saleh, a vocal critic of Pakistan, said. Hameed's visit to Afghanistan comes as pressure is mounting on the Taliban to form an inclusive Government acceptable to the international community.

Anil Wadhwa, who served as Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs before retiring in 2017, said India should avoid any knee-jerk reaction to the developments in Afghanistan and follow a wait and watch policy. "India should avoid a knee-jerk reaction because it remains to be seen what kind of government is formed by the Taliban, whether it is an inclusive government or not. No knee jerk reaction (India should), just wait and see how the situation emerges," Wadhwa said.

On the ISI chief's visit to Kabul, he said the influence of the ISI on the Taliban, especially the Haqqanis, is well known and so they would like to have that influence in the new Government.

11-year-old killed over ₹60 dispute

Lucknow: In a shocking incident, a 13-year-old boy has been detained for allegedly stoning his 11-year-old friend to death in Hamirpur district.

The killing took place just over a dispute over Rs 60. The victim's body was found in 11 pieces on Friday after wild animals lacerated it.

According to sources, the accused boy confessed to the crime which took place near the Kanshi Ram Colony in Sumerpur town.

The police reportedly received a tip-off about the boy's involvement in the crime after which a team of investigators, led by the Inspector in-charge of Sumerpur police station, Virendra Pratap Singh, interrogated the 13-year-old. PNS

Assam flood situation improves Number of affected people comes down to 1.18 lakh

Guwahati: The flood situation in Assam improved on Sunday with the number of people affected by the deluge coming down to over 1.18 lakh and no new fatality reported, a bulletin said.

According to the daily flood report of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), at least 1,18,300 people are suffering from the deluge in Barpeta, Chirang, Darrang, Dhemaji, Goalpara, Golaghat, Morigaon and Nagaon districts.

Golaghat is the worst-hit district with around 48,300

people affected, followed by Darrang and Morigaon.

Till Saturday, nearly 1.77 lakh people were hit by the deluge across 12 districts of the state. The total number of persons losing their lives in this year's flood stands at seven, the bulletin said.

Four more persons have drowned, but the ASDMA said these were cases of "general drowning" and not included in the flood toll.

At present, 646 villages are underwater and about 19,659 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam,

the bulletin said.

Authorities are running 24 relief camps and distribution centres in nine districts, where 2,333 people, including 439 children, have taken shelter.

The administrations have distributed 10.65 quintals of rice, dal and salt, 11.25 litres of mustard oil, 419.25 quintals of cattle feed and other flood relief items during the day.

Massive erosion was witnessed in Barpeta, Biswanath, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Morigaon and Sonitpur districts, the bulletin said. PTI

‘Panchjanya article...

From Page 1

"As an Indian company, Infosys has made seminal contribution in the progress of the country. There might be certain issues with a portal run by Infosys, but the article published by Panchjanya in this context only reflects individual opinion of the author," he tweeted adding that "Panchjanya is not a mouthpiece of the RSS and the said article or opinions expressed in it should not be linked with the RSS."

The article has alleged that Infosys had badly messed up not just the income tax and Goods and Services Tax portals, for which it is the technology vendor, but that Infosys Trust, through its other

activities including funding was encouraging forces inimical to the security of India, and encouraging "urban naxals" et al.

RSS distancing may reflect a difference of opinion within the Sangh Parivar or approach of looking at the issue, sources said.

But RSS in-house magazine targeting Infosys also points to support from within.

'Panchajanya' demanded accountability for the errors that cropped up in the new income tax filing portal developed by Infosys, days after the company's CEO, Salil Parekh was reportedly summoned by the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and given a deadline until September 15 to reset the software.

BJP leader warns Akhtar over RSS-Taliban ...

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It may be recalled that Akhtar had on Friday told *NDTV* that it was time for supporters of the VHP and the RSS to introspect. "I think people who support organisations like the RSS, VHP or Bajrang Dal need to do some introspection. Of course, Taliban are reprehensible; they are barbarians. But those supporting the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal are all the same," he said.

Akhtar -- who is a former MP and the father of filmmaker Zoya Akhtar and actor and filmmaker Farhan Akhtar and the husband of renowned actor Shabana Azmi -

had said: "Just like the Taliban want an Islamic State, there are those who want a Hindu Rashtra. These people are of the same mindset -- be it Muslim, Christian, Jews or Hindus".

Responding on remarks by some Muslim leaders welcoming the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mr Akhtar said: "these people are a miniscule of the Muslim population of our nation".

"Most of the Muslims I spoke to were shocked and appalled that such statements were made by some. Today, most young Muslims in India want a good job and a

good education for their children in good schools. But on the other hand, there are some who want to believe in this kind of regressive thinking -- where men and women are segregated, where a regressive mindset is promoted. But like I said, these people are a handful, so let them say what they want, they will not achieve it,"Akhtar had said.

"I have total faith in the basic sensibility of an average Indian. The majority of this nation is extremely decent and tolerant. That must be respected. India will never become a 'Talibani country,'" the lyricist-screen writer had said.

‘Kisan mahapanchayat is ...

From Page 1

The struggle for Independence continued for 90 years, so I have no idea for how long this agitation will run," he said.Several political parties are also using the occasion to extend support to farmers to press home the message that they empathise with the concerns of rural folks. The BJP has termed the 'Kisan mahapanchayat' an "election meeting" and accused its organisers of indulging in politics with Assembly polls approaching in a number of States. The BJP's 'Kisan Morcha' head and MP Rajkumar Chahar claimed in a statement that it is politics and not concerns for farmers which have been on the agenda of those behind the 'mahapanchayat'. "This was very much a political and election meeting. The Opposition and these farmer union leaders have been using the farmers to engage in politics," Chahar said. He claimed that no Government has done so much for farmers as the one led by Modi has in the last seven years. Muzaffarnagar is a constituency of Union Minister Sanjiv Balyan, considered as Jat-dominated area.

Referring to Modi, Adityanath and Union Home Minister Amit Shah as "outsiders", farmer leader Tikait said he has no objection if they become prime minister after winning polls from Uttarakhand or Gujarat."But on the soil of Uttar Pradesh, these rioters will not be tolerated," he said.

Hundreds of participants reached Muzaffarnagar on Saturday while scores arrived in groups from various states and parts of Uttar Pradesh through the night. By early morning, the four parking areas for tractor trolleys and buses were buzzing with activity even as groups from different states could be seen going about their preparations. Medha Patkar, Yogendra Yadav, Naresh Tikait, Balbir Singh Rajewal were present at the mahapanchayat.

"This (Muzaffarnagar) is the sugarcane belt. There was a Government which had raised the sugarcane price by Rs 80, while another Government had increased it by Rs 50. Is the Adityanath Government weaker than these two dispensations? It did not increase the price even by one rupee. This Government should be given 'vote ki chhott' (electoral defeat). The slogan of 'fasal lon ke daam nahi, to vote nahi' (no fair price for crops, no votes) will have to be raised," Tikait said at the mega rally.

"The mills owe over Rs 12,000 crore to sugarcane farmers. The Yogi Government has not increased the SAP even by a rupee. The movement started over the demand to repeal three black laws and MSP. Don't forget the night of January 28. That night brought together the people of the country. If we have governments like this, there will be riots. During (Mahendra) Tikait saheb's time, this land used to witness the slogan of 'Allah hu akbar', 'har har Mahadev'. Ye todne ki baat karte hai, hum jodne ki baat karte hai," he said.

Actor held for helping lover cheat people

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A senior police official said that Leena has been arrested under various sections of law including the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

According to the FIR registered at the EOW police station, Aditi alleged that she was cheated of Rs 200 crore by a man posing as a senior official in Union Ministry of law and promising to help her secure bail for her husband, who was in jail at that time, in return for money.

"The person demanded money to get the work done. The man also asked Aditi to contribute to the party fund and assured to set up a meeting either with the former law minister or Union Home Minister," the FIR stated.

"The case was registered at Special ell but was transferred to EOW for further investigation. During investigation, it was found that Chandrasekar, who was lodged in Rohini Jail, was the mastermind behind the offence," said a senior police official.

"Chandrasekar was arrested from Rohini Jail while other accused identified as Pradeep Ramdanee and Deepak Rammani were nabbed after a trap was laid to capture the person getting the delivery of money on 7 and 8 August 2021. During interrogation, it was also revealed that Chandrasekar was running the extortion racket by using mobile phones from inside the jail.

AAP launches Kisan Yatra across Haryana

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) today launched “Kisan Mazdoor Khet Bachao Yatra” in Haryana to give more emphasis to the voice of the farmers agitating against the three agricultural laws introduced by the Central Government.

Under the leadership of Rajya Sabha MP and Haryana co-in-charge Dr Sushil Gupta, the yatra started from Rohtak on Sunday will finish on September 13 at Palwal. It will pass through all the 90 Assemblies of Haryana through a route of more than 400 km in eight days.

The yatra will be led by Haryana’s co-in-charge and Rajya Sabha MP Dr Sushil Gupta. Several MPs, MLAs and representatives of district panchayats will also be present with him.

Dr Sarika Verma, the President of AAP Badshahpur, said that for the last 9 months, farmers have been sitting on agitation demanding the repeal of all the three black agricultural laws of the Center all around Delhi, leaving their homes.

“More than 600 farmers have also been martyred during this period. But the gov-



ernment is still not willing to listen to them. We have given martyr status to the farmers and demanded pension to their widows, job to any one member of the family,” she said.

Mukesh Dagar Gurugram District President of AAP informed that more than 50 thousand people will participate during the yatra.

“The main objective behind this yatra is to make the local people aware of this black law. The South Haryana rally will be held on September 12-13. In Gurugram it will be held on Sunday, September 12.

Meanwhile, Dr Gupta said that recently the Khattar government has brought new orders to grab the land from the farmers. As per the new order, Khattar led BJP government of Haryana has ordered to transfer the Shamlat land (Shamlat’ land which is owned by the village panchayat) in the name of the government. “If the government will acquire the land of the farmers, it will give it to industrialists. It is clear that the present government has started the process of taking the land from the farmers,” Gupta added.

4 held for running fake websites of popular brands, selling franchises

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested four men for allegedly operating multiple fake websites of popular brands and duping aspiring businessmen on the pretext of getting them franchise, dealership and distributorship of these reputed brands.

The accused have been identified as Vinay Vikram Singh, (37), Vikas Mistri (24), Vinod Kumar (27) and Santosh Kumar (32).

The accused were running fake sites of reputed brands such as Amul, Patanjali and Haldiram etc they got these fake websites developed, then got their similar sounding domains registered, and also got these fake sites enlisted and promoted through Google Ads for higher ranking and visibility on Google, police said.

Police said they have freed 17 banks and around 126 cyber fraud incidents across 16 states are found to be linked to this gang and it is estimated that the gang has cheated people of over Rs. 1.1 crore so far.

According to Anyesh Roy, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Cyber Crime Unit (CyPAD), the matter came to light after one of the victim was cheated by the gang. In her



complaint, she told them she wanted to ran an outlet of Haldiram and while surfing online, she came across an website claiming to be of Haldiram and it offered franchise and dealership.

“When she contacted on the given mobile number, she was asked to fill the forms, submit documents and pay for various charges on the pretext of verification, security deposit etc and ended up being duped for Rs.11.74 Lakh over a period of two months. When she was again asked to pay another Rs.1.6 Lakh on a flimsy ground, she realised that she was cheated by these fraudsters in the name of Haldiram dealerships,” said the DCP.

“During the course of investigation, it was found that a large number of fake websites are running in the name of Haldiram, and all these websites are offering franchisee of Haldiram against consideration of huge amounts,” said the DCP.

“It was also found that a large number of people across the country have become victims of these fake websites. It

also came to our notice that these fraudsters were using multiple bank accounts and a large number of bogus SIM cards running in more than 36 smartphones to cheat people. The details of all these were obtained and the suspects were zeroed in,” said the DCP.

“On the night of August 27 and 28, raids were conducted at various places in India including Nalanda (Bihar), Faridabad (Haryana), Ludhiana (Punjab) and Delhi. This led to the arrest of four members of the gang,” said the DCP.

“During interrogation, accused Vikas revealed that he along with his associates used to purchase the domain names of big brands and got the websites developed in such a manner that it appeared as the genuine website of the big brands. One phone number was also displayed on the website. When someone called on the given number for distributorship of the brand, he was asked to pay fees on pretext of various charges,” said the DCP.

“Vikas used to switch location between Bihar and Ludhiana. In Ludhiana, he used to stay for months and do the same work there with accused Vinod and Santosh, who both are his relatives. They were given commission from the cheated amount, the DCP said.

Plea in Delhi HC for declaring system of awarding gallantry medals to armed forces ‘arbitrary’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been moved in the Delhi High Court seeking that the current system of awarding gallantry medals to armed forces personnel be declared arbitrary and against the principles of fairness due to the alleged opaque selection process.

The petition, which is likely to come up for hearing next week, alleged that there have been instances where acts of gallantry worthy of high recognition have been ignored by the system.

The absence of a mechanism to review a decision has led to “serious cases of injustice being meted out to deserving personnel of the armed forces”, it said.

The petition, which has been filed by a retired defence personnel, said gallantry awards are generally given for conspicuous acts of valour done by armed forces personnel during peacetime or wartime.

It said all these gallantry medals are regulated vide various notifications issued by the office of the President of India from time to time, as to its form, selection criteria and benefits that will be given to the awardees.



It sought that the current system be declared arbitrary and unconstitutional on the grounds of opacity in functioning.

“The extant mechanism that considers each act of bravery by armed forces personnel individually for award of a gallantry medal is undefined and opaque in its functioning.

“Coupled with the absence of any mechanism for review of a wrong decision, it has led to serious cases of injustice being meted out to deserving personnel of the armed forces,” the plea said.

Covid: 30 new cases, zero casualties

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital reported as many as 30 new cases of Covid-19 with a positivity rate of 0.05 per cent while no death was recorded for the fifth consecutive day, according to a health bulletin issued by the health department of the Delhi Government.

As per the bulletin, the number of fatalities stands at 25,082 while the case fatality rate is 1.74 per cent. “The number of people under home isolation was 91 while the number of containment zones stands at 130,” the bulletin said.

A total of 65365 tests, including 45,500 RT-PCR tests and 19865 rapid-antigen tests, were conducted a day before, as per the bulletin. The number of cumulative cases stood at 1437959 on Sunday and over 14.12 lakh patients in Delhi recovered from the virus till the date, the bulletin stated.

This is also the 24rd time since the start of the second wave of the pandemic in the national capital that zero fatality has been reported in a day.

Delhi was reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with an oxygen shortage at various city hospitals adding to the woes. To deal with the impending third wave, the Delhi government has taken many steps. Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain had earlier said the city’s medical infrastructure was being ramped up and 37,000 hospital beds dedicated to COVID-19 patients were being set up to tackle the anticipated third wave of the pandemic.

Delhi divided into 3 zones for 24X7 water supply scheme

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi has been divided into three zones for the city Government’s ambitious scheme to provide 24X7 water supply to every household by 2024, according to officials.

“The entire project area has been divided into three parts -- East and Northeast Zone, South and Southwest Zone, and West and Northwest Zone,” an official told PTI.

The project will cover 77 percent of the capital’s population. At present, 12 percent of the population is covered under three pilot projects for 24X7 water supply in Malviya Nagar, Vasant Vihar and Nangloi areas.

Around 11 percent of the population will be covered under 24X7 water supply projects being undertaken in the command areas of Wazirabad and Chandrawal water treatment plants, an official said.

A contractor will be appointed for every zone and it will have to complete the rehabilitation and construction to create necessary infrastructure in five years from the date of handover of designated areas.

Thereafter, the contractor will operate and maintain water supply and sewage systems in their area for 15 years.

The Delhi Jal Board has already appointed a consultant to prepare tender documents for selection of contractors, officials said.

The contractor will be responsible for designing, constructing, laying, renovating, and rehabilitating water supply and sewage facilities.

The contractor will also be responsi-



ble for meter reading, bill generation of bills, revenue collection and integrating with the DJB’s revenue management system.

The DJB will be responsible for operation and maintenance of water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants, primary underground reservoirs (UGRs) and transmission mains from WTPs to primary UGRs and from there to secondary UGRs.

Terminal sewer pumping stations and trunk sewers will operate under the DJB. The water utility will provide new connections and disconnect the illegal ones.

With the implementation of the 24X7 water supply system, the government targets bringing down non-revenue water (NRW) to 15 percent in a phased manner.

NRW means water lost due to leakages or theft before it reaches the consumer. In Delhi, where lakhs of people rely on illegal borewells and private tankers, 42 per cent of water gets stolen or leaked.

On an average, each household in Delhi gets around four hours of water supply per day.

The DJB supplies around 935 million gallons of water per day (MGD) against the demand of 1,140 MGD.



Assistant Professors who had graduated from IITs/NITs, stage a protest at Mandi House demanding retention/regularisation of jobs, in New Delhi on Sunday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

‘People with zero co-morbidities, uncomplicated liver transplant didn’t have poor Covid outcome’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

People with uncomplicated liver transplant and with no co-morbidities did “not have poor outcome” if they were affected by Covid, according to a new study.

The independent study was conducted by Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, under the aegis of Dr Subhash Gupta, the chairman of the hospital’s centre for liver & biliary sciences.

The study was conducted on a batch of people who went liver transplant since 2006, including those affected by COVID-19, to understand their response, as they are on “immunosuppressive medications” which predispose them to infections.

It was based on over 2,100 adult recipients of the transplant procedure at the hospital’s department of gastroenterology and hepatology and the centre for liver and biliary sciences, and who have been under follow-up starting 2006, hospital author-

ities said Saturday.

The study has suggested that recipients with uncomplicated liver transplant cases and who had no co-morbidities, and were affected by Covid “do not have poor outcome”.

Asked about recipients who had complicated transplant procedures, doctors said the severe ones also recovered on treatment, and later they were administered the monoclonal cocktail therapy, and “responded well to it”.

As bars reopen, DUI challans resume in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police has resumed its drive to check driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol and prosecute violators, as bars and restaurant have opened in the national Capital.

To check drunk driving and prevent road accidents, special teams have been deployed at identified spots where liquor is served till late night and parties are organised. According Muktesh Chander, the Special Commissioner of Police, Traffic, when all activities in the city have resumed and bars and restaurants have also reopened, the enforcement also has to be stepped up, otherwise accidents, particularly in the night time, will increase.

“Drunk driving prosecution resumed from Saturday night onwards. It is ensured that the teams involved follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, like wearing masks, using sanitisers and maintaining appropriate social distancing, while performing their duty. Breathalysers are sanitised after every use,” said the Special CP.

“We are using disposal pipes for breathalysers. Every time a new pipe is used and immediately discarded,” he



added.

According to police records, about 30,000 challans were issued in 2019 for drunk driving. The number of such challans came down to 3,000 in 2020, while only 300 challans have been issued this year.

“We deliberately avoided issuing challans owing to the rise in COVID-19 cases,” Chander said.

Driving under the influence of alcohol is punishable by a court challan.

In case of a first such offence, a person is liable to pay a fine of Rs 10,000 or face imprisonment up to six months

or both.

For second and subsequent offences, a fine of Rs 15,000 or imprisonment up to two years or both are applicable.

Police are authorised to digitally seize the driving licence or registration certificate of the offender in such cases. If the person is from another state and has a booklet or a simple paper driving licence, then it is seized physically.

Unless accompanied by a sober person with a valid driving license, the police are also authorised to seize the vehicle of the drunk person.

Mystery tunnel beneath Delhi Assembly needs to be investigated scientifically, say heritage experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Historians and heritage experts, including those from the ASI, have called for carrying out a scientific investigation of a tunnel located beneath the sprawling building of the Delhi Assembly, which has again captured the imagination of the people.

The ‘mystery tunnel’, first reported around 2016, has sparked multiple speculation, and experts said it will be too early to draw any conclusion unless the structure is thoroughly examined from an archaeological standpoint or any documentary evidence is found.

The subterranean structure’s mouth lies just below the floor of the assembly hall of the iconic building (Old Secretariat), which was constructed in 1912 by the British after the imperial capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, and it is being planned to be thrown open to the public next year.

Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel on Friday had said that historical significance of the tunnel is yet to be established but it is conjectured that the tunnel connects the assembly building to the Red

Fort.

He also claimed that there was an “execution room” at the site where Indian revolutionaries were brought to by the British.

Many historians and heritage experts, including those who have done extensive research on the multi-layered history of Delhi, however, have expressed scepticism over the claims and suggested scientific investigation of the structure and the site.

A senior Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) official said that theories and conjectures abound in absence of investigation.

“So, the structures beneath need to be seen archaeologically, first. And, even if there are obstructions due to metro and flyover pillars, technology is there to investigate to test the theory. Without investigation, it would not be wise to make comments,” he told PTI.

Also, the Red Fort link theory seems a bit implausible as the distance between the 17th-century Mughal monument and the British-era landmark is over six km, and with a low height, a tunnel that long would be hard to imagine as it would also be hard to navigate, the official said.

Raghav Chadha inaugurates ‘Vaccination on Wheels’ bus

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) senior leader and national spokesperson Raghav Chadha inaugurated the ‘Vaccination on Wheels’ bus on Sunday to ensure vaccination to the workers living in Loha Mandi area.

In this drive, 150 people are being vaccinated every day without any prior appointments, a senior AAP leader said, adding that party workers are going door-to-door, encouraging people to get the vaccine.

Talking about the move, Chadha said that the target of the Kejriwal government is that even the last person standing in the queue should get the protective cover of the vaccines.

He added that due to the unavailability of smart phones, everyone is not able to get appointments and reach their nearest vaccination centres. To get rid of this problem, the Kejriwal government has arranged this special van, he said.

In this drive, which started on 3rd September, 150 people are being administered the vaccine every day without an appointment. “The person coming here gets registered



for vaccination on the spot, after which he/she is vaccinated. There is a team of doctors present at all times which is capable of dealing with any complications during the vaccination,” he said.

“The Kejriwal government aims to reach even the last per-

son standing in the queue for vaccination. Delhi government has already organized free-of-cost vaccine camps in many government schools. This campaign is being received well and the people of the area are also participating enthusiastically,” he added.

Indian think tank maps depth of Chinese foothold



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

China has spent huge sums of money to buy influence in India's universities, social institutions, research think tanks, film world and social media thereby posing a threat to national security and democracy.

Making this assertion in its research report titled 'Mapping Chinese Footprints and Influence Operation in India,' a Delhi-based think tank, Law and Society Alliance 3, has tried to identify how deep and extensive the Chinese foothold in India is.

Outlining the point that China has gone for its warfare doctrine of winning without

'China spent huge sums of money to buy influence in India's universities, social institutions, research think tanks, film world and social media'

Through a combination of financial investments, as seen in the entertainment industry, to propaganda in the socio-political realm through Confucius Institutes, Beijing is using every trick in its play-book to make in-roads into the Indian economy and society in order to try and advance its own selfish narrative and to create discord within the Indian society with regard to China's actions and motives.

China has been using subtle tactics to spread its influence and propaganda on not just India, but also its neighbours and the world at large, the report said.

Global powers such as the United States, Canada and Australia have already recognised this growing trend and taken concrete steps to minimise Beijing's influence on their societies, it said.

fighting, the report released this weekend said China has also invested huge sums of money in the technology industry of India.

The report covers a wide range of topics and identifies key elements and ways in which Chinese intelligence services and the Chinese Government have entrenched themselves into various Indian sectors.

Besides highlighting the Indian industries and areas where China has over the years increased its influence through strategic investments, the report also touches upon Beijing's hidden agenda in increasing its influence to shape the opinion of the common man, the voters, in India.

Focus on all-round development of each child: Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday urged teachers to keep in mind that every student has different abilities, different talents, different psychology, different social background and environment. He said, therefore, the emphasis should be on the all-round development of each child according to his special needs, interests and abilities.

Kovind said, the education system should be such that students should inculcate loyalty to the constitutional values and fundamental duties of cit-

izens, strengthen the feeling of love for the country.

The president reminded that it is the duty of teachers to inculcate interest in studies in their students and sensitive teachers can shape the future of students by their behaviour, conduct and teaching.

Speaking on Teachers' Day, Kovind remembered Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and said he was known as a philosopher and scholar across the world. However, he wanted to be remembered only as a teacher. President said, he has left an indelible mark as a great teacher.



President Ram Nath Kovind confers 44 teachers with National Awards, via video conference

Agency

Kovind also felicitated the Nation's best 44 teachers in the field of education, virtually, with the National Awards.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, his

three other colleagues in the ministry and officials were present on the occasion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the teachers, students, parents and stake-

holders associated with education on Tuesday and will also launch five initiatives of the Department, Indian Sign Language dictionary of 10,000 words.

Centre warns States about fake Covid vaccines

Shares list of parameters to check authenticity of jabs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid reports of counterfeit versions of Covishield vaccines circulating in the global market, the Centre on Saturday shared a list of parameters such as details on the label, colour and other information used by the vaccine manufacturer to identify the authenticity of the Covid vaccines being used in the country.

"The parameters will help identify whether the vaccine is fake or genuine, the Union Health Ministry said in a letter to the States, adding that it was prepared with information from the companies manufacturing Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V — the three vaccines currently being used in the Indian market.

Even the World Health Organization had warned recently of counterfeit versions of Covishield, India's primary anti-COVID-19 vaccine, in Southeast Asia including India and Africa markets. The guidelines come nearly a month after Health Minister Mansukh

PARAMETERS TO CHECK COVISHIELD'S AUTHENTICITY

- ★ Label colour shade is dark green, as per approved art work while colour of the aluminium flip off seal is dark green.
- ★ Brand name with trademark is mentioned on the original vaccine
- ★ The lettering is printed in special white ink to be more clear and readable. The general trend is to keep white lettering in reverse and just print the solid color. The text font of the Generic name is in un-bold
- ★ The SII logo is printed at a unique angle and position which can be only identified by a select few who are aware of the exact details

The entire label has been given a special texture honeycomb effect which is visible only at a specific angle. To make it foolproof, the honeycomb design has also been altered slightly at certain strategic locations.

PARAMETERS TO CHECK COVAXIN'S AUTHENTICITY:

- ★ Invisible UV helix on label which is only visible under UV light
- ★ Micro Text hidden in label claims Dots, which is written as Covaxin
- ★ Holographic effect has been given on Covaxin.
- ★ Parameters to check Sputnik V's authenticity:
- ★ Imported products are from two different bulk manufacturing sites from Russia and hence, there are two different labels for both these sites. While all the information and design is the same, only the manufacturer name is different.

For all the imported products till now, the English label is only available on the front and back of the carton of 5 ampoule packs while for all other sides,



Mandaviya said the Government is probing the claims of duplicate Covishield vaccines being allegedly sold by criminal elements.

"It has been claimed that duplicate versions of the

Covishield vaccine were sold in the country. The Indian government is probing this claim and will take action if it finds any substance to the allegations," Mandaviya had said.

In the meantime, India has

administered more COVID-19 vaccine doses in August than all the G7 nations combined, the government said on Saturday. In a tweet, the centre's official handle MyGovIndia, said the country

administered over 180 million vaccine doses in August - more than all the Group of 7 nations combined that includes Canada, the UK, the US, Italy, Germany, France and Japan.

PM Modi hails India's performance, says every member a champion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tokyo Paralympics

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday applauded all the members of the Indian contingent of the Tokyo Paralympics 2020 saying that it will always have a 'special place' in the history of Indian sports.

"Every member of our contingent is a champion and source of inspiration," said the Prime Minister.

According to Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur, the Prime Minister will be hosting Tokyo Paralympians just like he hosted Olympians after they won seven medals including one historic gold in the javelin throw.

India sent its highest ever contingent of 54 para-athletes across as many as 9 sporting disciplines at Games. Badminton and Taekwondo made their debut in Tokyo, both of which were represented by India.

Modi said that in the history of Indian sports, the Tokyo Paralympics will always have a special place.

He also lauded the people of Japan, particularly Tokyo and the Japanese Government for their exceptional hospitality, eye for detail and spreading the much needed message of resilience and togetherness

through these Olympics.

In a series of tweets, the Prime Minister said;

"In the history of Indian sports, the Tokyo #Paralympics will always have a special place. The games will remain etched in the memory of every Indian and will motivate generations of athletes to pursue sports. Every member of our contingent is a champion and source of inspiration", he said.

"The historic number of medals India won has filled our hearts with joy. I would like to appreciate the coaches, support staff and families of our athletes for their constant support to the players.", Modi said in his tweets.

Indian wolf among world's most endangered, distinct species



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists who sequenced the Indian wolf's genome for the first time have said that the land mammals could be far more endangered than previously recognised.

The findings, published in the journal Molecular Ecology, reveal the Indian wolf to be one of the world's most endangered and evolutionarily distinct gray wolf populations. The study indicates that Indian wolves could represent the most ancient surviving lineage of wolves.

Till now, the Indian and western Asian wolf populations have been considered as one population, however, the study's finding that Indian wolves are distinct from western Asian wolves indicates their distribution is much smaller than previously thought.

The Indian wolf is restricted to lowland India and Pakistan, where its grassland habitat is threatened primarily by human encroachment and land conversion.

"Wolves are one of the last remaining large carnivores in Pakistan, and many of India's large carnivores are endangered," said lead author Lauren Hennelly, a doctoral student with the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine's Mammalian Ecology Conservation Unit. "I hope

that knowing they are so unique and found only there will inspire local people and scientists to learn more about conserving these wolves and grassland habitats."

The authors sequenced genomes of four Indian and two Tibetan wolves and included 31 additional canid genomes to resolve their evolutionary and phylogenomic history. They found that Tibetan and Indian wolves are distinct from each other and from other wolf populations.

The study recommends that Indian and Tibetan wolf populations be recognized as evolutionarily significant units, an interim designation that would help prioritize their conservation while their taxonomic classification is reevaluated.

"This paper may be a game-changer for the species to persist in these landscapes," said co-author Bilal Habib, a conservation biologist with the Wildlife Institute of India. "People may realize that the species with whom we have been sharing the landscape is the most distantly divergent wolf alive today."

Gray wolves are one of the most widely distributed land mammals in the world, found in snow, forests, deserts and grasslands of the Northern Hemisphere.

Wolves may have survived the ice ages in isolated regions

called refugia, potentially diverging into distinct evolutionary lineages.

Recent genomic studies confirmed that the Tibetan wolf is an ancient and distinct evolutionary lineage. However, until this study, what was known about the evolutionary history of Indian wolves was based on mitochondrial DNA evidence, which is inherited only from the mother. That evidence suggested that the Indian wolf diverged more recently than the Tibetan wolf.

In contrast, this study used the entire genome — the nuclear DNA containing nearly all of the genes reflecting the wolf's evolutionary history. It showed that the Indian wolf was likely even more divergent than the Tibetan wolf.

Both Tibetan and Indian wolves stem from an ancient lineage that predates the rise of Holarctic wolves, found in North America and Eurasia. Sacks said this study indicates Indian wolves could represent the most ancient surviving lineage.

"I knew that if we sequenced the wolves and the results indicated a divergent lineage, answering that question could really help their conservation at a policy scale that could trickle down and bolster local efforts to help protect these wolves," Hennelly said.

SOPs for anti-graft agencies may make probes harder

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has circulated a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for investigating corruption cases against public servants to the Chief Secretaries of the States and Administrators of the Union Territories. In keeping with the provisions of Section 17 A, the SOPs provide for stage-wise processing of information received by a police officer, specifying rank of police officers to seek prior sanction for probing different ranks of public servants and consideration of sanction by appropriate authority among others. The move could make it more difficult for investigation teams to enquire against high ranking public servants like ministers or senior bureaucrats.

The premier anti-corruption investigation agency CBI has already been following a SOP of seeking the Director's approval before initiating a probe against ministers or senior government officers, sources in the agency said. While safeguards are already enshrined in the Prevention of Corruption Act to protect officers from unnecessary probes, the additional layer of scrutiny in the SOPs will make probe more difficult against top public servants. The anti-corruption agencies gather evidence and details of a case and if the enquiry is stalled at this stage, formal investigation through an FIR will not see the light of the day.

The SOPs provide that any probe officer who finds material against a government servant will have to seek approval from a designated officer who would then decide if the case is fit for the "enquiry, inquiry or investigation".

For Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, Supreme Court Judges and chief of Public Sector Undertaking, only a Director General of police or in case of CBI, the Director can approve the probe.

Likewise, for senior bureaucrats in the government and senior management in the PSU it can be DGP/ Director or ADG rank officers. IGs can decide on middle management while DIGs on junior management level officers.

Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, which was introduced in 2018 through an amendment, has already ensured that government functionaries cannot be probed for decisions taken during their stint with the government unless caught red handed in the act of corruption.

The SOPs provide for stage-wise processing of information received by police officers, specifying the rank of police officers under Section 17A in respect of different rank of public servants, consideration of the proposal under Section 17A by the appropriate authority or government and laying down a single window for receipt of proposal.

"It may be emphasised here that the provisions of section 17A stipulate a mandatory requirement for a Police Officer to seek previous approval for conducting any enquiry or inquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant under the Prevention of Corruption Act, where the alleged offence is related to any recommendation made or decision taken by such public servant in discharge of his official functions or duties," reads the SOP issued on September 3.

Detailing the process to be followed by the probe agency the SOP said, "The Police Officer of Appropriate Rank shall make a proposal to the Appropriate Government or Authority, as the case may be, through the single window procedure as laid down by these SOPs and shall ensure that the proposal is in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Check List and encloses clear, legible and authenticated documents, as may be required."

'Breast milk enhances heart's performance in premature babies'

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a first-of-its-kind study, a team of researchers has shown that preterm infants with higher exposure to their mother's own milk had not only enhanced cardiac function but also better cardiovascular health at age one year, with values approaching those of healthy full-term infants.

The study's observation that preterm infants fed formula do not demonstrate this recovery holds importance in the context of India which, currently, consumes about 10,000 tonnes of powdered infant formula for 0-6 months old babies.

Published in the journal 'JAMA Network Open', the study is also important given that children and adults who are born preterm are at increased risk of cardiovascular disorders, including ischemic heart disease, heart failure, systemic and pulmonary hypertension, and are more likely to die as a result of cardiovascular disease.

The research was led by Professor Afif El-Khuffash, Clinical Professor of Paediatrics at RCSI and Consultant Neonatologist at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin, in collaboration with researchers at the University of Oxford; Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto;

Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine; Washington University School of Medicine; and, Harvard Medical School.

The hearts of young people born early are known to have unique traits such as reduced biventricular volume, shorter length, lower systolic and diastolic function and a disproportionate increase in muscle mass.

This results in impaired heart function, which is significantly lower than that of healthy infants who are born at term. This dysfunction is detectable at hospital discharge and persists throughout their adolescence.

This study showed that exclusive breast milk consumption in the first months after birth is associated with a normalisation of some of these traits.

Premature infants exposed to a high proportion of their mother's own milk during the first few weeks after delivery had greater left and right heart function and structure with lower lung pressures and enhanced right heart response to stress at one year of age compared to preterm infants who had a higher intake of formula, with all measures approaching those seen in term-born healthy children.

These findings were appar-

ent before discharge from the hospital and persisted up to a year of age (the duration of follow up).

"This study provides the first evidence of an association between early postnatal nutrition in preterm-born infants and heart function over the first year of age, and adds to the already known benefits of breast milk for infants born prematurely," Professor EL-Khuffash said.

"Preterm infants have abnormal heart function. However, those who are fed their mother's own milk demonstrate recovery of their heart function to levels comparable to healthy term-born infants.

Commenting on the findings, Dr Arun Gupta, central coordinator of Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) said, the study is a good addition to thousands of scientific studies over the past 40 years to prove that human breast milk is better for the babies as compared to use of infant formula. "This benefit of cardiac function calls for ending unnecessary use of infant formula in babies both normally born or pre-term. Currently, India consumes about 10,000 tonnes of powdered infant formula for 0-6 months old babies," he pointed out.

Parts of South, West, N India to witness heavy rainfall during next three days: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the revival of the southwest monsoon, several parts over south, west and north India are likely to receive heavy rainfall during the next three days. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday said enhanced rainfall activity with fairly widespread and isolated heavy to very heavy rains is very likely over

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala during the next three days and reduce in intensity and distribution thereafter.

Under the influence of west-northwestward movement of a likely low pressure area or its remnant cyclonic circulation, fairly widespread to widespread rainfall with isolated heavy to very heavy rains are very likely over south Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana,

Vidarbha and south Chhattisgarh September 5-7. North Maharashtra, north madhya Maharashtra, north Konkan, Gujarat Region is likely to receive rainfall during September 7-9.

Isolated extremely heavy falls are also likely over north Konkan during September 7-8, central Maharashtra and Gujarat Region on September 8 and Telangana on September 7.

‘NDA Govt selling nat’l assets built by Nehru’

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Ridiculing the Narendra Modi dispensation for its efforts to undermine late Jawaharlal Nehru’s contribution to the country in the pre and post-Independence period, the Shiv Sena said on Sunday that it was ironical that the BJP-led NDA Government “is having fun” by selling the national assets created by India’s first Prime Minister.

In his weekly column “Roktok” published in the Shiv Sena’s official mouth-piece “Saamana”, Sena spokesperson and the newspaper’s Executive Editor Sanjay Raut said that while there was nothing wrong if the BJP-led Government at the Centre had differences with Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, what had prompted the Modi dispensation to nurse such an animosity towards late Nehru.

“What has prompted the Modi Government to nurse such animosity against Nehru? On the contrary, this Government is selling the public undertakings created by the late Nehru. The Government is having fun selling the Assets created by late Nehru,” the Sena spokesperson said.

“Had Nehru not created national assets, then there would have been massive unemployment and anarchy arising out of hunger in the country. But, because of the long term vision of Nehru, the country is today saved from a major disaster. The current government should be indebted to late Prime Minister Nehru for life time. But, the current government has erased the name of late Nehru from the freedom struggle movement. The current Government is practising vindictive politics,” Raut said.



Raut made these comments while slamming the Government over the dropping of photos of India’s first PM Nehru and the country’s first education minister Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad from a promotional advertisement released by the Union Education Ministry’s Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) on the 75th year celebrations of India’s Independence. The advertisement has sparked a fierce debate across the county.

Raut also slammed the Modi Government for its vindictive action of renaming the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award. “What is this Government is going to achieve by erasing the contribution of Pandit Nwhehru and Indira Gandhi to the country’s freedom struggle and the country’s subsequent progress. These are all part of the country’s history,” Raut said.

Charging the ruling BJP with trying to re-write history, Raut said: “Only those who cannot create history consider it their bravado to erase the history of others. Those who kept far away from and never participated in the Freedom Struggle are now trying to keep out one of the heroes of the Independence Movement... This is not proper.”

Heaping praise on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin for showing large heart and displaying “love, magnanimity and respect” towards his political opponents, Raut said: “When he took over as CM, Stalin was confronted with the issue of 6.5 million schoolbags to be distributed free to students but had the photographs of the former CMs the late J. Jayalalitha and E. Palaniswamy who was voted out in May 2021.”

“When asked by his officials what to do with the bags, CM Stalin categorically said the scheme should not stop because of the photographs (Jayalalitha and Palaniswamy), and must be immediately disbursed to the children... He said the state would save Rs. 15 crore which can be used in the war against Coronavirus,” Raut said.

Raut said that this was the same Stalin --whose father late CM M. Karunanidhi) was dragged out of his home by Jalalalitha’s policemen at the

middle of the night and arrested -- had now adopted a cultured and mature approach towards political opponents by forgetting the “old hatred” in the state’s interest. The Sena spokesperson said that “all political parties to take a lesson from Stalin’s conduct”.

Alluding to the “live and let live” approach adopted by late Nehru, Raut said: “In each era of history, great personalities are born. They bring in new ideas into society. He believed in the ‘live and let live’ approach. He wanted everyone in the country to adopt such an approach.”

“The large heartedness displayed by Stalin towards his political opponents reflects his culture and upbringing. Why do you have such an animosity towards late Nehru? You have to give a reply to the country,” the Sena spokesperson told the Modi government.

Assam Rifles’ ‘Freedom cycling rally’ from Shillong to Delhi flagged off

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A 3,000-km-long cycle rally organised by the Assam Rifles as part of Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav, the Government’s initiative to mark 75 years of India’s Independence, was flagged off on Sunday. Director General Assam Rifles Lt Gen Pradeep Chandran Nair flagged off the ‘Freedom Cycling Rally’ between Shillong and New Delhi, an official said.

The rally commemorates 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture, achievements and also promotes the Fit India Movement, he said.

It will touch important places associated with India’s

freedom movement en-route. It also includes interactions with locals to include them in the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations’ spirit.

Present at the launch at the Directorate General Assam Rifles headquarters at Laitkor, Shillong were Krishna Lahkar, a 94-year-old freedom fighter, Captain Keishing Clifford Nongrum, Maha Vir Chakra awardee, Maj David Manlun, Kirti Chakra awardee and all ranks and families of the Laitkor garrison.

Lt Gen Nair highlighted the role played by Assam Rifles towards peace and security in the North East. Assam Rifles, known as the ‘Sentinels of the North East’ is a force that binds the region, he added.

LF, Cong allege BJP-TMC nexus

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Left Front and the Congress have once again questioned the “hand-in-glove” chemistry between BJP and the Trinamool Congress a day after the Election Commission of India declared by-elections for only the Bhawanipore Assembly constituency in Kolkata from where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee would contest the polls.

While by-elections were due for five seats where the elected MLAs had either died or resigned. Besides elections were due for two constituencies of Jangipur and Rezinagar seats in Murshidabad where two candidates had died of corona while the electoral process was on.

The ECI on Saturday declared by-elections to Bhawanipore seat which was

resigned by local MLA and minister Sobhandeb Chatterjee and Rezinagar and Jangipur. The ECI is yet to announce any date for the remaining four seats including Cooch Behar, Khardaha and Shantipur.

Reacting to “bizarre steps taken by the ECI which never moves a leaf without the permission of Home Minister Amit Shah,” former Left MP and CPI(M) central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said “the EC making special arrangements for the Chief Minister so that she can get elected within six months and remain in power is a big proof of the alleged understanding between the BJP and TMC ... how is it that the by-elections for only one seat designated for the Chief Minister will take place and the remaining four seats will remain unrepresented.”

Congress MP Pradip Bhattacharya said “the ECI should have taken a decision compatible to the political culture of the country ... its decision should look impartial, devoid of bias.”

The Sttae BJP on the other hand attacked the ECI for “helping the Chief Minister to retain her chair.” State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said “we condemn the action of the ECI which has shamelessly acted in favour of the Chief Minister just to ensure that she retains her post.”

Banerjee who lost to Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari from Nandigram seat in the April-May Assembly elections, at was elected the Leader of TMC Legislator Party as a non-member of the House. She has to get elected within November 5 to retain her post.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee once again alleged “political conspiracy” and “vendetta politics” by the BJP Government hours before leaving for Delhi where Enforcement Directorate sleuths were likely to grill him on Monday in relation to multi-crore coal scam and money-laundering case.

“There are allegations being levelled against me and my family of being involved in a scam ... allegedly worth hundreds of crores ... I that context I had already told in a public meeting last November that if they can prove that I have misappropriated even 10 paisa then I will hang myself in public ... no ED or CBI will be required to prosecute me,” Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said.

Alleging rampant misuse of central agencies against political opponents the

Diamond Harbour MP challenged top BJP leadership to “spare five minutes in a public debate at a place appointed by them ... I will expose them in public as to how they misused central agencies in the past seven years of their rule and what its impact had been on the Indian political fabric.”

Saying that the BJP was hatching a conspiracy against him and his family after having failed to win in this year’s Assembly elections Banerjee said “this is nothing but a political conspiracy to defame my family and me after they failed miserably to defeat the Trinamool

Congress politically which they had claimed they would before the elections ... there is so much of vindictiveness” and selective prosecution that “in Narada case they are selectively targeting a few leaders and are sparing other who were seen accepting cash openly in front of the camera.”

Banerjee, his wife Rujira

Narula and their advocate had been summoned by the ED in Delhi for interrogation in the multi-crore money-laundering case and coal scam.

While, Narula who was to appear before the Agency on September 1 avoided appearances requesting the investigators to grill her at her home in Kolkata in view of pandemic situation particularly when she had little children to tend to back home.

Saying that unlike others the Trinamool Congress had

Adhikari cries conspiracy after CID summons

Kolkata: In an apparent counter-offensive against ED summons to Abhishek Banerjee in a money-laundering case the Bengal Police has summoned State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari in a three-year-old unnatural death case.

Adhikari who has been asked to appear before the CID sleuths at Bhavani Bhavan in Kolkata is likely to be grilled by a team of five senior officials who are reportedly ready with a 43-page questionnaire, sources said.

Reacting to the CID summons Adhikari said he would not succumb to any pressure from the State Government which has been trying to scare many opposition workers and leaders to join their ranks.

“There is no point scaring me ... I have been made of a different mettle ... I have nothing to lose or gain from politics ... My only attachment my are parents who have taught me to be on the side of the truth ... I am confident of myself,” he said.

Adhikari has been summoned by the CID which is investigating the case of unnatural death of his former security guard Subhankar Chakrabarty who allegedly committed suicide three years ago.

At that time Adhikari was a powerful minister in Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s cabinet. A former Man Friday of Banerjee he quit the Trinamool months before the Assembly elections to join the BJP.

After the TMC roared back to power in May this year a fresh case was filed against implicating a number of people including Adhikari.



Farmers harvest ladyfingers in a field on the outskirts of Jammu on Sunday

PTI

Appointment of HC judges is made after considering seniority and merit: SC

New Delhi: The process of appointment of judges to High Courts (HCs) is through a well-established process where the HC collegium considers seniority, merit and all inputs received by the Government, the Supreme Court has said while imposing a cost of ₹5 lakh on an advocate for abusing the court proceedings by trying to stop the elevation of a judge.

A bench of Justices S K Kaul and M M Sundresh made the observation while dismissing a plea filed by an advocate seeking directions to consider the representation submitted by him and take necessary action with the proposal of appointment of high court Registrar General A Venkateswar Reddy as a judge of the Telangana High Court.

The three-member Supreme Court Collegium in a meeting held on August 17 had approved the proposal for elevation of six judicial officers as judges of the Telangana High Court including Reddy.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate B. Sailesh Saxena seeking directions to the Centre, Telangana and Registrar (Vigilance & Administration) of the High Court of Telangana to consider the representation submitted by him and take necessary action as per law for proceeding further with the proposal of appointment of Reddy as a judge of the Telangana High Court. The petitioner made several allegations against the high court Registrar General and stated that his recommendation should not be processed for his elevation as a judge.

The petitioner advocate in his plea claimed that he was a legal advisor for the family of a MP belonging to the Telugu Desam Party and legal counsel for other politically connected persons and alleged that an FIR at the instance of the Registrar was filed on July 31, 2017 in pursuance to a direction issued by high court with a view to harass him.

The bench said the high court registrar general, as a responsible officer, only followed the direction passed by the high court judge.

The apex court said the high court opined that what the petitioner was attempting to do was to seek an investigation into the allegation that the evidence collected by the investigating officer in criminal complaints filed against him as fabricated and that was found to be nothing but a deflection towards derailing the course of investigation in the complaints lodged against the petitioner.

SC says don’t want NGOs challenging higher judicial service rules, dismisses PIL

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has said that it does not want “busy bodies” NGOs challenge the provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Higher Judicial Services Rules which prescribe minimum qualification for all categories of candidates and that it will rather hear aggrieved candidates.

In an order passed on September 3, a bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, Vikram Nath and Hima Kohli said, “We are not inclined to entertain the Special Leave Petition under Article 136 of the Constitution. The Special Leave Petition is accordingly dismissed.”

During the hearing, senior advocate Ashok Kumar Sharma, appearing for NGO Samvidhan Bachao Trust which has challenged the Allahabad High Court order dismissing the PIL, said that Rule 18 of the UP Higher Judicial Service Rules prescribed one minimum qualification for all General/SC/ST categories candidates and therefore, it defeated the very purpose of reservation.

The bench said, “What is this Samvidhan Bachao Trust, an NGO? We don’t want any busy bodies challenging the Higher Judicial Services Rules. Let some aggrieved candidates come before us, we will hear them. We cannot have a PIL on this issue.”

Sharma said that the high court had erred in its finding by treating it as a service matter and dismissing it.

He contended that it is a Public Interest Litigation as the provisions affect all sections of people. The bench then asked Sharma if there are any aggrieved candidates arrayed as party in the petition, to which the senior counsel responded in the negative.

“Then let the aggrieved candidates come before us, we will hear them, not you,” the bench said. The NGO in its appeal said that since 2012, from a total of 75 vacancies advertised for all categories in higher judicial services,

Will ally only with small parties: Cong’s State chief

UTTAR PRADESH POLLS

New Delhi: Virtually ruling out an alliance with the SP and BSP for the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, Congress’ state unit chief Ajay Kumar Lallu on Sunday said his party will forge alliances only with small parties and will “not even think about” joining hands with the big ones for the elections.

He also said the governments of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi Party (SP) that have ruled Uttar Pradesh in the last 32 years, when Congress was not in power, failed to live up to the expectations of the people and the Congress was set for a comeback in the state.

In an interview with PTI, Lallu said that in the eyes of the people of Uttar Pradesh, the Congress is the main challenger

to the BJP in the polls next year and expressed confidence that the party would win the elections under the leadership of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and form the next government.

The Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee president said the party will fight the polls under the “supervision” of Priyanka Gandhi as she is the general secretary in-charge of the state and a call on the issue of chief ministerial face will be taken by the national leadership.

Asked about the Congress’ stand on alliances for the UP polls and if there was still a possibility of a tie-up with the SP and BSP,

Lallu said, “The Congress’ stand on alliances is clear, we will forge alliances only with small parties. We will not even think about aligning again with

big parties.”

Pointing to the reaction of SP and BSP to a Congress booklet that talked about misrule under the non-Congress governments in the last 32 years, he said it is clear that “we will align with small parties” on the issues of the poor, farmers, youth and women’s security.

“We are moving forward as a strong opposition force and under the leadership of Priyanka Gandhi we will win the polls, and form the government in 2022,” Lallu said, adding that he was in touch with small parties on alliances but could not talk about the details now.

Both the SP and BSP have also ruled out tying up with the Congress, with SP’s Akhilesh Yadav saying the party will forge alliances only with small parties and Mayawati asserting that BSP would go solo in the polls.

PHONE TAPPING CASE

IPS Rashmi Shukla not named as accused, can’t seek quashing of FIR, Maha to HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government has told the Bombay High Court that senior IPS officer Rashmi Shukla has not been named as an accused in the case of alleged illegal phone tapping and leaking of confidential documents related to police transfers and postings, and hence she cannot seek quashing of the FIR.

In an affidavit filed on Saturday, the Government said the investigation only pertains to how sensitive and confidential information was unauthorisedly leaked to third parties from the State Intelligence Department (SID) and has got nothing to do with the contents of the said documents.

It further claimed that the

offences are not in any way connected to the offences being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against former State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

The affidavit was submitted in response to a petition filed by Shukla seeking quashing of the FIR, alleging that she was being made a scapegoat and targeted by the Maharashtra Government for submitting a report on alleged corruption in police transfers and postings.

The affidavit filed by Rashmi Karandikar, Deputy Commissioner of Police of the city police’s crime branch, said the FIR registered by the police is against “unknown persons” and hence the petitioner has no locus (standi) to file the plea seeking to quash the case.

TN’s unsung heroes of lockdown period

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Since the day Covid-19 struck Tamil Nadu for the first time in early in 2020 till this news report is written, there has been no death in the State due to poverty. The government led by Edappadi Palaniswamy which was in office from 2017 to May 2021 deserves mention for distributing free ration and groceries to people who lost their livelihoods. But many unsung heroes and heroines across the State had played a major role in feeding thousands of poor people sans any publicity.

The soldiers of Madras Regimental Centre, Wellington in The Nilgiris undertook a disciplined and meticulous food distribution programme feeding the under-privileged and unreachable people in the hilly terrains.

“It was our responsibility to make sure that our fellow brethren are not affected in times of natural disasters or pandemic. They are our people



Indira Sundaram distributing food packets and groceries in Tiruppur

and we are duty bound to protect them,” said a spokesman of the regiment.

In neighboring Tiruppur, the knitwear capital of India, it was a lady who took care of the hundreds of laborers who lost their daily income due to lockdown. Though the district had an alarming number of Covid-19 cases, Indira Sundaram, an otherwise reclusive home maker, took it as a challenge and undertook distribution of food among the needy.

For the Tiruppur residents, she was their ‘Anna Lakshmi’ who called on them



Pidi Arisu Krishna Iyer of Tiruchirappalli feeding those who were left in the lurch following the lockdown

Indira who had slowed down a bit since the pandemic has subsided and the knitwear units resumed production.

“It was a thrilling experience to watch a lady undertaking an adventurous mission. Indira managed the entire food distribution on her own and did not seek any help from others,” said Muthu Saravana Vel, an entrepreneur in Tiruppur. He said that Indira’s name is synonymous with helping the poor and needy. “She may be getting solace from tragedies that struck her personally,”

added Vel.

The story of Krishna Iyer of Tiruchirappalli is also interesting. A vedic scholar, trained to perform pooja in temples, Iyer worships poor and needy in the street instead of the deities in temples.

He prepares food in his house and carry it all over Tiruchi in search of the hungry and deprived. “I accept one handful of rice from those who offer to help me. That’s why they named me pidi arisi (Tamil for a handful) Iyer,” said Iyer with an innocent laugh.

Trouble signs

India needs to be utmost cautious of the unfolding developments in Afghanistan

Of all the countries in south and central Asia affected by the recent developments in Afghanistan, it is India that needs to be extra cautious as the various Taliban factions and the Haqqani Network try to settle internal rivalries, tribal divisions and disagreements to form a government in the country. India's stakes are the highest, given the association with terror of these groups currently trying to put together a government. Equally challenging is Pakistan's active role in reportedly ensuring that the government-formation talks go on smoothly. Terrorist groups inimical to India's interests exist in both the countries and it is too early to take the Taliban's assurances about respecting peaceful relations with India at face value. Hardly did India acknowledge its first formal talks with the Afghan group than a spokesperson for the latter said that they have the right to raise their voice for Muslims in Kashmir. To add to that, the terrorist group, al-Qaeda, also said that liberating Kashmir was part of its greater goal. Fighters of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad are said to be in Afghanistan, opening up the possibility of using it as a base to launch attacks against India. Then there is the Haqqani Network, which has been responsible for attacks on the Indian embassy in Afghanistan and is a declared Foreign Terrorist Organisation. Such an ensemble forming a government under the supervision of Pakistan is the biggest cause of worry for India.

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla saying New Delhi's engagement with the Taliban "has been limited" but "reassuring" is the very minimum he could convey without detailing the worries. India is monitoring how the Taliban factions play out the government-formation game. The Taliban is an umbrella of various Pakistan-based "shuras", and their office is in Doha, Qatar. The Miramshah and Peshawar *Shuras* want their share in the power pie though the Quetta *Shura* appears to be calling the shots. The Miramshah *Shura* predates the Quetta *Shura* while the Peshawar *Shura* is relatively new. Both have drifted away from the main group to become autonomous power centres. The Quetta *Shura* has the experience of running an elaborate setup complete with panels arranged like ministries covering various departments. The Doha-based leaders handle the political office but the military commanders in association with the clerics are vociferous. Mullah Yaqoob, son of Emirate founder Mullah Omar, is said to be serious about bringing in some commanders into the Cabinet. Taliban co-founder Mullah Baradar, however, is pushing for political elements. The Pashtun and non-Pashtun groups are staking their claim while the non-Pashtun tribes and the Kandahar faction of the Taliban are sorting out their differences. All the factions understand they have to share power with the Haqqani Network, whose founder was considered the mentor of Osama bin Laden. The Network has no experience in administration and would settle only for "active" duties in the government.



People clear debris from outside Goldberg's Famous Deli in Millburn, New Jersey

Peace pipe

The Centre has signed a tripartite agreement with five rebel groups of Karbi Anglong

After a long time, there's some good news from Assam, which had recently witnessed skirmishes at its border with Mizoram. A tripartite agreement has been signed to end the cycle of violence and take the Karbi region towards development. Nearly 1,050 insurgents had in February pledged to shun violence, setting the stage for the signing of this pact by five insurgent groups, the Assam Government and the Centre. The treaty has provisions for the rehabilitation of the insurgents who have laid down arms. Moreover, the Centre will make available a special development package of ₹1,000 crore over the next five years, which the State Government would use in the Karbi areas. The agreement paves the way for greater devolution of autonomy to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), protecting the identity, language and culture of the Karbi people. The pact would also ensure that the territory and administration of Assam are not affected, a win-win situation for everyone. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has assured that the Centre would implement the agreement in "letter and spirit". Indeed, that would be the litmus test for the pact as unfulfilled promises would lead to a chaotic situation and the credibility of the Government will suffer.

This agreement can go a long way in resolving such disputes and fulfil the aspiration of local people by offering autonomy at the local level. Most cases of insurgency stem from the fact that the administration is insensitive and does not take local sensitivities into account. The Karbi Anglong movement, which has been going on for quite some time now, has a history of violence. The Karbi district, where most of the Karbis live, had a set of demands including saving their culture, identity and recognising their language. The Karbi insurgency is among several similar "movements" that Assam has seen in recent times. Songbijit, the self-styled leader of the People's Democratic Council of Karbi Longri (PDCK), was allegedly involved in the killing of 69 tribals in December 2014 in Kokrajhar. Several cases are pending against him for allegedly killing non-Bodos and Adivasis between 2014 and 2015. Before forming the PDCK, Songbijit's National Democratic Front of Bodoland (Songbijit) was allegedly responsible for the killing of more than 200 people, mostly Adivasis and Muslims, living in the tribal districts.

Stress on 'learning' in learning schools

COVID-19 hastened the spread of digital education but the biggest challenge is to ensure learning in schools, and transform each one of these into a learning school

Global efforts to universalise basic education have achieved a milestone in terms of attitudinal transformation: Practically every community, or people, is not only willing but also keen to send its wards to school. It severely contrasts with the erstwhile tradition amongst most people in most developing countries, India included, which were averse to schooling, particularly sending girls to school. The global literacy percentage for all males and females is 90 and 82.7. It took more than 60 years to reach the current situation when, on any day, over one billion children should be attending schools. In this encouraging scenario, however, there are several challenges. According to an estimate, 11 per cent of primary schoolchildren and 20 per cent of lower-secondary children are not in schools. Further, there are more non-learners in schools than outside schools. Access and participation deserve continuous attention and streamlining but the biggest challenge is to ensure learning in schools, and transform each one into a learning school. The insistence on learning, and not mere schooling, is no more the concern of academics and educationists alone. The NEP-2020 is conscious of this new responsibility. To imbibe learning, the learner requires a conducive environment. Clean premises, mid-day meals, appropriate equipment, drinking water and sanitation arrangement are a must, but most important is the "Teacher", and her/his own holistic learning and the values that were internalised at the teacher preparation institute.

The transition from mere teaching to learning is a major advancement towards the knowledge society. It finds place in most of the dynamic education policies, and NEP-2020 is explicit about it. It will have significant implications towards evaluation and examination reforms. The pandemic created unforeseen challenges before global education policies and systems. The most daunting among these is the prevailing uncertainty on how long it would take to arrive at the normal mode of face-to-face schooling. India's education policy makers were busy finalising the new policy (after 34 years) when the pandemic struck. It was evident that education systems have to remain ever alert to such unforeseen exigencies; NEP-2020 has several indications on alternative strategies, including embedded learning, which came as a great support when children were confined home. Interestingly, what could have taken a couple of more years in utilising digital on large technologies in education was achieved in months, the remotest places not excluded. India salutes its teachers, who promptly familiarised themselves with new gadgets and techniques.

The challenge appears in its enormity in most of the Government schools that function with deficiencies and inadequacies. They are to be converted into learning schools. And they require an active, alert and conscious work culture transformation. The teachers and teacher training institutions shall have to walk the extra mile, make such changes in the totality of the institutional functioning in the light of the most prominent principle of education taught to us by Sri Aurobindo: "Nothing can be taught!" Harmonise it with the eternal truth expressed by



Swami Vivekananda: "Education is manifestation of perfection already in man!" The world of education is making attempts to understand this philosophy. The Delors Commission Report of 1996, which made attempts to envision the shape of global education in the 21st century, titled its report 'Learning: The Treasure within'. The Indian philosophical — yet fully pragmatic — basis is totally tilted towards learning, and it was beautifully articulated by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore: "Every child is blessed with two boons at the time of birth; the power of ideas and the power of imagination." No child is discriminated on this count. It is the transplanted system of education that has enslaved us in a system that makes every endeavour to impede the nourishment of ideas and imagination. One must hasten to add that even earlier, the importance of "learning" was pointed out in learned academic discourse, but in practice the system's rigidity prevailed and not much came out of it. Now that NEP-2020 has proposed organisational and structural changes of far-reaching consequences, the shift towards learning and an entirely new approach in the assessment of learning attain-

THE TRANSITION FROM MERE TEACHING TO LEARNING IS A MAJOR ADVANCEMENT TOWARDS THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY. IT FINDS A PLACE IN MOST OF THE DYNAMIC EDUCATION POLICIES, AND NEP-2020 IS VERY EXPLICIT ABOUT IT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STILL IN FULL SWING

Sir — It was evident from the sea of humanity at the Kisan Mahapanchayat in Muzaffarnagar that the farmers' movement for the repeal of the three farm laws is still going strong, belying the Government's expectation that it would fizzle out with the passage of time. It is the rightness of their cause — and their firm belief in its rightness — that sustains their movement in the face of the Government's callous disregard for their legitimate concerns over what the laws mean for their lives and livelihoods.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi never tires of promising to double farmers' incomes, but he is unwilling to provide protection to farmers by legalising the Minimum Support Price (MSP). Realising that it cannot dismiss the farmers' movement as politically inconsequential, the Government has decided to launch 'outreach programmes' in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand 'to regain the support of farmers'. The Government could say the farm laws were needed to improve agriculture but I don't think farmers would buy it. The Modi Government is well advised to see the writing on the wall and repeal the pro-corporate farm laws. In a democracy, there is no loss of prestige in acceding to people's demand.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Sir — It is said that man is a slave of circumstances, but circumstances cannot curtail talent and hard work and, at the Tokyo Paralympics, our para athletes proved it. Avani Lekhara, India's star shooter, made this Paralympics special. She not only won a gold medal in 10m rifle shooting, equalling the world record, but also created history by winning a bronze in 50m women's rifle shooting, becoming the first woman player of the country to win two medals in the same Paralympics. Joginder Singh Bedi had earlier won three medals in the 1984 Paralympics held in Britain and America, in which he won a silver and two

Proud of our para athletes



The way the Indian Paralympics players clinched the all-time greatest medal haul has made the nation proud. India also earned its all-time best finish at 24th with 19 medals in total, including five golds. This is a marvellous year for India's sports history; India had earlier performed its best at the Tokyo Olympics and won its first individual gold in athletics. The Paralympics were also very special because of the enthusiasm and the never-say-die attitude of the players.

Avani, who was inspired by Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra, started shooting in 2015. She was encouraged by her father to join sports and train in shooting after an accident left her with complete paraplegia in 2012. This tournament has been her first and the best and looking at her capability and willpower, there is every possibility that she would continue to make the country proud in the times to come. The "Golden Girl", as the media calls her, proved that a strong-willed person cannot be tamed by physical inability.

Devanand Ray | Delhi

VOTERS' INCENTIVE

Sir — The freebie culture has moved over from the 'traditional' to the more 'unconventional' varieties and, with elections in the offing, the political parties in Goa are making no bones about their plans to win over the electorate with a slew of such offers. Ahead of the

ers. The colour of the medal did not matter much because the players fought their hearts out. They also proved that mental strength and willpower can help overcome physical disability.

Players like Bhavina Patel, who started off the tournament with a silver in table tennis, and Sumit Antil, who broke the world record in javelin throw thrice to win gold, to Avani Lekhara who won two medals in the same tournament, records were broken and history was made. These milestones should be the beginning of the end of the taboo against the disabled people. India's performance in the Paralympics before the Rio Paralympics 2016 has been below average. India had won only 12 medals in Paralympics before the Tokyo edition, therefore, this tournament is a special one. However, if these players are forgotten after the Tokyo Paralympics conclude on Sunday, the whole purpose would be defeated.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

polls, for decades now, political parties across the country have been magnanimous in their assurances proffering 'material gifts' to the masses to garner their votes. But with modernism pervading every aspect these days, leaders have begun having second thoughts over their parties' appeasement tactics.

They have commenced re-writing the very concept of 'gratifying voters for their support' by turning their attention to approaches that could alleviate problems for the common man. Already miffed by the escalating prices of basic commodities and fuel throwing their kitchenomics haywire, it is believed that efforts to tide over their hardships at the domestic front will be greatly appreciated by the *aam aadmi*. It is this mode of assistance that the present corps of think-tanks in various political dispensations is looking at.

Pachu Menon | Goa

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



JS RAJPUT

ments becomes a *fait accompli*. The learning canvas shall have to be explored very cautiously. Learning to learn, and lifelong learning, would become the life-sustaining assets of every citizen to meet the concerns being faced nationally, and globally. Immediately after adopting the global agenda for the sustainable development goals including SDG-4 ("Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030) in 2015, India turned its attention to prepare a response education policy. The NEP-2020 was put to the toughest of tests. The pandemic also showed how a school becomes a learning school. Innumerable schools and teachers have responded through morally sound, ethically inspiring and culturally conducive initiatives. One must also add that the inspiration and motivation that emerged from NEP-2020 has played a great part as it has prepared teachers for transformation. It has revealed to them that every school can become a learning centre, adored and supported by one and all.

(The author works in education and social cohesion. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

The institutions created by Nehru are being sold by the BJP Government to give a fillip to the economy. Why this hatred for Nehru?

Shiv Sena spokesperson — Sanjay Raut

Nobody wants COVID to be the virus that stole Christmas, and we have a plan and the vaccinations available to ensure that's not the case.

Australian Prime Minister — Scott Morrison

PVR's decision to screen the Tamil and Telugu versions of 'Thalaivi' is a ray of hope for the team as well as all the cine-goers.

Actor — Kangana Ranaut

For any sports person, there is no higher achievement than winning a medal in the Olympics or Paralympics. So this medal means the world to me.

Para badminton player — Suhas Lalnakere Yathiraj

No one is above the law, even if that person is my 86-year-old father. His comment against a particular community has disturbed communal peace.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister — Bhupesh Baghel

FIRST COLUMN

MONETISATION:
WRONG CHOICE

Blind privatisation, temporary or permanent, is not a solution



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman wants to monetise assets in 13 sectors including airports, railways, roads, shipping, sports stadia and gas pipelines. Monetisation means transfer of management and privatisation means transfer of ownership. We may define monetisation as 'temporary privatisation' but how it would finally roll out is to be seen.

The assets are currently valued at ₹1.6 lakh crore worth roads, over 400 railways stations, 90 passenger trains and other assets worth ₹1.52 lakh crore, 25 airports valued at ₹20,782 crore, power transmission assets of Power Grid and others pegged at ₹45000 crore and many more.

The government proposal comes with an irony. In the 1960s, many private corporates sent their sick units for 'temporary management' to the government sector for nursing them back to health as if public sector management ran 'industrial hospitals'. The wheel has since come full circle and assets are being sent to the private sector with "ownership" in government hands.



The PSUs in those days had delivered but would the private sector do the same today?

It appears that the confusion induced by liberalization and globalization of parting with built-in infrastructure by sending it to the private sector is still being considered as the panacea for all economic and industrial ills. It must change. The political parties, including the Left and regional forces like Trinamool Congress and Telugu Desam Party, have failed to come up with alternate suggestions.

The so-called free economy enunciated by the Narasimha Rao government meant creation of assets in all sectors. But Manmohan Singh, P. Chidambaram and Montek Singh Ahluwalia changed it to handing over public assets to large private companies. The policy with minor changes was adopted by all subsequent governments. It is now 30 years of "poverty management" of the nation's assets. Even in the present context, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi says he is not against National Monetisation Pipeline but asks why the sale should be confined to a selected few. Most other parties share the view.

The roads to be handed over are in good shape and the private sector would only start exploiting them for maximizing their profits by increasing tolls, fees and seek remission of lease fees showing managed losses.

The railways started commercialising its assets in the 1990s. Little has been achieved. Only two of its 90 trains were leased out. Again nothing new because some private parties in the past also used to run pilgrim or tourist specials for a fee.

The Metro in Delhi ran into losses worth ₹1784 crore against a measly surplus of ₹1084 crore in 2019. All other metros have huge losses, whether in Bengaluru, Kochi, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Noida. Are they awaiting privatization too?

There is a myth that Air India and BSNL were devastated by the bureaucrats. Can the nation forget how under UPA rule, the then civil aviation minister, Praful Patel, banned the national carrier from running in profitable sectors in order to help private airlines profit?

Similarly, the BSNL was turned sick by forcing it to lend national phone and internet infrastructure to create private sector giants. No one answers why VSNL was sold to its rival.

Why was the sick Ruchi Soya taken over? Its study may reveal how monetisation will unfold to help consumers.

The FM says that the properties leased out would be taken back. This is possible in a rent agreement without a murmur but long-term lease of 30 to 60 years could complicate things. Handing over the control of such assets to private is not considered a wise step. Blind privatisation, temporary or permanent, is not a solution.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

China's dictatorship diplomacy in Myanmar

The policy of promoting pariah regimes and dictators increases China's strategic depth as such regimes are globally isolated and not accountable to their people

The recent news of China inaugurating its rail link to Myanmar may have been overlooked because of the Afghan mayhem. The project is a part of its sea-road-rail link under OBOR which Myanmar had joined in 2013. It connects Chengdu to Lincang which is opposite Chin Shwe Haw, a town in Myanmar's North East. Myanmar's cities of Mandalay, Lashio and Hsenwi will now see rail connectivity with other intersecting points with China. The larger purpose of this link is to connect China to the Bay of Bengal and finally to the Indian Ocean Region.

In early August, China had transferred more than \$6 million for these projects. Further, in the early months of the military coup in Myanmar, the Chinese referred to the Junta chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, as the "leader of Myanmar" which became "government" by the time Taliban took over Afghanistan. To understand this equation, one must be aware of China's 'dictatorship diplomacy' that it practices towards regimes such as North Korea and some African states.

The policy of promoting pariah regimes and dictators increases China's strategic depth as such regimes are internationally isolated and are not accountable to their people. Their human rights violations are brushed aside and labeled as "internal matters". In 1955, China adopted the principles of non-interference, respect for the sovereignty of others, non-aggression and peaceful co-existence. Nevertheless, this never meant that democracy had to be insisted upon. Beijing cleverly calibrated its foreign policy in contrast to the American policies of promotion of democracy and human rights.

Myanmar is no exception. Various international reports cite simultaneous Chinese arming of the ethnic military factions of Myanmar with sophisticated weapons. In the 1960s and 1970s, Beijing had adopted a policy of arming and training a few ethnic groups in Myanmar owing to their affiliations with the Chinese Communist Party due to their ethnic backgrounds. Beijing found active sympathisers in the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and incited them against their own government in Myanmar. Later, General Ne Wi (Revolutionary Council government) was replaced by the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) in 1974 and in the 1980s as pro-democracy movement was brutally crushed. Western sanctions were imposed on Myanmar, but China filled the military and financial void aiming not only to cut down on the Western influence but also to contain India's strategic outreach. Throughout the 1980s, China actively vetoed UN and other resolutions against Myanmar's Junta regime and was able to strategically converge with Myanmar by labelling the US as an "interfering power".

In 1994, China and Myanmar issued



AS CHINA TRIES TO RESHAPE EXISTING SECURITY ARCHITECTURES IN ITS FAVOUR, THE WEST TOO IS RECALIBRATING ITS POLICIES. FOR INSTANCE, DESPITE NOT SUPPORTING THE MILITARY RULE IN MYANMAR, THE US GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED HUMANITARIAN AID WORTH \$50 MILLION TO MYANMAR IN ORDER TO COMBAT THE COVID PANDEMIC

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



a joint Communiqué that stressed on their common "choice" of social development. Myanmar in return always stood by China on Taiwan and 'one China' policy. From 2014-16, China was the largest military supplier to Myanmar with its arms trade totalling US\$ 440 million.

This 'dictatorship diplomacy' of China may have had two motivations. The first relates to the access to Indian Ocean by bypassing the Malacca Strait and the second is possibly to lay hands on natural resources Myanmar is known for.

China has nurtured the Junta specifically to counter the Indian presence in Myanmar. During late 1980s and early 1990s, India owing to its democratic principles had disapproved of Myanmar's military regime; China took advantage of it. The Junta had already leased Coco and Greater Coco islands to China as also important military installations near Yangon, Moulmein and Manauang and a listening facility in the Ramree Islands (in Rakhine Province). These speak of the depth of Chinese penetration. The installation of a signals intelligence (SIGINT) collecting facility at Zadetkyi Island (near Indonesia's Sabang Island) is disturbing as it is barely 600-odd km away from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and poses a serious threat to Indian interests.

Currently, China faces its Malacca Dilemma, named after the strait, through which its major share of exports and oil imports pass through. In order to overcome its fears of India's control it made the Kyaukphyu port of Myanmar serve as a terminal for a \$1.5 billion oil pipeline and second natural gas

pipeline running to Kunming in Yunnan Province. In 2007, China sealed an oil pipeline deal that aimed to link Sittwe in Myanmar with Kunming. The following year, Myanmar stripped New Delhi of its preferential buyer status and committed itself to sell its resources to China National Petroleum Corporation for the next 30 years beginning 2013. In 2009, China announced the construction of an oil pipeline through Myanmar to Yunnan. The larger objective of these pipelines is basically to avoid the Malacca Strait as a transit for its oil and other requirements. The penetration of China can only be imagined when in 2017, the road construction project in Myanmar by an Indian company - C&C Constructions -- received a setback when Indian workers were abducted by the Arakan Army and building material was damaged.

From an internal security aspect, its support to the insurgency movements of India is another objective of China. The pipelines are accompanied by a road network. In 2015, China completed road construction from the Yunnan province till the Pangsau pass on the border of Arunachal Pradesh citing trade facilitation between India, Myanmar and China. Apart from the trade, what can be the road for? In the past, the porous Indo-Myanmar and Indo-Bangladesh border have been actively used by China to supply arms via Myanmar to fuel the North-East Indian insurgencies. The process that started after the 1962 war also witnessed active training to the Naga insurgents.

Internationally, there are many examples of China's 'dictatorship

diplomacy'. In 1996, amidst the Western sanctions, Chinese companies purchased a 40 percent share in the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company. In 2004, when Iran was reeling under international pressure, Tehran agreed to sell to a Chinese corporation \$20 billion worth of natural gas per year. This was in addition to Beijing being the largest purchaser of its crude oil supplies. In the same year, China, opposed to the pressures on Iran, invited it to be a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Similar approaches have been made in Venezuela, Zimbabwe and North Korea.

As China tries to reshape existing security architectures in its favour, the West too is recalibrating its policies. For instance, despite not supporting the military rule in Myanmar, the US government announced humanitarian aid worth \$50 million to Myanmar in order to combat the Covid pandemic crisis.

Finally, one has no hesitation to put across the view that China's state practice of dealing with pariah regimes along with the democratic ones with the same ease increases the challenges for the world, especially India. Beijing has been able to carve an alternate vision of the world order that presents before the extremist groups and dictators a very lucrative source of gradual legitimization and recognition. The fundamental principles of international law which stand for democratisation and the respect of the wishes of the people are gradually being eroded which will threaten the existing security architectures across the regions.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

JUST LIKE THE TALIBAN WANT AN ISLAMIC STATE, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WANT A HINDU RASHTRA. THESE PEOPLE ARE OF THE SAME MINDSET. — LYRICIST JAVED AKHTAR




THE PAIN OF CALLING OUT RADICAL ISLAMISM ACROSS THE GLOBE IS EVIDENT FROM @JAVEDAKHTARJADU'S BEHAVIOUR. — BJP MP MANOJ KOTAK

Badri 313: The Taliban's special operations unit

The question is how was the Taliban able to raise such a sophisticated force and who trained and armed its members?

After the unceremonious fall of Kabul there have been numerous reports of Taliban Special Forces Units patrolling the Afghan capital. They are always dressed in tactical outfits ready for deployment at a moment's notice instead of the traditional 'salwar' suit. Carrying US-made M4 rifles, US-style night vision devices, body armour, tactical kneepads, and tactical radios, they are capable of achieving any objective with relative ease.

The question is how was the Taliban able to fund such a highly advanced group of soldiers? The Taliban are not just some rag-tag group of rebels. They are among some of the wealthiest and most powerful in the world. Their annual income is estimated to be around \$1.5 billion.



PK VASUDEVA

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

According to reports from the UN and NATO, the chief contributors are drug trafficking and opium production, kidnapping and ransom, tax collection, and donations.

According to the UN, the revenue generated from opium production in 2020 was estimated to be around \$460 million. The US itself spent \$8 billion to try and stop it but knowing the US's history with drugs, especially opium, their true motivation is highly suspect. According to a report by the CIA in 2008, the Taliban received \$106 million in donations, mostly from the Gulf States.

The special forces have been specially trained for operations such as assault and house storming with complete tactical precision, which could



be the primary reason for the 'bloodless capture of Kabul'. These units have the latest arms and defence equipment. It is evident that the Taliban got the state-of-art equipment for the battalion from the departing US Army. It is still an enigma as to who trained them.

The Badri 313 Battalion is currently an elite military unit of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The group takes its name from the Battle of Badr, which happened on March 13, 624 AD, when the

Prophet Muhammad led a victorious battle with 313 men. Elite Taliban units have been reported as being "critical to the taking over of Afghanistan". The Taliban also has another elite unit known as the Red Unit.

These troops are ideologically aligned closely with al-Qaeda. Units termed "Army of Badr" first carried out suicide attacks and raids on positions associated with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and its allies in 2011, reported the Long War Journal. The Badri 313 Battalion already took part in an attack on the Kabul compound of G4S - the British multinational private security company -- in November 2018.

The Taliban now reported that Badri 313 Battalion had secured the presidential palace and other important

sites in the city. It was reportedly providing "security" at the Kabul Airport. On Twitter they were mocked for showing off their CIA training - their index fingers were typically not on the rifle triggers.

The unit was previously featured in promotional materials distributed by the Taliban, showing them to be equipped with modern military equipment. In July-August 2021, the Taliban released propaganda on Badri 313 Battalion in local languages, English and Arabic. Videos showed Badri 313 soldiers wearing US military night-vision gear, bulletproof jackets in camouflage clothing and modern American rifles and driving Humvees.

The Taliban now boasts of a large cache of 22 EMB-314

Super Tucano light-attack aircraft equipped with GBU-58 Paveway II laser-guided bombing systems. They have access to "attack helicopters and precision-guided munitions". They have captured six MI-24 heavy attack helicopters apparently gifted to the Afghan Air Force by India in 2019. These formidable gunships are capable of fear-some, low-level attack in ground fire conditions. It is a cause for grave concern that 11 American MD-530F light-armed helicopters designed for rapid, low-level attack missions and for special operations are now in their hands in addition to 35 US Black Hawk helicopters, 76 Russian MI-17 utility helicopters, five Cessna Combat Caravan airplanes, and 12 Pilatus PC-12

aircraft. However, they do not have trained pilots and maintenance staff for the attack helicopters for which they may depend upon Pakistan and China.

The biggest aircraft the Taliban now have access to is the C-130 Hercules. They are capable of special operations even from unprepared runway and highly flexible for even Special Forces operations. If the Taliban can get them off the ground, imagine what this means for them.

Gilles Dorransoro, a specialist on Afghanistan at Sorbonne University in Paris, said these commandos, was part of a larger trend. "We've seen a remarkable professionalisation of the Taliban since the middle of the 2000s," he said.

Taliban bomber kills 4 in Pak

PTI ■ KARACHI

A suicide bomber of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan blew himself up in the country's restive Balochistan province on Sunday, killing at least four security personnel and injuring 20 people, a top police official said.

The attack targeted a Frontier Corps (FC) check post on the Mastung road in Quetta, the provincial capital, Deputy Inspector General of Quetta police Azhar Akram said.

Akram told reporters that an initial investigations suggested that the suicide bomber drove an explosives laden motorcycle into a vehicle carrying Frontier Corps.

"The bomb disposal squad has estimated that the motorcycle was laden with six kilograms of explosives," he said.

Akram confirmed that four people were killed in the blast while 20 others, 18 soldiers and 2 bystanders, were injured in the attack.

"Condition of some of the injured is critical and the casualties could rise," he said.

According to the Counter-Terrorism Department of Balochistan, the blast was a "suicide attack" and was carried out near the Sona Khan check post.

The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)



Security officials examine the site of a suicide bombing at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Quetta, Pakistan on Sunday. AP

claimed responsibility for the attack, sending a grim signal that the change of government in Kabul might not end the woes of Pakistan as the country looks towards the Taliban to rein in the TTP rebels who are hiding in Afghanistan.

According to security forces, the vehicle targeted in the attack was providing security to vegetable sellers belonging to the Hazara community of the province.

Condemning the attack, Prime Minister Imran Khan took to Twitter to offer condolences to the families of those killed.

"Condemn the TTP suicide attack on FC checkpoint, Mastung road, Quetta. My

condolences go to the families of the martyrs & prayers for the recovery of the injured. Salute our security forces & their sacrifices to keep us safe by thwarting foreign-backed terrorists' designs," he said in a tweet.

Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove also condemned the attack and sought a report.

"Security forces have given countless sacrifices in the war against terrorism. The whole nation is indebted to the martyrs. We are fighting the terrorists with our full strength and will continue to do so. These violent attacks will not lower the morale of the forces," he said, adding

that the war would continue until total peace was achieved.

Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari said: "Condemnable TTP attack today on FC checkpoint in Quetta today. Condolences and prayers go to the families of the martyrs..."

President of the Opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Shehbaz Sharif also condemned the attack and said that the deterioration of law and order was a cause of concern.

Balochistan has been facing low-level violence by the TTP rebels and Baloch nationalists.

Pope urges countries to take in Afghan refugees



Vatican City: Pope Francis is encouraging countries to welcome Afghan refugees who are seeking a new life.

During his appearance to the public in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, Francis also prayed that displaced persons inside Afghanistan receive assistance and protection.

"In these tumultuous moments, in which Afghans are seeking refuge, I pray for the most vulnerable among them, I pray so that many countries welcome and protect all those seeking a new life," Francis said.

The pope didn't cite the Taliban or their policies, but added: "may young Afghans receive an education, which is essential for human development."

He concluded by expressing hope that all Afghans, whether in their homeland, in transit, or in countries taking them in, may be able to "live with dignity, in peace, in brotherhood with their neighbours." AP

China seeks common stand with Iran on Af under Taliban

PTI ■ BEIJING

A wary China is seeking to strike a common position with Afghanistan's key neighbour Iran to firm up its growing role in the war-torn country as it waits for the Taliban to form an "open and inclusive" Government that makes a "clean break" from all terrorist groups.

China is already coordinating its evolving policy on Afghanistan with its "all-weather ally" Pakistan and Russia which also share borders with Afghanistan.

Beijing, which has kept its Embassy open in Kabul along with Pakistan and Russia, is awaiting the formation of a government by the Taliban to decide on recognising it amidst firm indications by the US, the UK and other western countries that they will not be in a hurry to endorse the new government.

China is also keeping a close watch on the Panjshir Valley fighting between the Taliban and the militias of Ahmad Massoud-led National Resistance Front (NRF) which has reportedly delayed the formation of the new government in Afghanistan.

On Saturday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a telephonic conversation with his Iranian counterpart



Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

Iran, which is struggling under the US sanctions over its nuclear policy, has warmed up to China in recent years with Beijing steadily expanding its investments in the oil-rich nation which shares its borders with Pakistan.

In his talks with Amir-Abdollahian, Wang said China has noted that the Taliban might announce the formation of a new government in the coming days.

He hoped that the "the new government will be open and inclusive, make a clean break with terrorist organisations, and establish and develop good relations with other countries, especially neighbouring countries", according to a press release issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

"As common neighbours of Afghanistan, China and Iran need to strengthen communication and coordination to play a constructive role in

achieving a smooth transition and peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan," he said.

Wang has also lashed out at the US, saying that "the claim of the United States that the withdrawal from Afghanistan allows it to shift its focus to China and Russia not only serves as an excuse for its own failure, but also reveals the nature of its pushing for power politics in the world".

If the US is unable to learn due lessons, it is bound to make mistakes more serious than those in Afghanistan, Wang warned. Amir-Abdollahian said that the root cause of the chaos in Afghanistan is the irresponsibility of the US.

"Iran also holds that Afghanistan should establish a broad and inclusive government reflecting the interests of all ethnic groups in the country," the press release quoted him as saying.

"The Iranian side calls on the international community to spare no effort to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and prevent any turmoil in Afghanistan from triggering a wave of refugees," he said, adding that "Iran is ready to strengthen coordination with China to help Afghanistan get out of difficulties at an early date".

Some domestic flights resume at Kabul airport

AP ■ KABUL

Some domestic flights have resumed at Afghanistan's international airport in Kabul, with the state-run Ariana Afghan Airline operating flights to three provinces.

Shershah Stor, the airline's station manager at the airport, told *The Associated Press* on Sunday that the flights took place Saturday to western Herat, southern Kandahar and northern Balkh provinces. He said the flights were conducted without a functioning radar system at the airport.

Stor said three more flights are scheduled Sunday to the



same provinces.

A team of Qatari and Turkish technicians arrived in Kabul last week to help restart operations at the airport, which the U.N. Says is crucial to providing the country with humanitarian assistance. It remains to be seen, however, whether any commercial airlines will be willing to offer ser-

vices.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

Washington: The top US military general has thanked members of the 10th Mountain Division for their service in Afghanistan during the evacuation of Americans, Afghans and others over the past several weeks. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with military police soldiers at the Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Germany on Saturday.

Standing outside talking to a group, he asked them, "You were there for the bombing?" Heads nodded and a chorus of voices answered, "yes, sir." A suicide bombing by the Islamic State group near a gate at the Kabul airport more than a week ago killed 13 US service members as well as 169 Afghans who were crowded around the entry, desperate to get on flights out of Afghanistan.

Iran President calls for election in Afghanistan



AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran's President is calling for elections in Afghanistan to determine the future of the country, where he hopes peace will return after Western troops have left and the Taliban have seized control.

Speaking on state TV on Saturday, Ebrahim Raisi said that the Afghan people should vote to determine their own Government "as soon as possible." "A Government should be established there which is elected by the votes and the will of the people," he said.

"The Islamic Republic has always sought peace and calm in Afghanistan, and an end to bloodshed and fratricide, and the sovereignty of the people's will. We support a government elected by the Afghan people," he added.

Everything will be fine: ISI chief during visit to Af

Islamabad: Pakistan's powerful intelligence chief Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed, who dashed to Kabul on an unannounced visit amidst efforts by the Taliban to finalise a Government in Afghanistan, on Saturday expressed confidence that "everything will be okay" in the war-weary country.

A delegation of senior Pakistani officials led by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lieutenant General Hameed arrived in Kabul to conduct discussions with the incoming Taliban government, the Pakistan Observer newspaper reported.

In a short video clip circulated in the media, Hameed is seen trying to respond to questions by a journalist who first asked: "Will you be meeting senior people in the Taliban?" "No, I'm not clear..." the ISI chief said and looked towards Pakistan ambassador to Kabul Mansour Ahmad Khan, who was standing by his side, to respond to the question.

But before Khan said anything, the journalist posed another question.

"What do you hope is going to happen now in Afghanistan?" he was asked.



"I have just landed..." Hameed said and once again looked towards Khan who quipped: "We are working for peace and stability in Afghanistan."

At this Hameed smiled and said: "Don't worry, everything will be okay."

Earlier, Pakistan Observer newspaper reported that the ISI chief was expected to meet the Taliban leaders and commanders.

"Issues relating to Pakistan security, economy, and other matters will be taken up with the Taliban leadership," the report said, quoting sources. It is the first high-level visit of any Pakistani official to Afghanistan since the Taliban took over of Kabul on August

15, in a move that surprised both their foes and friends.

This is the second time that the Taliban have delayed the formation of the new government in Kabul since their toppling of the US-backed Afghanistan government. The insurgent group was expected to announce the formation of the new government led by its co-founder Mulla Abdul Ghani Baradar on Friday, but later postponed it by a day to Saturday.

According to the Express Tribune, Hameed will also meet Pakistan's envoy in Kabul to discuss the matter of repatriation and transit through Pakistan of foreign nationals and Afghans fleeing Taliban rule. PTI

Taliban using US weaponry in Panjshir Valley: Report

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Taliban is using advanced weaponry left behind by American troops to crush the last pockets of resistance to its takeover of Afghanistan, *Daily Mail* reported.

Fighters led by the country's former Vice-President were last night mounting a final defence against the new regime's forces in Panjshir Valley, the only province that the Islamist group has not captured. But the rebels appeared outgunned by Taliban fighters using US armoured vehicles, mortar missiles and high-powered artillery. Videos showed Taliban gunmen brandishing US military M4 and M16 rifles and wearing night-vision goggles, the report said.

A convoy of Taliban troops travelling in US armoured vehicles was last night filmed driving towards the area where resistance fighters were holding their ground 70 miles north of Kabul. There were also reports that Taliban forces had entered Panjshir capital Bazarak.

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Notice of 27th Annual General Meeting & Book Closure

NOTICE is hereby given that the 27th Annual General Meeting of Zel Jewellers Limited will be held on Thursday, 30th September, 2021 at 3.00 P.M. at the registered office of the Company at E-5, South Extension, Part - II, New Delhi-110 049 to transact the businesses as set out in the Notice of the AGM dated 2nd September, 2021 in compliance with the applicable provisions of Companies Act, 2013. The Notice alongwith Annual Report has been dispatched to the Shareholders at their address registered with the RTA/Company and the same is also available on the website of the Company at www.rkjewellers.in.

Mr. Parveen Rastogi, Practising Company Secretary has been appointed as Scrutinizer for overseeing/conducting the ballot voting process in a fair and transparent manner.

Pursuant to Section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 and Regulation 42 of the SEBI (LODR) Regulations, 2015, Register of Members and Share Transfer Books of the Company will remain closed from 24th September, 2021 to 30th September, 2021 for the purpose of the AGM of the Company.

By order of the Board
For Zel Jewellers Limited
Sd/-
Priyanka Pathak
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

Place: New Delhi
Date: 04.09.2021

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

TENDER NOTICE

Notification No. DRM/C/Agra/Halt/11/2011 Date: 01/09/2021

For and on behalf of the President of India, Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, North Central Railway, Agra invites application for appointment of halt agent/commission agent on the following halt stations for the period of 05 years.

Sr. No.	Name of Section	Name of Halt Station	Name of Serving Station	Number of halt agent for appointment	Security Amt.
1	BHA-UDI	Manikpura	Fatehabad	One	5000
2	BHA-UDI	Karondhna	BHA	One	5000
3	BHA-UDI	Bleshwer	BAH	One	5000
4	BHA-UDI	Dhimsin	BHA	One	5000
5	BHA-UDI	Jaipur Kalan	BAH	One	5000
6	DHO-TPO	Garhi sandra	BARi	One	5000
7	DHO-TPO	Bangthar	Tantpur	One	5000
8	DHO-TPO	Angai	Sirmattura	One	5000
9	BHA-BARI	Sirothee	BARi	One	5000
10	IDH-BKI	Noh Bachhamadi	Ekran	One	5000
11	MTJ-AH	Khera Sadan	Parkham	One	5000

Applicant can obtain Application forms along with terms and conditions from the office of Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), North Central Railway, Agra on cash payment of prescribe amount Rs. 1,000/- (Rs. One thousand only) to Chief Booking Supervisor, Agra Cantt. on any working day from the date of publication to **01/10/2021 upto 17.00 hrs.** The Application form is not transferable and its cost is not refundable. The Notification, application forms, terms and conditions are also available on the website of North Central Railway <http://www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in> the application documents are downloaded from the website, then, the applicant will have to attach the prescribe cost of application form Rs. 1,000/- in the form of DD/Banker cheque (In Original) issued by any Nationalized /Schedule Bank in favour of **Sr. Divisional Finance Manager N. C. Railway- Agra**, otherwise the application shall be rejected. The application form will be received through sealed box in the office of Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), North Central Railway, Agra up to **15.00 Hrs. on 04/10/2021** and will be opened at **15.30 hrs** on the same day. In case of the application form acceptance and opening day is holiday, thus the next working day will be the last day for depositing and opening of application forms at the same time. Applicant or his authorized agent is permitted to be present at the time. Application form received after the date & time specified above shall not be considered. Details particular available in the application form. Separate application form should be used for each halt station. The Railway Administration reserves all the rights to cancel or discharge complete application procedure without assigning any reason. 97621(AN)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPNCR

13 cops killed in suspected IS attack in northern Iraq

Baghdad: Gunmen opened fire at a federal police checkpoint in rural northern Iraq, sparking clashes that killed 13 police, a security official said Sunday. He blamed the attack on Islamic State militants.

The attack late Saturday on the checkpoint in Satiha village in Kirkuk province also wounded five police. The security official said the clashes with the militants lasted for nearly an hour.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters.

The militant group did not immediately claim responsibility for the attack. But northern Iraq has been a hotspot for IS activity since its territorial defeat in 2017 by Iraqi security forces with assistance from the US-led coalition.

Iraqi forces routinely carry out anti-IS operations in the rugged mountainous northern region and the deserts of western Iraq where they are known to be holed up.

IS attacks have abated in recent years but continue in these areas where security forces are often the target of ambushes, raids and roadside bombs. AP

Jeans, casuals not dress code for House, Speaker Hoyle warns British MPs

London: Britain's members of Parliament will return to the House of Commons on Monday at the end of their summer recess and have been issued a warning note by the Speaker to dress appropriately in "business attire".

Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Commons Speaker, has updated the "Rules of behaviour and courtesies in the House of Commons" to address any laxity that may have set in during the COVID-19 lockdown when rules were relaxed to allow MPs to be able to connect virtually with the chamber.

The new upgraded Commons guidance states that MPs must remember how they dress, "should demonstrate respect for your constituents, for the House and for the institution of Parliament in the life of the nation".

"Members are expected to wear business attire in and around the Chamber," read the new rules.

"Jeans, chinos, sportswear or any other casual trousers are not appropriate. T-shirts and sleeveless tops are not business attire. Smart/business shoes are expected to be worn. Casual shoes and trainers are not appropriate. Men are encouraged to wear a tie, and jackets must be worn," it notes.

"It is a privilege to serve as a Member of Parliament and your dress, language and conduct should reflect this," it adds.

The new rules represent a toughening of the advice from Hoyle's predecessor John Bercow, who was known for a more relaxed approach and believed there was "no exact dress code" for MPs.

It follows a few instances where Hoyle has intervened to point out an MP's choice of attire, including former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt being told he was not dressed smartly enough during a Commons debate on COVID-19 back in December 2020.

Hoyle has also moved to clamp down on rowdiness in the Commons and the new rules state that "singing and chanting are not permitted in the chamber" and that "clapping is also not allowed as it eats into the time available for debate". MPs have also been told to pay attention: "When listening to a debate you should not read books or newspapers or obviously devote yourself to your phone or other electronic device." PTI

Saudi Arabia says it intercepted Houthi missile that hurt two

AP ■ DUBAI

Saudi Arabia intercepted a ballistic missile fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels and debris that fell on a neighborhood near Dammam wounded at least two children, the kingdom said Sunday.

Images published by the state-run Saudi Press Agency showed glass and debris across a townhouse there, which is in the kingdom's eastern reaches and near the headquarters of the state-run oil giant Saudi Aramco. At least 14 homes in the area sustained damage, the agency reported.

The Houthis launched three bomb-laden drones and three ballistic missiles in the attack, military spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki al-Malki said. Yemen's Houthi rebels did not immediately acknowledge launching the attack.

The U.S. Consulate in nearby Dhahran sent an alert to American citizens warning them about the attack, which it described as targeting the area around Dhahran, Dammam and Khobar. "Stay alert in case of additional future attacks," the consulate said.

Saudi Arabia is mired in a yearslong, deadlocked war backing Yemen's toppled government against the Iranian-backed Houthis.

Blinken, Austin to visit Gulf to address post-war stresses

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Top U.S. National security officials will see how the failed war in Afghanistan may be reshaping America's relationships in the Middle East as they meet with key allies in the Persian Gulf and Europe this week.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin are travelling to the Gulf separately, leaving Sunday.

They will talk with leaders who are central to U.S. Efforts to prevent a resurgence of extremist threats in Afghanistan, some of whom were partners in the 20-year fight against the Taliban.

Together, the Austin and Blinken trips are meant to reassure Gulf allies that President Joe Biden's decision to end the U.S. War in Afghanistan in order to focus more on other security challenges like China and Russia does not foretell an abandonment of U.S. Partners in the Middle East.

The U.S. Military has had a presence in the Gulf for decades, including the Navy's 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain.

Biden has not suggested ending that presence, but he — like the Trump administration before him — has called China the No. 1 security priority, along with strategic challenges from Russia.

"There's nothing China or Russia would rather have, would want more, in this competition than the United States to be bogged down another decade in Afghanistan," Biden said in the

hours after the last U.S. Troops left.

In announcing his Gulf trip, Austin told a Pentagon news conference that staying focused on terrorist threats means relentless efforts against "any threat to the American people from any place," even as the United States places a new focus on strategic challenges from China.

Blinken travels to Qatar and will also stop in Germany to see Afghan evacuees at Ramstein air base who are awaiting clearance to travel to the United States.

While there he will join a virtual meeting with counterparts from 20 nations on the way ahead in Afghanistan.

"The secretary will convey the United States' gratitude to the German government for being an invaluable partner in Afghanistan for the past 20 years and for German cooperation on transit operations moving people out of Afghanistan," spokesman Ned Price said Friday.

Austin plans to start his trip by thanking the leaders of Qatar for their cooperation during the Kabul airlift that helped clear an initially clogged pipeline of desperate evacuees.

In addition to permitting the use of al-Udeid air base for U.S. Processing of evacuees, Qatar agreed to host the American diplomatic mission that withdrew from Kabul at war's end. The Qataris also have offered a hand to help reopen the Kabul airport in cooperation with the Taliban.

During a stop in Bahrain, Austin plans to speak with Marines who spent weeks at Kabul airport executing a frantic and dangerous evacuation of Afghans, Americans and others.

Trade deficit may continue to widen in 2nd half of FY22

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

India's trade deficit is likely to continue widening during the second half of the current financial year.

Kotak Economic Research report noted that imports in August increased further as economic activity continued to normalize and exports continued to be strong but have stagnated at the current levels, for now, leading to a widening of the trade deficit.

"We expect the current trend to continue in 2HFY22 and maintain our FY2022E CAD/ GDP estimate at 1.1 per cent. We continue to pencil in USD-INR within 72.5-74 in the near term," it said.

Exports in August increased 45.2 per cent to \$33.1 billion but declined sequentially by 6.5 per cent. Non-oil exports at \$28.6 billion increased 36.6 per cent while falling 3.3 per cent sequentially. Compared to August 2019, exports were higher by 27.5 per cent and non-oil exports increased by 25.5 per cent.



However, exports have been stagnating around the current levels after a sharp spike in March 2021. Top exports in August (over August 2020) were gems and jewellery (88 per cent), engineering goods (58.8 per cent), cotton and handloom products (55.6 per cent), and chemicals (35.8 per cent). Imports in August increased 51.5 per cent to \$47 billion while increasing sequentially by 1.3 per cent (July: \$46.4 billion). Non-oil import was at

\$35.4 billion increasing 43.9 per cent, while increasing sequentially by 5.6 per cent. Compared to August 2019, imports were higher by 18 per cent and non-oil imports increased by 22.6 per cent.

"We expect the overall external sector to remain comfortable but will be subjected to risks from a widening trade deficit, high commodity prices, and policy normalization in the US, and spread of Covid cases," it said.

M-cap of 9 of top-10 most-valued firms jumps ₹2.93 lakh crore

RIL BIGGEST WINNER

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most-valued companies together added ₹ 2,93,804.34 crore in market valuation last week, in line with a record-breaking rally in equities, with Reliance Industries Ltd emerging as the biggest gainer.

The BSE 30-share benchmark zoomed 2,005.23 points or 3.57 per cent last week. It scaled the 58,000-mark for the first time on Friday.

The Sensex last week only went beyond the 57,000-level. The BSE benchmark soared over nine per cent last month. From the top-10 list, Infosys was the only laggard.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries Ltd zoomed ₹1,02,382 crore to reach ₹15,14,017.50 crore.

RIL's market valuation jumped to a record ₹5 lakh crore on Friday, becoming the



first domestic company to attain this historic feat.

The market capitalisation (m-cap) of Tata Consultancy Services jumped ₹44,832.5 crore to ₹14,20,935.10 crore.

Bharti Airtel's valuation rallied ₹ 35,342.16 crore to ₹3,61,540.16 crore and that of Bajaj Finance rose by ₹33,906.91 crore to ₹4,54,207.76 crore.

The m-cap of Hindustan Unilever Ltd went up by ₹20,712.29 crore to ₹6,49,943.93 crore, and that of ICICI Bank gained ₹17,373.55 crore to ₹5,02,232.46 crore.

State Bank of India added

₹17,001.38 crore taking its valuation to ₹3,85,007.74 crore.

The valuation of HDFC Bank jumped ₹14,954.74 crore to ₹8,72,362.42 crore, and that of HDFC rose by ₹7,298.81 crore to ₹4,98,290.05 crore.

In contrast, the valuation of Infosys declined ₹3,457.12 crore to ₹7,21,244.78 crore.

Reliance Industries Ltd remained the most-valued firm, followed by Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank.

Infosys, Hindustan Unilever Limited, ICICI Bank, HDFC, Bajaj Finance, State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel.

CIL's 39 mining projects running behind schedule

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL's 39 coal mining projects are running behind the schedule on account of delays in getting green clearances and issues related to rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R). This assumes significance in the wake of the country's power plants grappling with depleting stocks at their end.

"As many as 114 coal projects with a sanctioned capacity of 836.48 mty (million tonnes per year) and a sanctioned capital of Rs 1,19,580.62 crore are in different stages of implementation out of which 75 projects are on schedule and 39 projects are delayed," Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in its report. The major reasons for delays in implementation of these projects are delay in forest clearances and possession of land and issues related to R&R.CIL's nine coal projects, with a sanctioned capacity of 27.60 million tonnes per year

and a sanctioned capital of ₹1,976.59 crores were completed with a total completion capital of ₹1,958.89 crore during 2020-21.Four of these projects belong to Western Coalfields Ltd (WCL), three of Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL) and two of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. WCL,CCL and MCL are subsidiaries of Coal India. One project with a sanctioned capacity of 1.4 million tonnes per year and a sanctioned capital of ₹143.63 crore had started coal production during the year 2020-21, the report said. CIL arm South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) is the mining project that started production during FY21, it said. Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output. Based on the demand projection in 'Vision 2024' for the coal sector in the country and subsequent demand projection on CIL, a road map has been prepared to project production plan in medium term.

EPF contribution of over ₹2.5 lakh now requires 2 PF accounts

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

People with Employees' Provident Fund and Voluntary Provident Fund (VPF) contribution of over ₹ 2.5 lakh per financial year will now have two separate PF accounts.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced, in this year's budget, that PF contribution of more than ₹ 2.5 lakh in a fiscal will be taxable. In line with the decision, recently, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) notified the rules for taxation of the interest on the excess EPF contributions.

"For the purpose of calculation of taxable interest under sub-rule (1), separate accounts within the provident fund account shall be maintained during the previous year 2021-2022 and all subsequent previous years for taxable contribution and non-taxable contribution made by a person," it said. What this means is that till FY22, all contributions made in



PF accounts so far, including contribution of upto ₹ 2.5 lakh made in FY22, will be placed in one account where no tax will be levied as has been the practice with the PF, where contribution, interest, and withdrawal, all are tax free.

But another PF account will be opened for each subscriber in FY22, where contribution of over ₹2.5 lakh made in the current year and subsequent years will be placed. This will taxable account meaning interest earned on this contribution would be subject to applicable tax.

These rules will be effective from April 1, 2022.

India imports 7,500 tonnes of GM soyameal mainly from Bangladesh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India imported 7,500 tonnes of genetically modified (GM) soyameal, used as a raw material in the poultry feed industry, from neighbouring Bangladesh in the last few weeks, a senior Government official said on Sunday.

To boost domestic supply and arrest skyrocketing prices, the government had in early August permitted import of 12 lakh tonnes of GM soyameal after the environment ministry and Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) cleared the air on the GM issue.

Later, DGFT also issued necessary notification for import of GM soyameal on August 24. "According to traders, about 7,500 tonnes of GM soyameal has been imported so far mainly from Bangladesh," the official said.

Traders have contracted another 4.5 lakh tonnes of GM soyameal from Bangladesh, Brazil and the US, the official said. Out of 4.5 lakh tonnes of



orders placed, about 1.25 lakh tonnes of GM soyameal is expected to come from Bangladesh, while 75,000 tonnes from Brazil and the rest 2.5 lakh tonnes from the US, he added.

According to the official, "imports are taking place and should help arrest prices of soyameal in the domestic market".

In the domestic market, soyameal rates in the last few months had risen from ₹35 per kg up to ₹100 per cent.

However with the imports taking place, prices have softened a bit to ₹85 per kg now, he added. Initially, the Govt had permitted import of GM soyameal only via Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT), but later permitted Mumbai Port and Tuticorin ports. However, industry experts believe it would be very difficult to achieve 12 lakh tonnes of GM soyameal imports as the window for importing is only till October 31.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Integrated e-mobility firm IHOP Electric is looking to raise at least USD 30 million (over ₹ 200-crore) in Series-A round amid its plans to expand product portfolio as well as dealership network, the company's founder and Chief Executive Officer Ketan Mehta has said.

The Jaipur-based HOP Electric Mobility, which hit the market with two e-scooters in January this year, is gearing up to launch another vehicle model, an e-bike, OXO, by October-November this year, which will be followed by two

more scooters over the next six-nine months, Mehta said.

The company currently has a manufacturing facility in Jaipur, which can produce 50,000 units per annum and can be expanded up to 1-lakh units. Last week, Hop Electric Mobility announced setting up another production plant in Jaipur itself to add capacity of 1.5 lakh units per year by February 2022.

"We have started our fund raising process now. We are looking to close at least USD 30-million (around Rs 200 crore) before the end of this financial year in Series A," Mehta told PTI.

Stating that the company is open to investment from any market - domestic or overseas, he said, "We just don't want to be limited to be an automobile manufacturer. We have to align our thoughts with the investor in a complete ecosystem, ranging from integrated manufacturing to energy infra as well as NBFC financing and swapping, among others, which falls into our plans."

"We are looking at investors who have a broader horizon and a much larger picture in the mind to drive the entire ecosystem rather than being limited to a particular system," he added.

Govt likely to extend incentive scheme IFLADP for leather, footwear industry till 2025-26

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is likely to extend an incentive scheme for leather and footwear industries, IFLADP, till 2025-26 with an outlay of ₹1,700 crore, to further boost manufacturing, exports and job creation, an official said.

The Commerce and Industry Ministry has submitted a proposal for the implementation of the Indian Footwear Leather and Accessories Development Programme (IFLADP) with an outlay of ₹1,700 crore, to be incurred during 2021-22 to 2025-26, the official said.

The Union Cabinet might approve it soon, the official

added. The programme has six components — Sustainable Technology and Environmental Promotion (proposed outlay ₹ 500 crore); Integrated Development of Leather Sector (proposed outlay ₹500 crore); Establishment of Institutional Facilities (₹200 crore).

Mega Leather Footwear and Accessories Cluster Development (₹300 crore); Brand Promotion of Indian Brands in Leather and Footwear Sector (₹100 crore); and Development of Design Studios (₹ 100 crore).

The expenditure finance committee, under the finance ministry, has already approved the Commerce Ministry's pro-

posal, the official added.

Under the 'Sustainable Technology and Environmental Promotion' component, assistance could be provided for setting up a common effluent treatment plant; and support could be extended for modernisation/capacity expansion/ technology up-gradation under the 'Integrated Development of Leather Sector' component. Similarly, under the 'Establishment of Institutional Facilities' component, support could be provided for the setting up of new infrastructure and up-gradation of requisite infra of the existing campuses of Footwear Design and Development Institute (FDDI).

Govt's excise collection jumped 48% in Apr-July

New Delhi: The Government's collections from levy of excise duty on petroleum products have jumped 48 per cent in the first four months of the current fiscal year, with the incremental mop-up being 3-times of the repayment liability of legacy oil bonds in the full fiscal, official data showed. Data available from the Controller General of Accounts in the Union Ministry of Finance showed excise duty collections during April-July 2021 surging to over ₹ 1 lakh crore, from ₹67,895 crore mop-up in the same period of the previous fiscal.

PTI

Atal Pension Yojana dominates social security scheme with 66% NPS subscriber base

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Atal Pension Yojana has emerged as the most popular social security scheme under the National Pension System with over 2.8 crore subscribers, mainly from the non-metro centres.

Out of 4.2 crore National Pension System (NPS) subscribers, over 66 per cent or 2.8 crore opted for the APY at the end of 2020-21, says the annual report of the National Pension Systems Trust (NPS Trust).

The State Government Scheme ranks second with 11 per cent share, while the central autonomous bodies (CAB) continued to account for the least number of subscribers of

NPS with a share of 1 per cent, followed by state autonomous bodies (SAB) with a share of 2 per cent. APY is the most subscribed plan among non-metro subscribers. This also reflects the demographic pattern in the country, where more unorganized population segments reside in the non metros, thus accessing the NPS self-initiated plan," the report said. Total assets under management (AUM) for the National Pension System schemes saw a year-on-year growth of over 38 per cent, and stood at ₹5.78 lakh crore at the end of the year, the report said, adding as of fiscal 2021, NPS had 4.2 crore registered users or popularly known as subscribers.

BBIN sub-region needs cooperative approach for multi-modal connectivity: CUTS International

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) sub-region should develop a cooperative approach for multi-modal connectivity as the BIM-STEeC master plan on transport connectivity, he said.

The BBIN sub-region is currently one of the least integrated sub-regions in the world and the intra-regional trade is very low, standing at mere four per cent, he added.

The Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) sub-region should develop a cooperative approach for multi-modal connectivity, learning from successful sub-regional connectivity models of the world," he added.

ness of the sub-region in terms of logistics performance.

These initiatives should be looked at along with the larger picture of the sub-region and initiatives such as the BIM-STEeC master plan on transport connectivity, he said.

The BBIN sub-region is currently one of the least integrated sub-regions in the world and the intra-regional trade is very low, standing at mere four per cent, he added.

The Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) sub-region should develop a cooperative approach for multi-modal connectivity, learning from successful sub-regional connectivity models of the world," he added.

UNITED LEASING AND INDUSTRIES LTD.
CIN: L17100HR1983PLC033460
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Tel: 0124-4200274
Email Id: investorrelations@uililtd.com
Website:www.uililtd.com

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that the 37th Annual General Meeting of the Company will be held on Wednesday, 29th September, 2021, at 12:30 p.m. at the Works Office of the Company at 14 Kms, Gurugram Pataudi Road, Village Jhund Sarai Veeran, Sector-95 Gurugram, Haryana, to transact the businesses as set out in the Notice of the AGM.

Members are hereby informed that the Notice of the Meeting and aforesaid documents are available on the Company's Website (www.uililtd.com) and the copies of the said documents are also available for inspection at the Registered Office of the Company on all working days (except Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays) during business hours up to the date of the Meeting.

A member entitled to attend and vote at the meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote on a poll instead of him and the proxy need not be the member of the Company. The Instrument appointing the proxy should however be deposited at the Registered Office of the Company not less than 48 hours before the Commencement of Meeting.

Members are informed that pursuant to the provisions of Section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014, as amended, and Regulation 44 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Company is providing to its members facility to exercise their right to vote by electronic means on Resolutions proposed to be passed at the meeting.

The Register of Members and Share Transfer Book in respect of Equity Shares of the Company will remain closed from 23rd September, 2021 to 28th September, 2021 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

The e-voting will be open from 9.00 a.m. (IST) on 26th September, 2021 to 5.00 p.m.(IST) on 28th September, 2021 in terms of Rule 20(3)(VI) of Companies (Management and Administrative Rules) 2014. During this period shareholders' of the Company, holding shares either in physical form or in dematerialized form, as on the cut-off date (record date) of 22nd September, 2021 may cast their vote electronically.

Shareholders are requested to visit <https://instavote.linkintime.co.in> for E-voting and the manner for casting vote through E-voting is prescribed in the Notice of AGM.

By Order of the Board

United Leasing and Industries Limited

Sd/-

Shashi Shekhar

Company Secretary

Place: Gurugram, Haryana
Date: 06/09/2021



A PRE-DESIGNED THOUGHT PROCESS

SUMIT DHAWAN explores contemporary problem framing tactics

In the dynamic environments that we live and work in, even the most precisely crafted solutions have a short shelf life. Once one accepts that the problem-solving abilities are limited and impermanent, one's goal can instantly shift from delivering full solutions to developing tools that empower users with adaptive designs. Designers tend to put themselves in the users' shoes to understand better how they interact with the built environment. This helps one in developing strategies that set users to successfully deal with change and uncertainty. Architects and designers achieve this holistic view of design with what is called 'design thinking'. Design thinking focusses more on the pain points of the design before execution so that the schematic framework becomes more feasible.

Design thinking is highly collaborative. It tends to bring together a group of users — including the



clients, contractors and a host of consultants so that diverse voices can participate and be heard. Such a collaboration opens them up to new ways of thinking with fresh perspectives. Keep an eye on achieving the outcome with a thoroughly involved team rather than an individualistic



approach. It is advised to be clear on the desired end result by creating layouts and designs that promote utilitarian interactions and functions. The creative process involves a constant state of learning and discovering unforeseen updates,

thus being willing to change the problem framing if new insights take shape— influenced by weather conditions, locations, material, user group or the unprecedented pandemic. Users are usually compelled to

adapt and design their own solutions if the problems are not addressed at the conceptual stage of design. Thus, an architect's task eventually shifts from delivering not only aesthetically sound solutions but also providing users with functional solutions for specific needs. Hence, as a designer, one should follow some key principles centered around the needs of the user.

OFFER VALUE

Have a clear understanding of the user's needs and offer value in the solutions given so the user can reap all benefits. Look for coherent, holistic designs that facilitate free-flow and continuity of task completions. Use established patterns with an inventive note— keep in mind the user's existing designs and lifestyle patterns to build futuristic solutions. Consistent, predictable patterns help create harmony between experiences and allow seamless transitions between spaces. While it is useful to explore other design approaches, maximum benefit is derived from patterns that people already understand and are using across a variety of contexts in planning and layout design. So, designing new spaces in contemporary and modern styles is not always about moving out of comfort but elevating comfort itself.

AIM AT FLEXIBILITY

While designs suggested should avoid overwhelming the users with choices, ensure to provide layouts that strive for flexibility and user functionality wherever possible. For instance, the pandemic made home offices and breakout spaces a must-have because of which a lot of residents suffered, due to predetermined interior setups. The inclusion of open layouts and flexible spaces allow that. A few residences are now including an island kitchen to act as makeshift work counters where there dearth of space. By applying the core principles of unlocking value, developing creatively on established patterns and understanding the need for user flexibility, designs can induce empathy in their schemes and help adapt the users to unforeseen changes in their lifestyle. It is crucial to understand the user mindset and lifestyle patterns to recognise and account for complexity in the built environment. At the end of the day, as architects and designers, one offers innovative solutions to try and navigate a complex and dynamic world of ever-changing architectural trends and yet be relevant.

(The author is the founder and principal architect at Cityspace' 82 Architects, an architectural firm.)

WEBBED



MUMBAI DIARIES 26/11

Set in the backdrop of the horrendous 26/11 attacks in Mumbai, the film focusses on how the frontline workers responded. The doctors, nurses, first responders, and other hospital personnel have to deal with an appalling crisis. It releases on September 9 on Amazon Prime Video.



KYA MERI SONAM GUPTA BEWAFA HAI

This romedy revolves around the life of Sintoo, a dejected lover, who expresses his feelings on a currency note. The note, in turn, goes viral and triggers a chain of hilarious events. It releases on September 10 on ZEE5.



BHOOT POLICE

The story is based on the lives of two brothers who are ghost-hunters by profession. The duo is assigned on a mission to a distant village. What follows is a series of hilarious but spooky adventures. It releases on September 17 on Disney+ Hotstar.

For the Bollywood actor Tahir Raj Bhasin, Nitesh Tiwari's *Chhichhore* has been a life-changing film. After his debut film *Mardaani* got him huge critical acclaim and incredible success at the box office, Bhasin tasted the same reaction with *Chhichhore*. He thanked his producer Sajid Nadiadwala, his director Tiwari and his co-star Sushant Singh Rajput for an unbelievable shooting experience.

"My fondest memories of shooting for *Chhichhore* were the parts we shot at IIT Bombay. Hostel four, on which the film is based, really exists and shooting in the real corridors and canteens helped get the entire cast to reminisce about their own college life and instantly bond. It was also a challenging film to be a part of. Nitesh Tiwari is a perfectionist and had me train with national level sports coaches to prepare for Derek. I was in training for four months for athletics, football and kabaddi, this developed the characters physically," says the actor on the film's second release anniversary.

The young actor adds, "Watching Sushant work and spending time with him behind the scenes was an absolute joy. His focus and complete commitment to his personal growth was very motivating to watch. His intellect was unparalleled and the vastness of his topics of interest always entertained and enthralled the set. Nadiadwala has an instinct for great scripts, watching him mentor the pro-

A life-changing role

On the second anniversary of *Chhichhore*, TAHIR RAJ BHASIN recounts some fond memories of shooting the National award-winning film. By TEAM VIVA

ject yet give the actors their space is a huge learning in leadership. One of my proudest moments after we premiered the film was when he congratulated me on how Derek had turned out in the film."

Bhasin is proud that he has *Chhichhore* in his body of work. He says, "There's a great sense of achievement when I think of the film today. Doing a box office smash hit and celebrating the film's National award is a rare combination. I smile every time I catch *Chhichhore* on TV. The shot of Derek running the relay race in the climax of the film brings back memories of Mumbai's humidity, 500 people cheering me on and physiotherapists between takes to get me back in shape just to do another take right. I



smile, only because it was all so worth it!" The film catapulted Bhasin to new found recognition and he hasn't looked back ever since. He says, "*Chhichhore* was an absolute blast to make. The part of Derek allowed me to explore a softer character than I had ever done before. Although he was the designated 'hostel ka

baap', Derek was extremely emotional about his gang of brothers at hostel four. The audience related to this vulnerability which was the real challenge about playing the character. The film definitely catapulted how studios and the audience saw me and it will always be a very special chapter on the road from *Mardaani*'s anti-hero to the more romantic hero parts I am exploring this year."

Bhasin will now be seen in *Loop Lapeta* as a romantic lead opposite Taapsee Pannu and in *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein*, in which he has been paired with Shweta Tripathi. Tahir also plays the role of Sunil Gavaskar in Kabir Khan's *83*!

The 'always around' dad

VARUN DUGGIRALA shares tips on adjusting to parenthood while working from home

Being a parent is never easy. Ask anyone who's a parent, and no matter how old or young their kid might be, they'll agree that it's a tough gig. But in many ways it could be compartmentalised. There was time between your kid being at home and time away from them at work/ school. And this helped drive the dynamic between parents and their children as an assortment of separate divisions with varying percentages of time spent: parent-child time and non-parent or child time.

And dads, for the large part, have had an even broader separation because we've not been equal partners in parenting. Historically, the heavy lifting and balancing has been left to mothers (I'm generalising, but the percentages are glaring), and it's only for the last few generations that a father has looked at his role expanding to being an equal partner in parenting. We have a long way to go.

But the pandemic and working from home and school from home has made parenting a whole new ball game. Because there is no separation, there is a constant struggle for balance. Yet an increased and more profound level of bonding between parents and children has developed. We've had to map all our lives, schedules, needs, wants, plans and personal spaces to find some form of balance.

So, is it chaotic? It is. But does it have many a silver lining? I'd go with gold lining because I no longer have to worry about spending enough time with my



daughter. I'm with her at every suitable break during the day (my office coffee breaks are replaced with bite-sized father-daughter time throughout the day every day). We do so much more together as a family because it's a part of how we live now (movie nights are a whole-blown affair), and have I formed and almost ritualised activities that she and I do together as 'our things'? Of Course, I have.

To catch moments of growth, the evolution of thought and mindset are a consistent daily process. Where she's been able to show her interest in art or building structures with blocks, her need to make up stories using her imagination and my task of reading her the same book has come into existence. Still, with a different take on its story every second night, the smaller things have grown in prominence. It's these tiny moments that we would have missed, had we not been confined to the

same space for such a long time together.

To have her understand what her parents do and work towards not disturbing either of us should we be on a work call or to give us our space when we need it (this last one is a work in progress) has also been a way to show her what we do and how we do it. And while there were, are and will be moments of madness, it's genuinely made me become the kind of father I always wanted to be, the one that's present and deeply involved. Because that's been my big realisation about being a parent through the last two years, more than anything else, it's about being present, the rest is a bonus.

They say distance makes the heart grow fonder, but proximity makes its bonds far stronger.

(The author is a content creator, podcaster, entrepreneur and personal development pundit.)

TRENDBLAZER



SAIF LOVES HIS NEW CHARACTER

Bollywood actor **SAIF ALI KHAN** has talked about what made him feature in the forthcoming horror-comedy *Bhoot Police* and his character, Vibhooti.

"I loved the script the first time I heard it. It was one of the most surprisingly entertaining scripts I had come across," Khan expressed.

"From being an unbeliever to a believer, I like the way my character dresses himself, the world he's from, and his accent. He's an irreverent and a slightly twisted person," he added.

fairtalk

NEHA SHARMA



'I think harassment, be it physical or mental, is a very common situation that most of the people in our society have faced and majority of the section cannot even raise their voice because they have to keep their job. In *Vikalp* also, at one point, it is mentioned how bullying and harassment, based on power dynamics at the workplace, has been normalised.'

dailytalk

RASHMI AGDEKAR



'Since I have to get into the psychology of a character while portraying a role, my personal mental health needs to be centered. It becomes relatively easier to oscillate to extreme emotions when an actor is mentally fit, in my opinion. So yes, it is crucial. I'll hear my friend out at first. But encourage him/her to get professional help later.'

ENRIQUE ARCE ON ARTURO ROMAN

Actor **ENRIQUE ARCE**, who plays Arturo in *Money Heist*, has talked about his character, who can be described as a narcissist.

"I am saying it not as Enrique and there's no ego involved, but I think this is one of those characters that, when the show is over, if people watch it again, they would then like him. After getting the emotional distance, they will say he was funny, he wasn't bad after all," he stated.



NO LUCK FOR ARTISANS

RUBY SARKAR explores how the second wave of the pandemic has drastically impacted practitioners of Gond paintings in Madhya Pradesh

Fifty kilometres from Madhya Pradesh's Dindori district, on the Jabalpur-Amarkantak route, lies the village of Patangarh, the birthplace of the illustrious Gond painting. It was because of Jangarh Singh Shyam — a pioneering Gond artist from Patangarh that this traditional style of painting received recognition and artists from the village were able to successfully exhibit their work widely across the world. Most of the women and men from this village are proficient in this art form. Around 200 artists in the village earn their livelihood through their artworks which fetch high prices overseas and at major art galleries.

Covid-19, however, has severely impacted the lives of Gond artists. Income, through their paintings, has been stalled compelling these talented artists to work as daily wage labourers for their survival. They have started working under MGNREGA or in the fields of big farmers to survive and cope with these uncertain times.

Chandrakali, a local artist, is currently employed under MGNREGA, deepening wells. Expressing her plight, she said, "Earning a living through our small agricultural land was getting difficult. I had no option but to take up this work that has bruised my hands to such an extent that I am unable to paint with a brush."

During the unlocking phase, Chandrakali was involved in a wall painting project in Chhattisgarh's Tilda region, but as the second phase of lockdown came into effect, she had to end the project midway. Looking after her only son has become an uphill task.

Likewise, Rajendra Kumar Ujhke, another local artist, shared the hardships Covid-19 has imposed on the artisans. "Earlier, paintings were sold online through social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook. But we are no longer able to sell our paintings through this medium. People have stopped buying. The pandemic has



stretched so long that it has shattered our lives and hopes. Our forefathers worshipped Gond art and never imagined us doing anything else," expressed Rajendra.

He shared that several artists from his village — who have been felicitated with government and private awards — are now working as labourers. To name a few, there's Rajkumar Shyama, Devilal Tekaam, and Santoshi Dhruve.

Last year, just before the lockdown, Nadette Charlet, an artist from Ireland, visited this village of artists and was mesmerised by the artwork. Santosh Kumar Dwivedi, a social worker and the director of Tikuli Kala Kendra —



an organisation that promotes artisans situated in the Umariya district of Madhya Pradesh — introduced Nadette to Patangarh and its artists. With the motive of helping these local artists, Nadette bought 50 A-4 size paintings at a basic price. Later, she created a website called Gond Art India and started selling these paintings. Through this website, 36 paintings were sold and, as a result, she was able to send ₹ 1,37,000 to the artists. Each painting was sold at the rate of ₹ 3,824. This initiative was a blessing for the artists, which helped them survive the first phase of lockdown.

According to Santosh, Nadette is fond of tribal art and culture. "A common friend introduced us. They showed interest in knowing more about Gond paintings and wanted to meet the artists behind the artworks. I took them around the Patangarh area in Dindori district as there is no better place in Madhya Pradesh to understand Gond paintings. Their visit impacted the lives of the local artists as it aided them in receiving funds during the first wave of Covid-19," revealed Santosh.

However, artisans did not have the same luck the second time around. The second wave of Covid-19 has proven to be way more devastating as it penetrated its way to the rural areas which were spared in 2020. With the subsequent lockdowns, these artists could not send their paintings to Nadette, nor could she visit them. This forced them to take up menial jobs.

The brilliant artists in Patangarh make words dance on the canvas. The colours and patterns make musical harmonies and that is what makes their art so exquisite. The world recognises the work of these Gond artists, and yet in the current times, these talented artisans are battling to meet the needs of their families.

—Charkha Features



Where are we headed?

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI ponders over the increasing number of rape cases across the country and tries to understand what has been causing this rising trend

The recent incident of the kidnapping, assault and brutal gangrape of a female student in southern India, considered to be safest for women, has jolted the entire nation and has once again raised the issue of women security in a country that is best known for its rich cultural heritage, where women are worshipped in the form of goddesses. As per a report by NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) for 2019, around 32,033 rape cases were registered across the country in that year, which is an average of 88 daily cases. Surprisingly, in 94.2 per cent of cases (30,165), rapes were committed by perpetrators known to the victim. The proliferation of such heinous, barbaric acts has intensified the wave of insecurity among women. Hence, women organisations across the country, and state governments, have asked the police for greater patrolling and vigilance on roads at night and those organisations, whose women employees are dropped back after night shifts, have been instructed to ensure proper measures for their safety, including placing guards in each office cab. Though such measures may help to an extent, they do not hit at the root cause. Several female employees feel that finding clusters of policemen on roads or guards inside their cabs is as uncomfortable as being driven alone at night. Thinking that increasing police vigilance will prevent incidents of crime is akin to hoping that training more doctors will eradicate diseases from the country.

People had a hope that after the passing of the important anti-rape law by parliament, the rate of sexual crimes would come down; however, nothing much has changed. Rapes by gangs of young men have continued with a disturbing frequency, even though the men convicted in the Nirbhaya case were given death sentences by the court.

The reasons behind these cases are wide-ranging, but one thing is clear that there is still a widespread sense of impunity among aggressors as they feel that they won't get caught and neither would victims say anything as Indian women can't come out in the open about such things. The fundamental question however still remains unanswered — what leads a person to commit rape in the first place? Surely something is lacking in the mental and moral makeup of a rapist — the thing/ thought process that prevents other honest, upright people from even imagining such an act. Firstly, it needs to be understood that a rapist does not certainly look upon women in the same way as other people do. Hence, their modesty, honour and dignity would hardly concern him. Rather, such a person regards women as mere objects of sexual gratification. It is because of this evil attitude, that the occurrence of rape cases are increasing in the country. Proof of the same can be found everywhere — be it on visual platforms, print platforms and in the perversive language and behaviour of men in public places, which our mothers and sisters have to tolerate daily.

Of late, there has been a trend of incorporating provocative material in anything and everything. At a casual glance, these kinds of material appear overtly harmless but carry subtle, cleverly crafted subliminal messages that seep into the psyche of people of all age groups who consume them day in and out, thereby promoting a culture of promiscuity. That is why in many recent cases of gang rape, juveniles are among the accused. Since these images and videos are everywhere, it is making more and more people regard them as normal. In fact, those who try to oppose them are seen as old-fashioned and prudish. Nowadays, youngsters consider it 'cool' to use vocabulary which was once considered indecent and disrespectful towards women. Hence, it can be easily said that the growing cases of criminal assault on women are nothing but the fruit of the seeds of moral degeneration that are being sown by these vulgar images that are being transported through various mediums. So, unless we fully realise the extent of damage that is being done to our society by this vulgarity, which is fast becoming a norm, we may soon reach a point of no return. Then, no woman will be safe in our cities, by day or night.



Dear Anthia,

Doves rock, so what do people have against rock doves? And why do they suddenly get called pigeons when they're unwelcome? I guess lovey-dovey sounds better than poppety-pigeony, but there must be more to it than that!

LOL- Pool Stigeon

Hello Pool, my fine-feathered friend.

You've really let the cat out with that one! Pigeons and doves are the same thing?! Like sporks and *foons*!? Surely not! Well, let's dive right in.

The first thing to understand is no one likes the French. A glance at their language explains why: their words for fart and peace are nigh-identical, as are those for fist and point, queen and reindeer (explains why the monarchy didn't last). They also have six words all meaning owl, and call bats 'bald mice.' Diabolical! Most fiendishly, they've taken the words venomous and poisonous, which no one can pick apart, and made them paronyms. So now it's venomous and *vemenous* instead!

Anyway, in 1066, a bloke named William the Conqueror sailed over to England from France. He came, he saw, he left — but not before crushing the Brits. The clue's in the name. Eventually, William big-head passed the throne to his son — not William the Brave, not William Conquerer Jr but William short-stockings. And for the next 300 years, all the rich and powerful people in England spoke French, saying things like "Oh la vache!" and "Pas de croissants? I've got mustard up my nose!"

By the time the Frenchies



left, their word 'pigeon' had joined the English word 'dove.' And as a baguette, up the backside, to the blue-blooded *aristosnobs*, their beautiful breathy bird-name 'pigeon' was turned towards the more un-coo-th

contexts. Basically, if it's big, ugly, pooping or poop-coloured, it's a pigeon. If it's cooked, shot, raced or poisoned, feral, foreign, or fighting, it's a pigeon. And if it's holy, loving or peaceful, it's a dove. Sounds fair enough.

Pigeons are like flying pigs: they can fly, and they're occasionally pink. The resemblance is uncanny, isn't it? Well, they're also smart like pigs, enjoy art like pigs — or is that Picasso? Whatever the case, we humans have been their 'friends' for five thousand years, since way before the Greeks invented mythical flying pigs (and failed to name them *Pigasus*). The big question, therefore, is "How did these birds go from pal to pariah?" That or "Why don't Greeks have a sense of humour?" Either one.

The first problem with pigeons is they keep coming back. You just can't get rid of them! It's like throwing out a boomerang: you're sure for a headache. And that's mostly our fault- people have trained them for millennia to return home carrying letters. Calling them 'homing pigeons' probably doesn't help either. Just like naming William 'the Conqueror' — it's asking for trouble! Heck, pigeons were so keen to live up to their name, they domesticated themselves! Yep, as soon as humans started building huts, pigeons were on the scene, setting up shop next door. Lord knows they make the most god-awful nests of any bird, so the added structure of huts must have seemed like manna from heaven. Or like the aliens building Egyptians their pyramids! Take your pick.

The pigeons' cunning plan

worked for a while. They were worshipped alongside the sexy love-war goddess of ancient Mesopotamia and starred in the Epic of Gilgamesh which the Christians copied for Noah's ark. The Greeks kept the trend, with doves the symbol of the love (no war) goddess Aphrodite, and naturally, the Romans copied them. So, excepting the odd ritual sacrifice, pigeons had it pretty good.

That is until they encountered problem number two. Pigeons, it turned out, were just a *smidgeon* too good at that homing thing. And when the Greek city-states fell out, the birds were conscripted as wartime messengers. Guess who copied? The Egyptians and Sumerians, Romans, French and Americans, Swiss, Brits and Germans. So just a few friends, in teen-speak! Pigeons have been trussed up and tossed out of planes, targeted by trained enemy falcons, taken as war prisoners and tied to flaming sulfur balls. Plans for pigeon-guided missiles almost took off, but the coo de grâce came in 2014 when Chinese authorities anally probed 10,000 doves for hidden bombs. What a job!

If all that doesn't strain a relationship, you're probably married. But it sure as hell shot down our love of pigeons. By the end of the 20th century, they'd gained the moniker 'rats with wings,' and rodents were cheesed off about it. However, while rats had always been useless pests, pigeons had lost their utility in the modern world. Army pigeon corps were all disbanded, and pigeon jokes deteriorated until people were asking "What's a pigeon's favourite guitar?" and "Why did the pigeon cross the road?" You can guess the punchlines.

This, though, is the third and

final problem. Cities are humans' crap attempts at habitats. And pigeons (more or less literally) remind us of that. They crap on our hot, hard pavements and the impractically high ledges of skyscrapers. They piss on sweaty commuters and shiny cars stuck in traffic. And yes, since pigeons have just one hole, you're getting a number three for the price of one, each and every time!

Once, not so long ago, pigeon poop was bought and sold. It had value as fertiliser, with the bonus that it doesn't smell. I'm told it makes a fine facial as well... apparently. Alas, nowadays, we're eating food grown from cells and living in towns full of foreign odours. Diseases are going to town on us all cooped up in close confinement, so naturally, we take it out on the harmless pigeons as plague spreaders. They're left out on the streets with the dispossessed, nesting in gutters and fast-food stands. High-fliers no longer.

So, Pool Stigeon, I leave you with this. Our world is filled with two kinds of people: those who shoo pigeons, and those who shoot them. But one man tried to marry a dove. Nikola Tesla, who gave us electricity, fed pigeons in a park for 30 years and was obsessed with them. Wordsworth wrote of them, Darwin bred them, and Queen Victoria collected them. Pigeons have been with us through thick and thin. So next time you're out, look up for these feathered friends. But don't open your mouth — because there's only one way that will end...

(The author is a wildlife carer, naturalist, researcher, writer, scientist, host of the *Animalsense* podcast and a TEDx speaker.)

“

Happiness and freedom begin with one principle. Some things are within your control and some are not.

”

—Epictetus

AEROSOL, DUST'S IMPACT ON SOLAR POWER

Researchers at the Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital, an autonomous research institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India and National Observatory of Athens (NOA), Greece, studied the impact of aerosols and clouds on the solar energy potential over a high-altitude remote location in the central Himalayan region with analysis and model simulations to find that aerosols, dust, and clouds reduce solar energy generation from photovoltaic (PV) and rooftop solar installations resulting in substantial economic impact.

They estimated that the impact of total aerosol optical depth on PV and rooftop installations amount to annual financial losses of upto ₹ 1.55 million and the corresponding financial loss due to dust and clouds is ₹0.56 million and ₹2.47 million, a release from the Ministry of Science and Technology stated.



TRYING TO REVERSE CLIMATE CHANGE

As per the Vulnerability Assessment Study carried out by Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore along with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi and IIT Guwahati, of the 612 districts across India that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, 100 districts, mostly from eastern regions of the country are most vulnerable.

"Out of the 100 most vulnerable districts in the country, 70 per cent of them are in five states of Eastern India — Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa," said the senior adviser and head of the Policy Coordination & Programme Management (PCPM) Division, Dr Akhilesh Gupta.

Gupta, who is also a climate change expert at the Department of Science and Technology (DST), hinted at a change in policy over a high-level dialogue that has been scheduled to identify the futuristic climate scenario and challenges, long term vision for science, technology and policy integration and localisation for these regions.



SIDE-EFFECTS OF AIR POLLUTION IN NORTH INDIA

A study by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) has found that 480 million people in northern India face the "most extreme levels of air pollution in the world." Indian cities routinely dominate global pollution rankings and bad air kills more than a million people every year, the BBC reported.

The report by EPIC said that north India breathes 'pollution levels that are 10 times worse than those found anywhere else in the world'.

This air pollution has spread over decades beyond the region to western and central Indian states such as Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, where the average person is now losing between two-and-a-half to three years of life expectancy as compared to early 2000, the study said.

Air pollution can reduce the life expectancy of Indians by nine years, said the report; which further added that strong clean air policies can add up to five years to people's lives.



PLASTIC POLLUTION'S AFFECT ON WILDLIFE

Migratory species are likely to be among the most vulnerable to plastic pollution, a new study released by the Secretariat of the UN's Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) said on Tuesday.

The study focused for the first time on the impacts that plastic pollution has on animals that live on land and in freshwater environments in the Asia-Pacific region.

The study included case studies on the Ganges and Mekong river basins, which together contribute an estimated 200,000 tonnes of plastic pollution to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean every year.

But not all plastic pollution reaches the oceans. The study found that species protected under CMS are impacted by plastic pollution in river ecosystems and on land, including freshwater species, land animals and birds.



COVID PATIENTS ARE PRONE TO KIDNEY DAMAGE

Fresh research in the USA shows that there is a significant decline in kidney function among patients described as COVID-19 "long-haulers" because they suffer a range of adverse conditions months after their initial infections.

The study, published online on September 1 in the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*, points out that the kidney problem surfaces even among those who had mild infections of the novel Coronavirus.

The study carried out by researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis and the Veterans Affairs St Louis Health Care System, shows that those infected with SARS-CoV-2 are at an increased likelihood of developing kidney damage as well as chronic and end-stage kidney diseases.



BETTER THAN THE BEST

India's para-athletes soar high in best ever Paralympics

PTI ■ TOKYO

Inspirational, incredible and indomitable.

India's paralympians managed to be all these and much more in an epoch-making campaign at the Tokyo Games where an unparalleled 19 medals, including five Gold, helped them sign off 24th in the overall tally — the highest ever.

The tally also included eight Silver and six Bronze medals but most importantly, it was a performance during which history was scripted almost everyday with the contingent living up to the 'Spirit in Motion' motto of the Games.

Even on the last day of competitions, the medal rush did not stop and Krishna Nagar won a Gold after Noida's District Magistrate Suhas Yathiraj signed off his brilliant run with a Silver to complete a remarkable badminton show.

The duo's performance was like icing on the cake for the contingent which found new heroes, celebrated some established ones and brought para-sports firmly into spotlight in India.

In all, 54 came to Tokyo and 17 of them left with medals around their necks.

It was an improved performance no doubt but calling it just improvement would be an understatement given that India's overall Games haul was a mere 12 before this edition.

To put things in perspective, at the 2016 Rio Games, India had 19 ath-

letes across five disciplines with four returning with medals in the end.

There were several firsts to celebrate and the euphoria lasted the entire duration of the Games.

Two athletes, shooters Avani Lekhara and Singhraj Adana, finished on podium twice, creating their own legacies in their debut Paralympics.

The 19-year-old Lekhara became the first Indian woman to win a Games Gold (10m air rifle) and later added a Bronze in 50m rifle 3 positions to ensure that her name would now be part of every India-centric Paralympic quiz.

The 39-year-old Adana, on the other hand, was a late bloomer after taking a liking to the pistol while dropping his nephew to the range.

His right hand impaired, Adana knocked off a 10m air pistol Bronze and 50m pistol Silver to ensure that India had more than one double-medalist in the same Games for the first time ever.

There was the first medal in archery through Harvinder Singh (Bronze), impaired after wrong medication for dengue, the first medal in table tennis by waist-down paralysed Bhavinben Patel (Silver) and also a remarkable two Gold medals in badminton through short of stature Nagar and a polio-stricken Pramod Bhagat.

Another shooting star rose on the horizon with Manish Narwal, all of 19, already a world champion and now a Paralympic champion as well.

Not to mention the legends — Devendra Jhaharia (javelin throw) and Mariyappan Thangavelu (high jump).

The two long-time flag-bearers of Indian para-sports, who won Gold medals in 2016 Rio, and finished on podium

again, this time with Silver medals, cementing their place among all-time greats of Indian sports.

Nearly half (8) of India's haul this time came from the track-and-field arena with javelin thrower Sumit Antil shining the brightest with a Gold en route which he shattered his own world record five times over.

Antil was pursuing a career in wrestling, as his family wanted, before a bike accident led to the amputation of his left leg, changing the course of his life forever.

At 18, Praveen Kumar

became India's youngest medalist with a Silver in high jump which came with an Asian record for the debutant, whose left leg is impaired.

Another shining star was Sundar Singh Gurjar, who finished behind Jhaharia in javelin throw.

Gurjar lost his left hand in an accident and in his maiden Paralympics in Rio, he was disqualified after failing to register in time for his event.

He slipped into depression after the heartbreak and had thought of never touching the javelin again but was convinced into giving it another shot by his

coaches.

This time, Gurjar was on the clock and also on the podium.

In fact, all of them, even the ones who didn't win a medal, are a personification of fortitude, having braved and beaten circumstances that were difficult at best and improbable at worst.

The performance was a perfect end to India's Tokyo sojourn after able-bodied athletes snared an unprecedented seven Olympic medals last month, including the first individual Gold in 13 years.

But the paralympians bested their tally by quite a distance.



Never been so happy & disappointed at same time in my life: Suhas

Tokyo: Indian shuttler-cum-bureaucrat Suhas Yathiraj was left with mixed feelings on Sunday after he ended his Paralympic campaign with a Silver, saying he has never felt so happy and disappointed at the same time in his life.

The 38-year-old Noida District Magistrate produced an entertaining performance before narrowly going down 21-15, 17-21, 15-21 to two-time world champion Lucas Mazur of France in men's singles SL4 class summit clash.

"Very emotional (moment). I have never been so happy and so disappointed in my life at the same time. Most happy because of the Silver medal but most disappointed because I missed the Gold medal by a whisker," he said after losing the final match.

"But destiny gives what I deserve and probably I deserve Silver medal so I am happy for

that at least."

Suhas, who has an impairment in one of his ankles, said he hoped for the national anthem to play at the Yoyogi national stadium but it was not to be as the Gold medal slipped through his fingers.

"As I said, I have never been so disappointed and most happy in my life, coming so close and yet so far but still winning a Paralympic medal is not a small feat and I am extremely proud for what I have done in last few days."

A computer engineer, Suhas became an IAS officer in 2007 and was at the forefront of the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic as Noida's DM.

On Sunday, Suhas became the first ever IAS officer to win a medal at the Paralympics. "For every sportsperson, there is no higher achievement than Olympic or Paralympic, so this means the world to me," he said.

PTI

Just want to live in this moment: Nagar

PTI ■ TOKYO

Indian badminton player Krishna Nagar said Sunday's Gold medal at the Paralympics was nothing short of a blessing as he was over the moon for just being able to compete in the Games.

Nagar defeated Hong Kong's Chu Man Kai 21-17, 16-21, 21-17 in the men's singles SH6 class final to claim the second Gold medal in badminton after Pramod Bhagat. Nagar's disability classification is for players of short stature.

"Olympics or Paralympic medal is a huge thing. We committed that we will win 5-6



There couldn't have been better gift for me on Teachers' Day, says coach Khanna

Tokyo: Overwhelmed by the performance of his wards at the Tokyo Paralympics, India's para badminton national coach Gaurav Khanna on Sunday said he could not have received a better gift this Teachers' day.

Indian shuttlers claimed four medals, including two Gold, a Silver and a Bronze,

at the Paralympics where badminton made its debut this year.

"There can't be a better gift then this. When I had got Dronacharya award, I had a feeling which I couldn't express but this Paralympics with these medals, the feeling is no less than that feeling. I'm overwhelmed," Khanna,

said during a virtual press conference.

"The targets have been achieved but I am a bit disappointed because I expected medals from Tarun (Dhillon) and Palak (Kohli). We will comeback and take it as a strong learning. If they had won the medals, then we could have delivered six

medals."

Asked about the future plans, Khanna said: "I am feeling like as a coach, my exam is over, the session is over, so what's next now?"

"The Olympic cycle is over, for the next Paralympic cycle, that is, for 2028, 2032 and 2036, we will have to look for youngsters. In few

months, we will have Asian Youth Games, and I am hopeful we will produce good results."

"I am working on some new young and minor players and I am sure they will be in the limelight in few months time and shine like the Paralympic Gold medalists."

PTI

Max wins Dutch GP

Zandvoort: Home favourite Max Verstappen snatched the world championship lead from Lewis Hamilton on Sunday as the Red Bull driver produced a scintillating performance to win the first Dutch Grand Prix since 1985.

A week after the farcical washout in Belgium, pole-sitter Verstappen controlled the race from the start in bright sunshine at a circuit set in coastal sand dunes at the beach resort of Zandvoort.

His seventh win in 13 races this season turned a three-point deficit into a three-point lead over seven-time world champion Hamilton ahead of Monza next week-end.

Hamilton came in second, setting the fastest lap on the final lap to earn a consolation bonus point, with Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas a distant third.

"As you can hear already, it's just incredible," said Verstappen, roared on by some 70,000 orange-clad fans at a venue where the last winner was Niki Lauda for McLaren 36 years ago. "Expectations were high going into the weekend, I'm so happy to win here. It's such an amazing day, the whole crowd, incredible."

On a day that began with Max showing Dutch King and Queen around the Red Bull garage, Hamilton through Bangladesh's top order with a career-best 4-16 as New Zealand clawed their way back into the five-match T20I series with a 52 run win on Sunday. Bangladesh were bowled out for 76, their second-lowest T20 total, with Patel and Cole McConchie (3-15) bundling out the hosts on a slow wicket at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium. Bangladesh were looking to secure their first-ever T20 series triumph over the Blackcaps after winning the first two games. They got off to a flying start



Patel helps Kiwis stay alive

Dhaka: Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel ran through Bangladesh's top order with a career-best 4-16 as New Zealand clawed their way back into the five-match T20I series with a 52 run win on Sunday.

Bangladesh were bowled out for 76, their second-lowest T20 total, with Patel and Cole McConchie (3-15) bundling out the hosts on a slow wicket at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium.

Bangladesh were looking to secure their first-ever T20 series triumph over the Blackcaps after winning the first two games.

They got off to a flying start

in chase of New Zealand's modest score of 128-5 when Mohammad Naim blasted Jacob Duffy for two fours in the first over.

But the innings unravelled from there. Mushfiqur Rahim tried to salvage the chase but was left standing alone on 20 after Colin de Grandhomme picked up the final wicket.

Earlier, Henry Nicholls top-scored for the Blackcaps with 36 off 29 balls, marshalling his team's recovery in an unbroken 66-run sixth-wicket stand with Tom Blundell (30) when New Zealand were teetering at 62-5.

AFP

INDIA SET 368-RUN TARGET

4th Test. Day 5
Live from 3:30pm IST
SONY SIX NETWORK

England's under-fire opening pair made a confident start after an indomitable Shardul Thakur and a calm Rishabh Pant ensured a 367-run lead for India as the fourth Test entered an engrossing home stretch.

Haseeb Hameed (43 batting, 85 balls) and Rory Burns (31 batting, 109 balls) put on 77 runs in 32 overs on a placid track that showed little signs of wear and tear after Thakur (60 off 72 balls) and Pant (50 off 107 balls) helped India put on a commendable 466 in their second essay.

With 291 runs out of the target of 368 required on the final day, England would at least fancy a draw if not a victory on the fifth day as the pitch has nothing on offer for the bowlers.

More so, Ravindra Jadeja (0/28 in 13 overs), whose primary skill has been overlooked by the team manage-

ment, looked pedestrian during the overs that he bowled during the penultimate evening. A few balls did turn but Burns tackled them with ease.

The only bowler who made some impact was Jasprit Bumrah (7-3-11-0), who at least tried to exert some pressure on the openers.

However, India still have their nose ahead in the game largely due to the performance of the lower middle-order where Thakur the batsman exceeded everyone's expectations with a second half-century in the match.

He was well complemented by Pant, who finally

got some runs under his belt showing admirable restraint and sense of responsibility during the duo's 100-run stand.

Credit should also go to Umesh Yadav (25) and Jasprit Bumrah (24), who also played their cameos in taking the target past 350-run mark.

Had Thakur-Pant not played their part, England would have ended up chasing a lesser total after yet another all-too familiar middle order collapse.

From 296 for 3, within 10 over space, it became 312 for 6 before Thakur and Pant joined forces.

It did help that the pitch became

flatter as the day progressed and under bright sunshine, strokeplay became easier for both the batters as they could hit through the line.

While Shardul, who is fondly called 'Beefy' by team's head coach Ravi Shastri for his Ian Botham-like exploits, is reinforcing his value as a bowling all-rounder.

His three straight drives were as good as any of the shots that his illustrious seniors Rohit Sharma and Cheteshwar Pujara hit on the third day.

It was sight to behold as he picked an Ollie Robinson (32-7-105-2) slower early and dispatched it over long-on to reach 49 and then a pull shot for a single helped him complete his fifty.

If Shardul's 57 in the first innings had helped the team reach a respectable total, his approach in the second innings ensured that Pant wasn't in his usually 'harakiri' mode that brought about his downfall during a number of occasions this summer.

US party over for No 1 Barty

AFP ■ NEW YORK

Top-ranked Ashleigh Barty was ousted by a stunning fightback from American Shelby Rogers on Saturday while Novak Djokovic moved within four matches of completing the first men's singles calendar-year Grand Slam in 52 years.

World number one Djokovic defeated Kei Nishikori 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-3, 6-2, taking his 17th consecutive victory over the Japanese star and improving to 18-2 in their overall rivalry.

"I was very pleased with the focus," Djokovic said. "Maybe at some points I wasn't my best, but I was determined and focused and that made the difference."

With a fourth career US Open trophy, Djokovic would complete the first men's singles sweep of major titles in the same year since Rod Laver in 1969.

Reigning Wimbledon champion Barty won 11 of 14



games after dropping the first set, only for Rogers to capture five of the last six games for a shocking 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (7/5) triumph.

"I didn't want to leave," Rogers said. "I just said make balls, try to stay in this match, it can't get any worse, you've lost to her every time."

Rogers had dropped all

five prior meetings with Barty but would not be denied, breaking the Aussie as she served for the match in the eighth and 10th games as the crowd went wild at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

"I was just trying to stay in the point longer than Ash," Rogers said. "I was happy with myself for sort of problem

solving. I'm just so excited to be moving on to the next round."

Rogers will next face 150th-ranked British qualifier Emma Raducanu, an 18-year-old who routed Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-0, 6-1 in 70 minutes.

Djokovic, meanwhile, marched toward a 21st career Grand Slam title, which would break the deadlock for the men's record he shares with Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer.

The 34-year-old Serbian star advanced to a fourth-round matchup on Monday against 99th-ranked US wild-card Jensen Brooksby.

Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini, the Italian sixth seed, eliminated Ilya Ivashka of Belarus 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-4, 2-6, 6-3. Next up is 144th-ranked German qualifier Oscar Otte, who beat Italy's Andreas Seppi 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 7-5.

SAKKARI BEATS KVITOVA
Greek 17th seed Maria

Bopanna-Dodig pair in last 16

New York: Veteran Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna and his Croatian partner Ivan Dodig advanced to the men's doubles pre-quarterfinals with a three-set win over the pair of Hugo Nys of Monaco and Arthur Rinderknech of France here.

The 14th seed Indo-Croatian pair won 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 over their unseeded rivals in

one hour and 56 minutes on Saturday night.

Bopanna and Dodig converted all three break chances they earned and also saved three of the five breakpoints they faced.

They next face fourth seeds Rajeev Ram of the USA and Joe Salisbury of Great Britain, the Australian Open runners-up this season. **PTI**

Sakkari, a French Open semi-finalist, ousted two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova 6-4, 6-3, booking a fourth-round match against 2019 US Open winner Bianca Andreescu.

Czech 10th seed Kvitova double faulted on the final point to hand Sakkari the victory after 81 minutes.

Canadian sixth seed Andreescu improved to 10-0 at the US Open, advancing over 104th-ranked Belgian lucky loser Greet Minnen 6-1, 6-2.

"I'm very happy with my performance," Andreescu said. "For me to perform like this on this kind of stage it's an honor."

Saina, Praneeth to lead Indian challenge

New Delhi: Star Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and B Sai Praneeth will lead the women and men's teams in the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals, scheduled in Denmark from October 9-17. BAI also on Sunday named a 12-member Indian team for the Sudirman Cup, which is slated to take place from September 26 to October 3 in Finland.

For the Thomas and Uber Cup, Saina will be accompanied by the top-3 singles ranks from the trials — Malvika Bansod, Aditi Bhatt and Tasnim Mir — in the women's team.

The 10-member men's team also comprised of four singles players and three doubles pairs.

Alongside Praneeth and the former World No 1 Kidambi Srikanth, top-2 singles players from the trials — Kiran George and Sameer Verma — have secured spots in the team.

The country's top men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy has been selected in the team

alongside top-2 ranked pairs from the trials.

The players, for the Thomas and Uber Cup and the Sudirman Cup, were selected on the basis of their performances in the recently-concluded trials apart from the automatic selections of the players/pairs, who are placed inside top-20 in the world rankings.

PV Sindhu has not been included in the squad as she had requested not to consider herself for the selections.

On the other hand, the 12-member team for the Sudirman Cup, top-ranked doubles pair from the trials Dhruv Kapila and MR Arjun have been named in the squad alongside Srikanth, Praneeth and doubles pair of Satwiksairaj and Chirag.

Among the women, top-2 doubles pairs from the trials, Tanisha-Rutuparna and Ashwini Ponnappa-N Sikki Reddy have been selected alongside top-2 singles from the trials Bansod and Bhatt. **PNS**