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YEMEN'S HOUTHIS EXECUTE 9 OVER OFFICIAL'S KILLING

MONEY 8

CRYPTOCURRENCY HYPER FUND UNDER GOVT SCANNER

SPORT 10

BOPANNA, RAMKUMAR CRACK IN MUST-WIN DOUBLES MATCH



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'Humiliated' Captain resigns

Cong's last-ditch effort to negate anti-incumbency; Amarinder to 'explore options'

AMITABH SHUKLA ■ CHANDIGARH

Less than six months before the Assembly polls in the State, Congress changed Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh conceding that it was the best political alternative to dent the growing anti-incumbency against the two-time Chief Minister. It was clear that the political script written by the Congress high command was unpalatable to the Punjab Chief Minister who submitted his resignation to Governor Banwarilal Purohit soon after 4pm before the meeting of Congress Legislature Party (CLP) to elect a new leader. Citing continued humiliation over the past two months, Capt Amarinder made it clear that he would explore and exercise his future options when the time comes, "There is always an option, and I will use that option when the time comes. At the moment I am still in the Congress," he said after submitting his resignation. "I was humiliated three times by the Congress leader-



Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amrinder Singh submits his resignation to Governor Banwarilal Purohit at the Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh on Saturday

ship in the past two month. They called the MLAs to Delhi twice and now convened CLP here," Amarinder said, adding that he had decided and informed Congress president Sonia Gandhi in the morning that he would resign. "Apparently they (Congress

high command) do not have confidence in me and did not think I could handle my job. But I felt humiliated at the manner in which they handled the whole affair," he told reporters at the gate of the Raj Bhavan after giving his resignation letter to the Governor.

"Let them appoint who they trust," he remarked, taking a dig at the party leadership. After the arrival of AICC general secretary incharge of the State Harish Rawat and Central observer Ajay Maken in Chandigarh, it was clear that Capt Amarinder would be

Amarinder blasts Sidhu, Congress

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Out but not defeated, a visibly agitated Capt Amarinder Singh on Saturday declared that he will stay in politics and had his options open, while making it clear that he would never accept an "incapable" Navjot Singh Sidhu as the Chief Minister. Minutes after handing over his and his Council of Minister's resignation to the Governor, Amarinder hit out at the party high command for humiliating him time and again. Amarinder claimed that he had fulfilled his duty given to him, serving Punjab as the Chief Minister for nine and half years, including five years of his previous term (2002-2007). "I worked as strongly as I can for my Punjab and the people and

would continue to do so. I am not going to bog down. I have completed my task. Now I will take over the next," he added. Keeping the cards close to his chest, Amarinder refused to disclose what he had planned for his future. Earlier in the day, Amarinder had convened a meeting of Ministers and MLAs supporting him at his official residence here at 2 pm. However, apart from a handful of his close allies in the Cabinet and among MLAs, not many attended the meeting. Amarinder had led the Congress to a stunning victory in the 2017 Assembly polls, following 10 years of Akali rule in the State. The Congress had mustered a brute majority of 80 in the 117-member Assembly. Continued on Page 4

Centre cautions States on Covid as schools open

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As schools reopen gradually in various States, the Centre on Saturday asked the respective authorities to monitor any rising Covid infection trends among children and strengthen the public health response infrastructure, including medical oxygen plants, ICU, and hospital facilities and essential medicine stocking. The suggestions come amid fear of a third Covid-19 wave as at least 70 districts in 15 States have become a cause of concern in terms of rising Covid-19 cases. At a review meeting with States on Saturday, the Government noted that around 34 of these districts have a positivity rate exceeding 10 per cent, and in 36 districts the rate hovers between 5 and 10 per cent. Cabinet Secretary Rajeev Gauba, who chaired the meeting, said there was no room for complacency and called for strict enforcement of Covid appropriate behaviour, especially in the wake of upcoming festivities. He asked the States to implement intensive containment and active surveillance in clusters reporting high cases and not delay the imposition of restrictions, increase testing

As 3rd wave fear lurking, States told to monitor rise of Covid among kids

while maintaining RT-PCR ratio and promptly commission pressure swing adsorption plants, oxygen cylinders, concentrators and ventilators. "States were also told to undertake regular reviews for priority implementation of emergency response package II to ensure preparedness with enough headroom, monitor infection spread in children considering that a few States have opened schools, monitor breakthrough infections post-vaccination and analyse the emerging evidence, monitor mutations including sending sufficient samples for genome sequencing," the Government said in a statement here. Continued on Page 4

Ram Lala jalabhishek: Water from 115 countries received

Water from remaining 77 nations would be procured before Ayodhya temple is constructed, hopes Rajnath Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday received water from 115 countries of seven continents for offering in the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. He termed it "innovative thinking" and underlined the message of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". He made these remarks at his residence here after receiving the water from rivers, streams, and oceans from these 115 countries. Shree Ram Jannabhoomi Teertha Kshetra general secretary Champat Rai and Ambassadors and High Commissioners from several countries including Denmark, Fiji and Nigeria were present on the occasion. The water was procured by



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh receives holy water from 115 nations for Ayodhya Ram Mandir, in New Delhi on Saturday

NGO Delhi Study Circle, which is led by BJP leader and former Delhi MLA Vijay Jolly. Lauding this effort, Rajnath said, "Procuring water from all the countries of the world replicates the thinking of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam of India. Bringing water from 115 countries is an excellent work."

He hoped water from remaining 77 countries would also be procured by the time construction of the temple is completed. "We will do 'Jalabhishek' of our Ram Lala from that water." He further said construction of Ram Temple is a moment of pride for everybody adding Continued on Page 4

Supriyo joins TMC months after vowing to quit politics

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a blow to the saffron clan, Asansol BJP MP and former Union Minister Babul Supriyo on Saturday quit the party and joined the Trinamool Congress little more than two months after he was stripped of his ministerial status after which he had vowed to quit politics. Supriyo joined the TMC in the presence of the party's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and its Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien. While the State BJP called it an "act of revenge", the Asansol MP said there is no vengeance in his mind and that he left his earlier party just because he was "feeling stagnated" and the "space for work was increasingly getting narrower.... I thought my effort to serve people for several years got a full stop... why... or how... is irrelevant". Supriyo's joining the TMC comes close on the heel of at



TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee with former Union Minister and sitting MP Babul Supriyo after the latter joined the Trinamool Congress in Kolkata on Saturday

least 5 MLAs, including former BJP national vice president Mukul Roy, quitting that party. Soon after he joined the BJP, the Union Government on Saturday scaled down the armed security cover of Central paramilitary commandos given to the Asansol MP. His security cover was reduced from the second-highest level of Z to Y category, sources said. Continued on Page 4



Boats anchored along the swollen Ganga river following heavy rain, in Varanasi on Saturday

Kabul drone strike killed 10 civilians, admits US military

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US military has admitted that a deadly drone strike days before its pullout from Afghanistan was a "tragic mistake" as it did not kill the ISIS-K planners bent on attacking the Kabul international airport, and instead killed 10 innocent civilians, including an aid worker and seven children. Briefing reporters on the results of the investigation of the August 29 drone strike in Kabul, General Kenneth Frank McKenzie, the commander of the US Central Command, also said it was "unlikely that the vehicle and those who died in the attack were associated



with Islamic State-Khorasan or were a direct threat to US forces". The strike by a Hellfire missile in Kabul on August 29, which was launched in an effort to kill ISIS-K planners, instead killed 10 civilians, he said. Continued on Page 4

Sonowal, Murugan BJP's picks for RS bypolls on Oct 4

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

BJP on Saturday announced two candidates for the Rajya Sabha bypolls — Cabinet Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Minister of State L Murugan from Assam and Madhya Pradesh respectively. The polls would take place on October 4. Sonowal is the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and Murugan is the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting. Sonowal, who as Chief Minister led the BJP to the second successive victory in the Assam Assembly poll, was inducted into the Modi Cabinet

on July 7. He was compensated for leaving the Chief Minister's post for Himanta Biswa Sarma in May this year. Murugan was the BJP president of the Tamil Nadu unit. Both the leaders needed to be elected to the Upper House before the period of six months that would end early next year. Total of six seats are vacant in the Upper House — two from Tamil Nadu, one from Bengal, one from Assam, one from Madhya Pradesh and one from Maharashtra. The ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) nominated Sushmita Dev, who in a surprise move recently quit the Congress and joined the TMC.

Sonu Sood, aides evaded ₹20 crore tax, flouted FCRA, alleges CBDT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBDT on Saturday alleged that actor Sonu Sood and his associates evaded tax of ₹20 crore and claimed that after the Income Tax Department raided him and a linked Lucknow-based infrastructure group, it was found that he routed his "unaccounted income in the form of bogus unsecured loans from many bogus entities". It also accused Sood of violating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) while raising donations from abroad. It had launched searches against the 48-year-old actor and the Lucknow-based group of industries involved in the infrastructure sector on September 15 and the CBDT said the action was continuing. Continued on Page 4

Whopping 80 cr Covid vaccines administered

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has administered 80 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses so far, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Saturday. A day ago, India administered the highest ever single-day vaccinations with 2.5 crore doses given in 24 hours, which Mandaviya had described as a golden chapter in world history. In the meantime, India reported 35,662 new Covid-19 cases and 281 deaths in the last 24 hours, 33,798 got recovered in the same duration. Kerala recorded 23,260 Covid cases and 131 deaths in the past 24 hours. Continued on Page 4

The countrywide vaccination drive against the coronavirus was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers getting inoculated in the first phase. "Standing tall against Covid-19, India administers 80 crore vaccine doses. Congratulations to the nation on this momentous feat," Mandaviya tweeted using the hashtag "Worlds Largest Vaccination Drive". India took 85 days to touch the 10-crore vaccination mark, 45 more days to cross the 20-crore mark and 29 more days to reach the 30-crore mark, according to the Ministry. Continued on Page 4

CAPSULE

CONG: TMC'S ATTACK ON RAHUL UNWARRANTED New Delhi: The Congress on Saturday accused the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress of undermining the leadership of the grand old party and said its attack on Rahul Gandhi was "unwarranted and in poor taste". The remarks of the Congress came after the TMC's Bengali mouthpiece 'Jago Bangla' ran a cover story, attacking Gandhi by saying he has failed to take on the BJP and Banerjee, who is the chief minister of West Bengal, should be the opposition's face now.

SEVEN GIRLS DROWN IN JHARKHAND POND Latehar: Seven girls aged between 12 and 20 years drowned in a pond at a village in Jharkhand's Latehar district on Saturday during 'Karma Puja' festivities, a senior official said. The tragedy occurred at Bukru village under Shregada within Balumath police station limits when the girls had gone to the pond for immersion after Karma Puja, a major festival in Jharkhand, Deputy Commissioner Abu Imran said.

THAROOR CALLS FOR PERMANENT CONG CHIEF Kochi: Senior Congress leader and Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor on Saturday called for a permanent president to head the party, which is 'now at an interim stage'. He said all the Congress leaders have sought a permanent president for the party.



A beneficiary receives a dose of Covid-19 vaccine in New Delhi on Saturday



—राष्ट्र सेवा के—
20 वर्ष



सोच ईमानदार
काम दमदार



बदलाव के



वर्ष

19 सितम्बर, 2021

आओ मनाएं

विकास
उत्सव

17 सितम्बर - 7 अक्टूबर, 2021



- देश की सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था बनने की ओर अग्रसर
- प्रति व्यक्ति आय लगभग दोगुनी हुई
- ईज ऑफ डूइंग बिजनेस रैंकिंग में देश में दूसरा स्थान
- ₹ 3 लाख करोड़ से अधिक की निवेश परियोजनाएं प्रारम्भ
- 5 लाख नए रोजगार के अवसर
- वर्ष 2017 में बेरोजगारी दर 17.5% थी, जो अब घटकर 4.1% रह गई

विकास की लहर
हर गांव - हर शहर

किसान हित सर्वोपरि

- ₹ 1.44 लाख करोड़ गन्ना मूल्य का रिकॉर्ड भुगतान
- ₹ 36,000 करोड़ से किसानों का कर्ज माफ
- एम.एस.पी. पर खाद्यान्न की रिकॉर्ड खरीद, किसानों को ₹ 79,000 करोड़ का भुगतान
- पी.एम. किसान सम्मान निधि से किसानों को ₹ 37,521 करोड़ हस्तांतरित
- प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना में किसानों को ₹ 2,376 करोड़ की क्षतिपूर्ति
- किसानों को ₹ 4 लाख 72 हजार करोड़ फसली ऋण का भुगतान
- कृषि निवेशों पर देय अनुदान राशि ₹ 2,151.30 करोड़ हस्तांतरित
- 13 सिंचाई परियोजनाएं पूर्ण, 3.77 लाख हेक्टेयर अतिरिक्त सिंचन क्षमता में वृद्धि

निष्पक्ष एवं पारदर्शी प्रक्रिया से रिकॉर्ड रोजगार

- 4.50 लाख से अधिक युवाओं को सरकारी नौकरी
- 3.50 लाख युवाओं की संविदा पर नियुक्ति
- 82 लाख एमएसएमई इकाइयों में 2 करोड़ से अधिक लोगों को रोजगार
- एक जनपद एक उत्पाद (ओ.डी.ओ.पी.) योजना से 25 लाख लोगों को रोजगार
- 1.50 करोड़ से अधिक श्रमिकों को मनरेगा में रोजगार

भय एवं भ्रष्टाचार मुक्त प्रदेश

- जीरो टॉलरेन्स नीति से अपराधों में रिकॉर्ड कमी
- माफियाओं द्वारा अवैध ढंग से अर्जित ₹ 1866 करोड़ से अधिक की सम्पत्तियां जब्त/ध्वस्त
- बेहतर पुलिसिंग के लिए लखनऊ, नोएडा, कानपुर नगर व वाराणसी में पुलिस कमिश्नरेट प्रणाली लागू

हर बेघर को घर, हर घर बिजली, हर घर नल और मुफ्त रसोई गैस कनेक्शन

- प्रधानमंत्री आवास योजना में 42 लाख से अधिक आवासों का निर्माण
- मुख्यमंत्री आवास योजना (ग्रामीण) में 1,08,495 आवासों का निर्माण
- 1.41 करोड़ घरों तक पहुंची बिजली
- 30,000 ग्राम पंचायतों में शुद्ध पेयजल की योजना
- 2.61 करोड़ शौचालयों का निर्माण, 10 करोड़ लोग लाभान्वित
- 1.67 करोड़ परिवारों को उज्वला योजना में निःशुल्क गैस कनेक्शन

मुफ्त टेस्टिंग-मुफ्त टीका-मुफ्त इलाज-मुफ्त राशन

- 7.61 करोड़ से अधिक कोरोना टेस्टिंग, देश में सर्वाधिक
- 9.50 करोड़ से अधिक टीकाकरण, देश में प्रथम
- चिकित्सालयों में कोरोना का मुफ्त इलाज
- प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना एवं मुख्यमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना में कुल 6.90 करोड़ से अधिक लोगों का 5 लाख रुपए का बीमा कवर
- 15 करोड़ जरूरतमंदों को मुफ्त राशन

एक जनपद-एक मेडिकल कॉलेज की ओर मेडिकल शिक्षा और रोजगार के बढ़े अवसर

- 59 जनपदों में न्यूनतम एक मेडिकल कॉलेज क्रियाशील
- 16 जनपदों में पी.पी.पी. मॉडल पर मेडिकल कॉलेज की स्थापना प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ
- गोरखपुर और रायबरेली में एम्स का संचालन
- लखनऊ में अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी चिकित्सा विश्वविद्यालय का निर्माण प्रारम्भ
- गोरखपुर में महायोगी गुरु गोरखनाथ आयुष विश्वविद्यालय का निर्माण प्रारम्भ

शिक्षा से प्रगति, देश की उन्नति

- 'मुख्यमंत्री अभ्युदय योजना' के अंतर्गत प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के छात्रों को निःशुल्क कोचिंग सुविधा
- 1.38 लाख सरकारी स्कूलों का कार्याकल्प
- 7 नए राज्य विश्वविद्यालय की स्थापना
- 16 नए निजी विश्वविद्यालय
- 1 लाख 50 हजार से अधिक शिक्षकों/शिक्षणोत्तर कर्मियों की नियुक्ति

महिलाएं बनीं विकास में भागीदार

- 1.50 लाख महिलाओं को सरकारी नौकरी
- बालिकाओं को स्नातक तक निःशुल्क शिक्षा
- मुख्यमंत्री कन्या सुमंगला योजना से 10.01 लाख बेटियां लाभान्वित
- मुख्यमंत्री सामूहिक विवाह योजना के अंतर्गत 1.52 लाख से अधिक कन्याओं का विवाह
- 55,964 महिलाएं बैंकिंग सखी के रूप में नियुक्त
- ग्रामीण आवासीय अभिलेख (घरौनी) परिवार की महिला सदस्य के नाम
- 10 लाख स्वयं सहायता समूहों के माध्यम से 1 करोड़ महिलाओं को रोजगार
- 29 लाख 68 हजार निराश्रित महिलाओं को पेंशन

देश में सर्वाधिक एक्सप्रेस-वे, एयरपोर्ट्स एवं मेट्रो

- 4 नए एक्सप्रेस-वे
- 14,471 किमी. सड़कों का चौड़ीकरण/सुदृढ़ीकरण
- 3,49,274 किमी. सड़कों का गड्ढामुक्तिकरण तथा 15,246 किमी. नई सड़कों का निर्माण
- 5 इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट
- 8 एयरपोर्ट संचालित, 13 अन्य एयरपोर्ट व 7 हवाई पट्टी का विकास
- 10 शहरों में मेट्रो परियोजना
- डिफेंस कॉरिडोर का कार्य गतिमान

GREY LINE METRO ACCESSIBILITY

Najafgarh-Dhansa Metro stretch inaugurated



SALIENT FEATURES OF NEW METRO STRETCH

- The Dhansa Bus Stand Metro Station has been decorated with colourful artwork which beautifully captures the local culture, lifestyle and rich biodiversity of the area. DMRC has made an effort to portray the heritage and culture of the area through the artworks at its station.
- The Dhansa Bus Stand Metro Station has been given the Platinum Rating by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC). This is the highest possible rating for adherence to green building norms.
- The newly opened section of Delhi Metro will reduce burden on roads and will provide safer and comfortable public transport options in the nearby areas.
- The Dhansa Bus Stand Metro Station has been built underground and has all amenities and modern infrastructure to provide easy mobility at entry and exit.
- The Dhansa Bus Stand Metro Station is the first ever underground Metro Station of the Delhi Metro network to have an entire underground floor dedicated to parking of vehicles. The parking facility is integrated with the main station area, where vehicle users will be able to park their cars and two wheelers and then proceed to the concourse of the station directly using lifts and escalators.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
 Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday flagged off metro services on the Najafgarh-Dhansa Bus Stand stretch of metro. The inauguration of the stretch which will make the Grey Line Metro accessible to a sizeable chunk of population living in Outer Delhi.

Delhi's Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot, Ambassador of Japan in India Satoshi Suzuki and MD — DMRC Mangu Singh were present apart from other dignitaries and officials in the ceremony that was held virtually.

With the opening of this section, the Dwarka - Dhansa bus stand grey line corridor will become 6.1 kilometres long with four stations. With an interchange at Dwarka, the

grey line will provide seamless connectivity from Najafgarh and Dhansa Stand to different parts of the city. The metro connectivity to Dhansa Bus Stand will immensely benefit the residents of the interior areas around Najafgarh and Dhansa Bus Stand.

Kejriwal said, "It is a moment of great delight for all the people of Outer Delhi, especially the residents of Najafgarh. Till now, the route of the Delhi Metro would end at Delhi Gate region in Najafgarh. There are about 50 such villages in the area from where a huge number of people come to inner Delhi to work. All these people had to cross the Phirni Road Chowk to get to the Metro, which would result in a huge traffic jam at the Chowk. Now that the metro services have been extended to the Dhansa Bus Stand, people won't need to

cross the Chowk and stand in traffic. The route may be just 1.5 kms long but it is a very significant stretch for the residents. A large number of people come from Jhajjar, Haryana to work in Delhi. They too will get a lot of help from this service." "I remember how in February 2015, when I visited the region for election campaigning, people would put forth a demand. They asked us to make one more station on the stretch. We promised them that we'll get the Dhansa Station made. It was one of the first things we did when we came into power. The Delhi Government had put forth a proposal which the Centre approved, and we thank them for that. I want to congratulate the entire team of DMRC, all the officers, engineers and Shri Mangu Singh upon their success. I would also

like to thank the Centre for always supporting the Metro Projects in Delhi," the CM said. Gahlot took to Twitter to share his delight and said, "Congratulations Najafgarh! Today is very important to me for two reasons. First as Transport Minister of Delhi - Expanding the existing metro network in Delhi and second as MLA of Najafgarh - a new metro station (Dhansa Bus Stand) is being added in the Najafgarh constituency."

ANTI-DENGUE '10 HAFTE, 10 BAJE, 10 MINUTE' CAMPAIGN

Children to take part in anti-dengue campaign

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

All children of Delhi will participate this week in the '10 Hafte, 10 Baje, 10 Minute, Har Sunday Dengue Par Vaar' campaign being run by the Delhi Government against Dengue.



These children will attack dengue by checking clean water gathered in and around their houses and by calling their friends to inspire them to take part in the campaign.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal encouraged all the children to participate in this campaign vigorously and said that we have to do 10 minutes of homework every Sunday to save Delhi from dengue. He said in this homework, we have to check whether clean water has been stagnated in our houses and surroundings, if it is, then we have to drain it, change it or put oil in it. The theme of this week's campaign against Dengue of the Delhi Government is 'Children of Delhi' and 'Come On Kids, Let's Give Dengue A Kick; 10 Hafte 10 Baje 10 Minute is the trick' is the tagline. "Dear kids, get ready to fight Dengue. Let's do a 10-minute homework every Sunday to protect Delhi from

Dengue. For this, we need to check our homes and surrounding areas for any signs of stagnant water. If we do find water, let's drain it, replace it regularly or cover it with a small layer of oil. Let's also call up our friends and ask them to take part in this campaign. Come, let's save our Delhi from Dengue." Like last year, this time also the Delhi Government has started the '10 Hafte, 10 Baje, 10 Minute' campaign to eliminate dengue in Delhi. All the ministers, MLAs and officers of the Delhi Government are also taking part in the campaign and cleaning the water accumulated in their homes every Sunday. Along with this, all the citizens living in Delhi are being made aware of changing

the water of their coolers, pots, etc. every week by joining the campaign through various mediums and cleaning the accumulated water around them. We all have to work together to stop mosquito breeding. We all have to do this for 10 weeks and defeat dengue. The maximum number of dengue cases are reported every year between September 1 and November 15. Dengue mosquito breeds only in clean water. Dengue eggs are produced in clean water and those eggs turn into mosquitoes within 8 to 10 days. If we change that water before 8 days and destroy that egg, then mosquitoes will not be born. These mosquitoes cannot fly more than 200 meters. If you have dengue in your home, then you should assume that the mosquito is born nearby. Therefore, to eliminate dengue, the Delhi Government is appealing to give only 10-10 minutes to every person living in Delhi for 10 weeks. Every Delhiite can be safe from Dengue and Chikungunya if they thoroughly check the clean water stagnated in and around their house and make sure that their neighbors have also done the same in their house.

City sees 41 Covid cases

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital recorded 41 fresh cases on Friday while the positivity rate stands at 0.06 per cent, according to data shared by the city health department on Friday.

According to the report, a total of 68,624 tests - 46734 RT-PCR tests and 21,890 rapid antigen tests - were conducted a day ago, the bulletin said. The death toll due to the coronavirus infection in Delhi has increased to 25,085. The number of cumulative cases on Saturday stood at 1438469. Over 14.12 lakh patients have recovered from the virus. Delhi battled a brutal second wave of the pandemic in April-May that claimed a massive number of lives, with the issue of oxygen shortage at city hospitals across the city adding to the woes. The Government has taken steps to increase the number of hospital beds and accommodate up to 37,000 cases a day and become self-reliant in terms of oxygen supply. An estimated 7,000 ICU beds are also being added at government healthcare facilities in Shalimar Bagh, Kirari, Sarita Vihar, Sultanpuri, Raghuvver Nagar, and GTB Hospital and Chacha Nehru

PICTALK



Police officers ride motorbike in front of a wall graffiti, painted as Tokyo 2020 Paralympics medal winners athletes in New Delhi, on Saturday. PTI

C&D waste plant operator issued notice

Gurugram: Following an enquiry into the matter in which the construction and demolition (C&D) waste plant operator who had completely sublet its work to a third party, a notice has been issued by the civic body asking the company to explain why action should not be taken against it. An official of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) said its

inquiry officer had given a 'fair opportunity to the concessionaire IL&FS to present its view. "But it is a matter of regret that you failed to provide the necessary documents in the inquiry," stated the notice issued by the MCG commissioner. "During probe it found that the company gave the contract to a third party, com-

pletely flouting the contract norms. We have served the concessionaire a show-cause notice. They have sought 15 days to reply. Action will be taken as per the agreement with the concessionaire," said the officer. The report by inquiry officer Pradeep Ahlawat, MCG's joint commissioner-1, said that the third party was also illegally charging people for C&D waste

collection and transportation on behalf of the MCG. MCG said no written permission was sought from it, which is a violation of the agreement. Based on the MCG's report, the mayor had written to the commissioner to file a complaint against the concessionaire, recover the financial loss caused to the civic body and blacklist all companies involved in the alleged fraud.

2 bike-borne men open fire outside Tihar Jail official's house

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two unidentified bike-borne assailants allegedly opened fire outside the paternal house of Tihar Jail's Assistant Superintendent in outer Delhi's Alipur area. Police said that the incident occurred on Friday and a manhunt has been initiated to nab the culprits. The Assistant Superintendent, who is posted in Tihar's central jail no. 3, resides in the staff quarters inside the prison premises while his elderly parents live alone at their house in a village in Alipur area of outer Delhi. According to sources, it is suspected that the jail official had allegedly slapped a Tihar Jail inmate and the incident may have been its fallout. A senior police official said

all these aspects are being looked into and is part of the ongoing investigation. The police said the exact motive behind the incident will be ascertained with the arrest of the suspects. Rajiv Ranjan Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, (DCP), Outer-North district said that police have registered a case under IPC section of attempt to murder and Arms act. "Police teams are analysing all the CCTV footage and technical evidence. Multiple teams are working to nab the suspects in the case. The assailants fire three bullets outside the paternal house of the assistant superintendent," said police. The incident on Friday afternoon was caught on CCTV camera, police said.

NDMC launches a series of thematic activities around 'Swachhata' to celebrate 'Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Chairman, Dharmendra, on Friday launched a series of programme to celebrate 75 years of Indian Independence in the form of 'Azaadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' on theme 'Swachhata' by starting a Plog-Run Drive with morning walkers inside and surrounding areas of Nehru Park, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi here. On the occasion, he was joined by NDMC Secretary, Dr. BM Mishra, senior officers of the Public Health Department including Dr Ramesh Kumar, Dr. Shakuntala Srivastava and Dr. Gunjan Sahai and Safai Sewak along with the hundreds of morning walkers, volunteers from NGOs like WILGA and other visitors participated in the Plog-Run to make the

Swachhata movement successful. "Plastic litter such as gutka packets and packaged foods wrappers are causing extreme harm to the environment as these can't be recycled and not even picked by ragpickers," the Chairman said as he stressed on behavioral changes among people to encourage them to throw such wastes in the bins. Dr Jagdish Kaur, WILGA President felt that as Delhi's drains are heavily clogged with empty gutka/pan masala packets and food packet wrappers, the city faces huge water-logging and traffic jams problems every time there is rain. The NDMC has also organized an exhibition - "Waste to Art" - displaying products made by waste by different NGOs at "Sirjan Art Corner" at the Park to create awareness about "say no to - single use plastic" amongst the visitors.

Gurudwara Bangla Sahib ordered to shut after Covid related violation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Chanakyapuri district administration has ordered the closure of Gurudwara Bangla Sahib here for alleged violation of Covid-19 norms, prompting outgoing Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa to demand action against the officials concerned. The order by the Chanakyapuri sub divisional magistrate (SDM) was issued on September 16. The order stated that a report submitted by executive magistrate (Chanakyapuri) found that the management of Bangla Sahib Gurudwara "allowed visitors/prayers inside the Gurudwara" in violation of DDMA directions.

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24.09.2021 (Friday - 6.00 PM IST)	Closing Time of e-Registration and online EMD submission
27.09.2021 (Monday)	Online Bidding for Residential Plots (121) and Institutional Plots (76)
28.09.2021 (Tuesday)	Online Bidding for Industrial Plots (48), Group Housing Plots (07) and Built up Shops/Units (150)
29.09.2021 (Wednesday)	Online Bidding for Expandable Housing Scheme Plots (24), Commercial Plots (37), CNG/Green Fuel Sites (07) and Kiosks (36)
30.09.2021 (Thursday)	Online Bidding for Mobile Tower Sites (24) and Function Sites (24)

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The details of e-auction were also published on 15th August, 2021 in leading newspapers. Neeraj Bharati, Commissioner(LD-II)

For further details contact : Commissioner (LD-II), Room No. A/105, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023 Ph.: 011-24622670

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2 held for drunken brawl in Seemapuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested two men, for engaging in a row in drunken state that led to three people getting injured in Seemapuri of Delhi's Shahdara area. The accused identified as

Veeru (32) and Shezhad (22) were under the influence of alcohol when the incident took place on Friday night in Kalandar Colony of Seemapuri area. Police said that besides the two men, who are both neighbours, a woman was also injured in the altercation that

arose over the issue of a verbal abuse. According to a senior police official, the quarrel began when a drunk Veeru started abusing his neighbour Shezhad, who was also in an inebriated state. "Both the men got into a fight, and as the situation esca-

lated, Veeru's sister-in-law Pushpa joined in to support him, while another neighbour Meenakshi took the side of Shezhad," he said. "During the quarrel, both the men and Pushpa sustained injuries and were taken to GTB Hospital for medical treatment.

Based on our enquiry, we filed an FIR under Section 160 (punishment for committing affray) of the Indian Penal Code against the four people involved in the quarrel and arrested both Veeru and Shezhad in connection with the incident," said the senior police official.

8 drown in J'khand during 'Karma Puja' immersion

Latehar: Eight people, including seven girls, drowned at two places in Jharkhand's Latehar district on Saturday during 'Karma Puja' festivities, a senior official said.

The incidents took place at Bukru village under Shregada and another village under Shiba Panchayat in the district when they had gone to a pond for immersion after Karma Puja, a major festival in Jharkhand, Deputy Commissioner Abu Imran said.

The Deputy Development Commissioner of the district, Shekhar Verma has been asked to hold an inquiry into the drowning of the seven girls aged between 12 and 20 years at Bukru, Imran said.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren expressed shock over the incident.

"Shocked to hear about



Women immerse 'Karam Dala' on the occasion of Karma at Khokhan Pond in Dhanbad on Saturday

the death of seven girls due to drowning during 'Karam Dali' (branch of Karam tree) immersion at Shregada of Latehar district. May God grant peace to the departed souls and give strength to the bereaved families to bear the loss," Soren said in a tweet.

Commissioner, Palamu Range, Jatashankar Choudhary said the incident occurred during immersion of the 'Karam dali' and the bodies of the girls, who drowned while trying to save each other, were sent to the Latehar district hospital.

Indianisation of our legal system is need of hour: Chief Justice of India

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Chief Justice of India N V Ramana on Saturday said Indianisation of the country's legal system is the need of the hour and it is crucial to make the justice delivery system more accessible and effective.

He said Courts need to be litigant-centric, and the simplification of justice delivery should be the pressing concern.

"Very often our justice delivery poses many barriers for the common people. The working and the style of courts do not sit well with the complexities of India. Our systems, practice, rules being colonial in origin, it may not be best suited to the needs of the Indian population," Justice Ramana said.

Speaking at an event organised here to pay tributes to late Supreme Court judge Justice Mohan M Shantanagoudar, he said the

need of the hour is the "Indianisation of our legal system."

"When I say Indianisation, I mean the need to adapt to the practical realities of our society and to localise our justice delivery system. For example, parties from a rural place fighting a family dispute are usually made to feel out of place in the court; they do not understand arguments or pleadings which are mostly in English, a language alien to them," he added.

Further noting that these days judgments have become lengthy, the Chief Justice said it further complicates the position of the litigants. "For parties to understand the implication of the judgment they are forced to spend more money. Courts need to be litigant-centric as they are the ultimate beneficiaries. The simplification of justice delivery should be our pressing concern."

Newly-appointed Gujarat Ministers take charge

Ahmedabad: Several newly-appointed Ministers of the Gujarat Government on Saturday took charge of their offices at Sachivalay, with some choosing an auspicious time and others coming with kin for blessings.

Among the ministers who took charge were Kanu Desai, Jitu Vaghani, Rushikesh Patel, Raghavji Patel, Naresh Patel, Harsh Sanghani, Brijesh Merja, Kirtisinh Vaghela, Manisha Vakil and Vinod Moradiya.

Many of them began their ministerial stint with meetings with officials, with Vaghani, minister of education as well as science and technology, approving Rs 7.83 crore as financial aid for 906 student beneficiaries.

Finance Minister Kanu Desai met officials of the state electricity board, and said he would "take forward the work carried out by previous CMs like Narendrabhai (Modi), Anandiben (Patel) and Vijay Rupani". Health and Family Welfare and Medical Education Minister Rushikesh Patel, after taking charge, said the Government would continue to push for free Covid-19 vaccination.

Patel, who is also in charge of the water resources and supply ministry, said work will continue to ensure tap water is made available in every household in the state.

Tribal Affairs minister Naresh Patel assumed office by bringing a priest for prayers, while minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Pradiip Parmar took charge on an auspicious time after seeking the blessings of his parents.

Kerala Gov, CM, leaders condole demise of noted journalist KM Roy

Kochi: Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Opposition leader VD Satheesan, Union Minister V Muraleedharan and other senior leaders condole the demise of senior journalist KM Roy and said his contribution towards ensuring the rights of journalists will be long remembered.

Noted journalist and columnist Roy (84) died at his residence here on Saturday, family sources said.

The body will be laid to rest at St Thomas Church on Sunday and the Kerala government has issued orders to accord a state funeral in his honour.

The state protocol officer directed the Ernakulam District Collector to make arrangements for presenting the State honours to the veteran journalist.

'About 1,714 human trafficking cases registered in 2020'

New Delhi: About 1,714 cases of human trafficking were registered by the government's anti-human trafficking units in 2020 with sexual exploitation for prostitution, forced labour and domestic servitude being the top reasons behind it, according to the NCRB data.

The data also showed that the case conviction rate of human trafficking was 10.6 per cent. Among states, Maharashtra and Telangana recorded the highest number of such cases at 184 each, followed by Andhra Pradesh at 171, Kerala at 166, Jharkhand at 140 and Rajasthan at 128.

The conviction for cases of

human trafficking was recorded at 0 in seven states, while the highest conviction rate of such cases was reported from Tamil Nadu at 66 per cent followed by Delhi at 40 per cent.

The NCRB, in its report, said it started collecting data on human trafficking cases from these Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) across the country since

As per data provided by states/UTs, 1,714 cases of human trafficking have been registered by AHTUs during 2020.

According to the report, 2,278 human trafficking cases were registered in 2018 and 2,260 in 2019, respectively

Min should promote 'Ayush Aahar' to help save youth from ills of junk food: Sonowal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister for Ayush Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday said that the Ministry should promote 'Ayush Aahar' throughout the country to save the youth from the ills of junk food.

Sonowal visited the Central Councils Common Building Complex (CCCBC) in Janakpuri, where he interacted with officers and scientists of five research councils and two national commissions that come under the Ayush ministry.

He said that that the Ministry should promote 'Ayush Aahar' throughout the country. This will also help save the youth from the ills of junk food, Sonowal said. The ministry is promoting Ayush-based diet and lifestyle and is working in convergence with the women and child development ministry in the Poshan Abhiyaan (nutrition campaign) to realise the ultimate goal of 'Suposhit Bharat' (nourished India).

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in convergence with Ayush ministry has also released draft guidelines on 'Ayush Aahar', which will facilitate standardisation.

Goa's entire eligible population to get fully vaccinated by end of Oct: CM

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

Panaji: Goa would become the first state in the country to achieve the target of fully vaccinating its entire eligible population by October 31, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant expressed confidence on Saturday.

He was speaking while welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi before his interaction with healthcare workers and vaccination beneficiaries in Goa via video link to mark the first dose vaccination to the entire eligible population in the state.

By October 31, Goa would be the first state in the country to completely vaccinate the eligible population with the second dose.

Chardham Yatra begins

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

Chardham Yatra — the pilgrimage to four revered Himalayan shrines in Uttarakhand — began on Saturday following COVID-19 protocol, after remaining suspended for months due to the second wave of the pandemic.

Devotees began arriving at the temples from nearby villages early on Saturday morning to offer prayers with all arrangements in place to ensure their compliance with the yatra SOP, Devasthanam Board Media in-charge Harish Gaud said.

A tab was kept on visiting pilgrims through CCTV cameras to ensure there was no violation of COVID-19 protocol. The pilgrims were not allowed to get into the sanctum sanctorum of the temples -- Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri. They wore masks and maintained physical distancing.

The delayed yatra will go on till mid-November, Gaud said.

Devotees and traders whose livelihood is connected with Chardham Yatra were excited on the resumption of the pilgrimage. The state government was under great pressure from them to start the pilgrimage as early as possible.



Though the portals of the temples opened for regular prayers in May itself, they had been kept out of bounds for pilgrims for safety reasons.

However, pilgrimage to the Himalayan shrines began on Saturday after the Uttarakhand High Court vacated its stay on starting the yatra with strict adherence to COVID-19 restrictions.

By 4 pm, 419 people had visited Badrinath and Kedarnath while mostly locals had visited Gangotri and Yamunotri temples, the Devasthanam Board official said. The Board has issued 19,491 e-passes for Chardham Yatra by Saturday evening, he said.

Meanwhile, the portals of famous Himalayan Sikh shrine of Hemkund Sahib in Chamoli district were also opened on Saturday for devotees.

Kabul drone strike killed 10 civilians...

From Page 1

"Our investigation now concludes that the strike was a tragic mistake," he admitted.

The Pentagon had maintained that at least one ISIS-K facilitator and three civilians were killed in what Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Mark Milley had previously called a "righteous strike" on the compound in Kabul last month.

However, the strike must be considered in the context of the on-ground situation at the Hamid Karzai International Airport following the ISIS-K attack that killed 13 US soldiers and more than 100 Afghan civilians. Also, a substantial body of intelligence had indicated the imminence of another attack, McKenzie said.

He said that having thoroughly reviewed the findings of the probe and supporting analysis, he is convinced that as many as 10 civilians, including up to seven children, were tragically killed in that drone strike.

"It was a mistake, and I offer my sincere apology. As the combatant commander, I am fully responsible for this strike and this tragic outcome," he told reporters.

"Moreover, we now assess that it is unlikely that the vehicle and those who died were associated with ISIS-K or were a direct threat to US forces. I offer my profound condolences to the family and friends of those who were killed. This strike was taken in the earnest belief that it would prevent an imminent threat to our forces and the evacuees at the airport," he said.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin also apologised for the errant strike. "We apologise, and we will endeavour to learn from this horrible mistake," he said in a statement.

Austin also offered condolences to the family of Zamara Ahmadi, the driver of the car targeted in the strike.

Ram Lala jalabhishek: Water...

From Page 1

"Indian culture is very rich and there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and religion in India," he said. Addressing the gathering, Rai said procuring water from across the world is a historic moment. "In Ayodhya, there is a place called 'Saptasagar'. It is believed that water from all oceans of the world was brought during the coronation of Lord Ram in Treta Yuga. And now when his temple is being made at his birth place, water from all the oceans of the world has again been brought. It is a sentimental issue for me," he said. Rai also said the first phase of the foundation of the Ram Temple has been completed. Jolly said during the Covid pandemic, when people could not step out of their homes, his organisation procured water from 115 nations across the world. He also said people from various religions, including Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jews, and Buddhists of the world contributed to this cause.

Jolly said the water was stored in 115 small pots mentioning their respective countries.

Sonu Sood, aides evaded...

From Page 1

"During the course of search at the premises of the actor and his associates, incriminating evidence pertaining to tax evasion has been found.

"The main modus operandi followed by the actor had been to route his unaccounted income in the form of bogus unsecured loans from many bogus entities," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) claimed in a statement.

It added that, so far, use of 20 such entries has been found and the providers of which, on examination, have "accepted" on oath to have given "bogus" accommodation entries (transaction entries in accounts).

"They have accepted to have issued cheques in lieu of cash. There have been instances where professional receipts have been camouflaged as loans in the books of accounts for the purpose of evasion of tax," the policy-making body for the tax department said. These bogus loans, it said, have been used for "making investments and acquiring properties." The total amount of tax evaded unearthed so far amounts to more than Rs 20 crore, the statement and official sources said about Sood. It also talked about his charity organisation that was established during the Covid-19 outbreak last year.

'Humiliated' Captain resigns

From Page 1

Political circles in Punjab are rife with similar speculation though it is unlikely that the entire Cabinet in Punjab would be changed, but sources do not rule out a major surgical operation to weed out the non-performers.

On the sudden change of leadership, Congress sources said that its internal reports suggested that there was an undercurrent against the sitting Chief Minister for being inaccessible to the party workers and even MLAs and Ministers. "Going to elections with this sort of an upheaval where everyone was against someone (Capt Amarinder) it was not prudent to leave things (elections) to chance," said a senior party leader. He added that anti-incumbency is a big factor in Punjab where Governments are not repeated (except Akalis once) and taking corrective measures in line with the demands and wishes of the MLAs, was a practical political solution.

A party MLA added that the Raja of Patiala was busy enjoying life in the sere Siswan Dam area near Chandigarh where he lives in his farm house and had cut off himself from the ground realities of grassroots politics. In the CLP meeting, as expected and as per the traditions of Congress, MLAs authorised party president Sonia Gandhi to pick a new CLP leader (Chief Minister) with a resolution to this effect being passed unanimously in a meeting of the hurriedly convened "emergency" meeting.

Central observer Ajay Maken said 78 of 80 party MLAs were present in the meeting. He said another resolution praising and thanking Capt Amarinder for his contribution towards Punjab and the Congress was also unanimously passed at the meeting. "We expect that the party will continue to get guidance from Amarinder Singh," he said. Amongst the top contenders in the race for becoming the interim Chief Minister till the elections, former State Congress chief Sunil Jakhar tops the list. A staunch loyalist of Capt Amarinder till recent months, he changed track when he sensed the brewing resentment against the CM amongst the MLAs and silently became neutral. He was replaced by Navjot Singh Sidhu two months ago in July. If Jakhar is chosen, Congress would go with both -- a Jat Sikh and a Hindu -- into the polls, bringing in the caste and community equation in the Sikh majority State.

Supriyo joins TMC...

From Page 1

Replying to posers on the reasons behind his quitting the party that he joined after being "inspired" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Supriyo said, "I knew that questions will be asked as to why I left the party or whether it had anything to do with my losing the ministerial job. I thought some encouragement would come my way after seven years of hard work I had put in for the people and the party." When asked whether he would resign the Asansol parliamentary seat, he said, "Obviously I would resign in conversation with my leadership. I will play by the rule book and ethics book." He later said he would go to Delhi in a couple of days where he would tender his resignation to the Lok Sabha Speaker.

On why he joined a party whose policy and whose leadership he had been criticising all through he said, "It all happened all of a sudden. I was specified in a matter of four days when I met Derek in connection with the admission of my daughter. Later, following some incidental conversations a proposal came and I was offered huge opportunity to work by Mamata Didi and Abhishek. I will remain grateful to them."

On whether he will campaign for the TMC at Bhawanipore, he said, "Mamata Banerjee does not need me to campaign for her. Notwithstanding if she wants me to go there I definitely will." Incidentally, the singer-turned-politician was listed by his earlier party among the 20 star campaigners --- against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee --- in the high-profile Bhawanipore Assembly by-elections. Senior TMC parliamentarian Saugato Roy said, "The process of BJP's disintegration has started. There house will go dry as more people will desert them in days to come." His other party colleagues said "about 20-25 BJP MLAs are in touch with us and may join us soon." As State saffron leaders took time to digest what they call "bolt from the blue," BJP spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said, "It is a clear act of revenge. It just because he was removed from the

Ministry he joined the TMC. There are some people who develop a lust for power after tasting it. Babul Supriyo is one of them." His statement was seconded by former Bengal BJP president Rahul Sinha who said, "Babul was treated well in the party and was always accorded high status. Still he left it. If it is not for power then for what it is. It is unfortunate."

Amarinder...

From Page 1

Capt Amarinder claimed that he was well aware of all the games his political rivals were playing with him all this time. "They have been doing all this as they want to be the Chief Minister. I am aware of their game. This game has been going on since long," he said.

Expressing displeasure with the party high command over the turn of events that forced him to tender his resignation, Capt Amarinder said that he had already asked the party chief Sonia Gandhi to "relieve" him but the high command asked him to continue.

"I had told the party president Sonia Gandhi. Not today. But three-four weeks back when I met her, seeking to relieve me from this charge telling her that this won't be possible with Sidhu pulling right and me pulling left. I told them that in this way the party would split. Rawat ji was also there. But she asked me to carry on. Why they took this decision now, I don't know," he said.

WON'T ACCEPT SIDHU AS PUNJAB CM EVER

In a bitter fight with the Punjab Congress chief for over a year now, Capt Amarinder declared that he would "not agree with Navjot Sidhu as mukhyamantri". Slamming Punjab Congress president, who had led a fight to dethrone him, Capt Amarinder said that Sidhu is a complete disaster as chief minister frontrunner for the state. "He is a total disaster. He wasn't able to run one Ministry, will he be able to run the Government? How can he handle whole of Punjab?" said Capt Amarinder, adding that he would ruin Punjab if he becomes the chief minister of the state. Capt Amarinder said that he "knows his (Sidhu's) capability. He has no capability."

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No. Dip/J-3039-P/21 Dated :- 18-09-2021

Centre cautions...

From Page 1

The Centre also asked States to accelerate the speed and coverage of vaccination and take necessary measures for the prevention and control of dengue and vector-borne diseases.

States were also guided on the control of Serotype-II Dengue in 11 States, including Haryana.

Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, V K Paul, member (Health), NITI Aayog, chief secretaries, additional chief secretaries (Health), principal secretaries (Health), municipal commissioners, and district collectors attended the meeting.

"We hope that with increased availability of vaccine doses, the pace of vaccination will be maintained.

There is no room for complacency. There is a strict need to enforce Covid Appropriate Behaviour (CAB)," Gauba said.

Drawing examples from other countries that saw multiple peaks of Covid-19, the Government expressed concern over certain pockets in the country reporting high test positivity and advised States to undertake granular analysis of their Covid trajectory, ramp up their health infrastructure, undertake the stocking of essential medicine and augment human resources at the earliest, to meet any potential surge in cases.

Bhushan also highlighted the emerging challenge of Serotype-II Dengue in 11 States which is associated with more cases and more complications than other forms of the disease.

He suggested the States undertake steps like early detection of cases, operationalisation of fever helplines, adequate stocking of testing kits, larvicides and medicines, deployment of rapid response teams for prompt investigation and necessary public health action like fever survey, contact tracing, vector control, alerting blood banks for maintaining adequate stocks of blood and blood components, especially platelets.

"In view of the forthcoming festival season, States were directed to ensure all necessary precautions and effective enforcement for the avoidance of mass gathering and congested closed spaces. Existing guidelines regarding malls, local markets, and places of worship are to be strictly followed," said the Government in a statement.

Whopping 80 cr Covid vaccines...

From Page 1

The country took 24 days to reach 40 crore from 30 crore doses and then 20 more days to cross the 50-crore vaccination mark on August 6, the Ministry said.

It took 19 more days to go past the 60-crore mark and took only 13 days to reach 70 crore from 60 crore on September 7, it said. The total number of doses administered crossed the 75-crore mark on September 13.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease is 3,26,32,222, while the case fatality rate has been recorded at 1.33 percent, it said. The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the vaccination drive has exceeded 79.42 crore, according to the Ministry.

Disruptions of proceedings contempt of House: Naidu



PNS ■ NEW DELHI



In a first of its kind observation by any presiding officer of the legislatures in the country and in the context of rising disruptions, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday unequivocally held that disruptions of proceedings amount to contempt of the House and disruptors can't claim it as their privilege to do so.

Delivering the second Ram Jethmalani Memorial Lecture on "Is disruption of parliamentary proceedings an MP's privilege and/or a facet of parliamentary democracy?" Naidu spoke at length on the intentions of various rules and other provisions requiring high standards of behaviour of MPs in the House and the scheme of privileges and argued that disruptions negate the objective of

effective performance by individual members and of the House collectively.

Speaking on disruptions in the Parliament, Naidu informed that the productivity of Rajya Sabha is being quantified since 1978 and during the first 19 years till 1996, the productivity of the House has been over 100% and has begun to decline since then. While the House clocked annual productivity of over 100% during 16 of these 19 years, it was so only in two years in 1998 and 2009 during the next 24 years and not even once in the last 12 years.

The Chairman further said that the productivity of Rajya Sabha during 2004-14 has been about 78% and it declined to about 65% since then. Of the 11 sessions that Shri Naidu presided over, four of them

clocked low productivity of 6.80%, 27.30%, 28.90% and 29.55% and during the year 2018, the Rajya Sabha recorded the lowest ever productivity of 35.75% under the impact of disruptions, he stated.

During the last monsoon session (254th), the Rajya Sabha lost more than 70% of the scheduled time including over 76% of the valuable Question Hour time, the Chairman noted.

Since the Rajya Sabha came into being in 1952, only 10 members were suspended for misconduct inside the House during the first 57 years while 18 were also suspended in the last 11 years including 9 in the last one year.

Giving this information, Naidu noted that these sus-

pensions do not reflect the gravity of the situation since such actions were not taken on all occasions for various reasons.

Seeking to answer in the negative, if disruption can be claimed as a privilege by MPs, Chairman Naidu argued that the Rules of the House, the Code of Conduct, the detailed Parliamentary Etiquette to be complied with by the Members of Rajya Sabha were clearly aimed at ensuring a high standard of behavior of members inside the House befitting the solemnity of proceedings of the House while the scheme of privileges granted to the Members are intended to enable effective performance of the Members individually and of the House collectively.

He asserted that accordingly, disruptions negate the principle of effective functioning of the House besides being against the wishes of the people.

Earlier in his speech, Naidu described Jethmalani as a rebel and radical thinker who brought innovation to legal inquiry and opened new vistas of interpretation and opportunities in every major case he argued during his 77 year long and successful career as a leading lawyer.

Unforgettable moment: Modi on 2.50 cr shots on his b'day

Panaji: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said it was an unforgettable and emotional moment for him as over 2.50 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses were administered in the country on his 71st birthday.

"With your efforts, India has created a world record of administering over 2.5 crore vaccines in a single day, a feat not even the most powerful nations have been able to achieve," PM Modi said during an interaction via video link with healthcare workers and beneficiaries in Goa.

"We saw how the nation kept looking at CoWIN dashboard yesterday. Over 15 lakh vaccinations per hour, over 26,000 vaccinations every minute took place yesterday. Over 425 people were administered vaccines each second," he said.

PM Modi said he appreciates all doctors, medical staff, and people in administration in the country for this effort. The huge effort and skilled manpower needed to accomplish this task show the might of India, he added.

"Birthdays come and go but I have been away from such

things. But yesterday was emotional for me. It has become an unforgettable occasion for me," PM Modi said.

Without naming any party, PM Modi said "a political party" developed fever after over 2.5 crore vaccine doses were administered on his birthday.

"People speak of fever as a side effect of vaccines, but a political party experienced fever after 2.5 crore vaccines were administered on my birthday," he said.

PM Modi praised Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and his government for overcoming challenges in accomplishing 100 per cent vaccination of the first dose of covid vaccines in the coastal state.

Goa is on way to becoming a leading state in India as far as vaccination is concerned, PM Modi said.

"Goa is playing important role in the success of the world's largest and fastest vaccination drive - 'Sabko vaccine, muft vaccine'. In the past few months, Goa fought bravely against heavy rainfall, cyclone and flood, under the leadership of Pramod Sawant," he said.

"Birthdays come and go but I have been away from such



PM should celebrate his b'day daily, Cong takes a dig

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi should celebrate his birthday every day as some BJP-ruled States "performed" on the day and vaccinated many times the daily average, the Congress said on Saturday.

The party took a dig at Modi a day after India achieved the highest record of 2.5 crore Covid-19 vaccinations on a single day.

The Prime Minister's reaction came after senior Congress leader P Chidambaram tweeted asking

why we had to wait until the PM's birthday. "Happy and grateful that 2.5 crore vaccinations were administered yesterday But why did we have to wait until the PM's birthday? Suppose the PM's birthday was on December 31 then would the 2.5 crore vaccinations have been done only on the last day of the year? Vaccination is not like cutting a cake on a birthday," he tweeted. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said this is the pace of vaccination the country needs.

all people are vaccinated, tourists will also feel safe and

flock to Goa in more numbers, he said. PTI

Taliban trying to sell leftover US weapons to overcome fin crisis

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Facing financial crunch, Taliban is negotiating with African countries to supply leftover American weapons. In lieu of the weapons, the outfit is seeking payments in diamonds to trade the same through white channels in the international markets.

The African diamonds are globally reputed to be of high quality and the Taliban is aiming to offset the financial crisis amid pending recognition of its regime from the international market and a staring drought in Afghanistan.

The crisis is such that the Taliban has started selling off seized properties of the political and ideological opponents. A number of such properties have already been sold off to the Pakistanis based in Kandahar. Several properties in other cities are also on the block.

In view of the financial mess the country is going through, the Taliban has sought aid from a number of countries like Germany and Iran as also from the international community.

In addition, the Taliban has already invigorated the drug cartel in collusion with the Pakistani military-ISI syndicate to the Al Qaeda affiliates in Africa like the Boko Haram and Al Shabab.

Founder President of the Afghanistan Republic Salvation Front and counter-terrorism expert Ajmal Sohail

said, "Taliban is essentially a terrorist or an insurgent organization that has been involved in drugs trade and smuggling of antiques and has also relied on funding from the Sheikhs of the Gulf countries. But such funds cannot sustain a government at the helm in Kabul. Running a government is an altogether different ballgame than operating a guerilla organization. Having realized the constraints of governance, the Taliban is already amplifying messages of an inclusive government and respect of human rights, all of which are aimed at seeking recognition for its regime and subsequently gaining access to international funding."

Meanwhile, attacks on Pakistani troops continue in Pashtun dominated areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) reportedly attacked a Pakistani military post in Bajaur late last night.

Quoting sources on the ground, Sohail said several Pak soldiers were killed and wounded in the attack by the TTP.

A spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban said in a statement that they had targeted a Pakistani military post in the Nawagai area of Bajaur, killing and wounding the militants.

The TTP is a breakaway faction of the Afghan Taliban active in Pashtun dominated areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

India inks ₹230 cr deal with France to buy phased out Mirages



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to maintain operational readiness and increase the life of its Mirage jets, the IAF has signed an agreement with France to buy phased out Mirages flown by its air force. The deal is worth over ₹ 230 crores and the airframes of these planes will be brought to India in containers.

At present, India has a fleet of 50 Mirage planes procured in 1985. These versatile planes were used in the Balakot air strikes against terrorist hide outs in 2019.

All these planes are now in mid-life upgrade and the acquisition of the phased Mirages will ensure seamless availability of spares, sources

said here on Saturday. Moreover, this procurement will make sure maintenance cycle of these jets is adhered to thereby prolonging their operational life.

Incidentally, the IAF had inked a similar pact some years ago and bought phased out Mirages from France. The Mirage fleet is based in Gwalior.

France is in the process of switching over to Rafale jets and has phased most of its Mirages.

The 36-jet deal with India for Rafales will be completed next year with the last batch of two planes arriving here. The IAF has placed these jets in two bases including Ambala in north and Hashimara in West Bengal in the east.

Tokyo Paralympics-2020

Grand Felicitation

of Paralympic Medal Winners & Participants

Chief Guest

Sh. M. Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President

Presided over by

Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

August Presence

S. Sandeep Singh

Minister of State, Sports and Youth Affairs, Haryana

Date - 19th September, 2021 ; Gurugram

Time - 3:15 pm

Please Scan QR Code to join the programme

<p>GOLD MEDAL</p> <p>Sumit Antil</p> <p>Men's Javelin</p>	<p>GOLD MEDAL</p> <p>Manish Narwal</p> <p>Shooting</p>	<p>SILVER & BRONZE MEDAL</p> <p>Singhraj Adhana</p> <p>Shooting</p>	<p>SILVER MEDAL</p> <p>Yogesh Kathunia</p> <p>Men's Discus Throw</p>	<p>BRONZE MEDAL</p> <p>Harvinder Singh</p> <p>Archery</p>
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Ultras looking for soft targets: J&K Police chief

Srinagar: Militants are looking for soft targets in order to create disturbance, Jammu and Kashmir Police chief Dilbag Singh said on Saturday as he asserted that every attempt of anti-national elements to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere in the union territory would be dealt with firmly.

The DGP's comments came a day after a civilian and a policeman were shot dead in separate incidents in Kulgam district.

Singh visited Kulgam in south Kashmir and Handwara area of Kupwara in north Kashmir where he led officers and relatives in paying floral tributes to Bantu Sharma and sub-inspector Arshid Ahmad Mir. While Sharma was killed on Friday, Mir was shot dead in Khanjar area of the city on September 12.

The DGP also chaired officers' meetings to review the security situation in these districts and directed the

officers to keep a strict watch on the suspicious elements and overground workers (OGWs) of militant outfits who are providing any kind of support to terrorist activities, a police spokesman said.

Senior officers of police, Army and CRPF were present in the meetings. He said Singh directed the officers to revisit the security plans as terrorists in order to create disturbance are looking for soft targets and stressed on counter strategies and preventive measures.

The DGP emphasised the officers to remain extra alert and ordered a series of counter measures to prevent incidents like the killings of a civilian and a cop in Kulgam.

Singh said protecting the lives of people is prime concern and every attempt of anti-national elements to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere in the UT would be dealt with firmly.

The police chief directed the offi-

cers to intensify the operations against terrorists and terror support networks and stressed that terrorists involved in Friday's killings should be brought to justice very soon.

The DGP directed the officers to augment the security of vulnerable targets and places and emphasised on putting in use the latest technology in monitoring the movement of suspicious elements.

Reiterating the importance of maintaining close synergy between the J&K Police and other agencies to meet the security challenges in the UT, Singh said the killing of infiltrators in the recent past at various border areas are the indicators that Pakistan and its agencies are making continuous attempts to disturb peace by pushing terrorists here.

He stressed upon the officers to maintain alertness on the borders and the hinterland to check the movement of anti-peace elements. **PTI**

Terrorists attack security forces in Srinagar, no casualty reported

Srinagar: Militants fired at a security forces' party in Noorbhagh locality here on Saturday but there was no loss of life, police said.

"A small team of Police while laying cordon came under fire from #terrorists in Noorbhagh #Srinagar," the Kashmir Zone Police said on its official Twitter handle.

Police said while the militants managed to escape, they left behind some arms.

"Seems terrorists managed to escape after dropping their #weapons 01 pistol & 01 AK 47," they said. **PTI**



Way to Delhi goes via Uttar Pradesh: Akhilesh

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The way to Delhi goes via Uttar Pradesh, said Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav stressing that the upcoming State Assembly elections are crucial to restore democracy, secularism and brotherhood.

The former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister also said the challenge before the media is to maintain objectivity and transparency as strong journalism leads to strong democracy.

"The way to Delhi goes via Uttar Pradesh, hence, the upcoming elections in the politically significant state holds importance to restore democracy, secularism and brotherhood, the hallmarks of

our Constitution," he said.

Yadav once again claimed that his party will win 400 of 403 Assembly seats in the Assembly polls.

He also alleged that "a section of the media is creating perceptions and setting narratives to earn handsome revenue".

"Print media in particular is facing a big challenge to maintain fair news dissemination without bothering about revenue in the present scenario," he said.

Today, like political parties, the media also stands a "big challenge" to maintain objectivity and transparency without any "bias" during the upcoming UP Assembly polls so that people know the truth, he said.



People walk past a wall mural on Covid awareness in Chennai on Saturday

DGCA grants aerodrome licence to Chipi Airport

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Less than a month ahead of the launch of the flight operations at newly developed Chipi Airport in coastal Konkan region, Messrs IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt. Ltd., a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd. has received an Aerodrome License from the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Armed with the Aerodrome License, the Company can now go ahead and launch flight operations from newly developed Chipi Airport in Sindhudurg district of coastal Konkan region, from October 7, 2021 as planned earlier.

There was an informal announcement earlier that

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray would formally throw open the Chipi airport for air traffic on October 7. Initially, intra-state flights would be operated from this airport. Later on, the Chipi airport would offer inter-state connectivity to Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and a couple of other states.

Announcing the grant of an Aerodrome License to Messrs IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt. Ltd by the DGCA, a company spokesperson said: "The licence authorises the Aerodrome to be used as regular place of landing and departure to all persons on equal terms and conditions by aircraft requiring specifications of runway and associated facilities including granted exemptions equal to or less

than those indicated in the Aerodrome Manual."

While commenting on the occasion, Chairman & Managing Director of the Company Virendra D. Mhaikar said: "We are very happy to achieve yet another milestone in the current year and see the airport receive licence to operate after successful completion. With a concession period of over 90 years and a compelling regional proposition, it offers meaningful avenues of growth."

"We express our sincere gratitude to all Authorities and Stakeholders for extending their valuable cooperation and support in bringing up this new facility. We now look forward to opening the facility for airline operators and the general public soon," Mhaikar said.

Sindhudurg Airport with the cost outlay of approx. Rs.800 Crores and concession period of above 90 years is the first of its kind in the South Konkan Region, which is aimed at establishing and enhancing air connectivity of the region with Western Maharashtra, Mumbai, southern States Mumbai and subsequently to all regions of the country.

The airport has a runway of 2500 metre length and 45 metre width, which can be extended by another 1,000 metres. The airport can handle up to 400 passengers or two flights per hour with an estimated annual capacity over a million passengers.

The airport can handle aircraft like A-320 and B-737 which would give a huge fillip to tourism in Konkan, known

for its long and picturesque coastline, dazzling beaches, big and small rivers, creeks, abundant greenery and natural beauty, ancient temples, sea and land forts, a rich cultural heritage, unique lifestyle and major historical landmarks.

"The Airport will not only generate the passenger traffic, but also it will be a boon for economic development of the region as it will facilitate and boost cargo transportation, generate direct as well as an indirect employment and other business opportunities for the local people," Mhaikar said.

"The airport has potential to become a cargo hub of the Western Region as there is ample space for handling the Cargo; and is expandable to meet the future growing needs," Mhaikar added.

Kerala to reopen schools from November 1

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Schools in Kerala would be reopened on November 1, after 18 months of Covid-19 induced lock down. This was decided in the review meeting convened by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday.

November 1 is the anniversary of the formation of the State of Kerala. The chief minister has instructed the authorities that primary schools and 10th, 11th and 12th standard classes should start functioning from November 1 and the remaining classes to be re-opened by November 15.

Stringent measures are being taken by the Department of Health to ensure that the children are fully protected from Covid-19 attack. The State continues to be under the spell of the pandemic as 19,

325 out of the 1.21 lakh persons tested on Saturday were diagnosed with Covid-19. The Test Positivity Rate as on Saturday was 15.96 per cent while 143 patients succumbed to the pandemic.

Though the situation in the State is far from satisfactory, the Kerala Government is going ahead with the reopening of schools and educational institutions. The review meeting held on Saturday decided not to allow dining in hotels and consumption of spirits in bars or pubs.

The Kerala State Beverages Corporation, the State Government owned liquor outlets have made arrangements so that consumers could buy the spirits on line which would bring down the sufferings of the tipplers who had to stand in queues for hours.

Covid: 889 new cases, 14 deaths in K'taka

Bengaluru: Karnataka on Saturday recorded 889 new Covid-19 cases and 14 deaths, taking the infection count to 29,67,083 and death toll to 37,587, the health department said.

The day also saw 1,080 discharges, pushing the total number of recoveries to 29,13,713.

Of the fresh cases, 263 were from Bengaluru Urban, as the city saw 222 discharges and 6 deaths.

Active cases in the state stood at 15,755. While the positivity rate for the day stood at 0.63 per cent, case fatality rate (CFR) was at 1.57 per cent.

Six deaths were reported from Bengaluru Urban, two each from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi, followed by others.

Apart from Bengaluru Urban, three other districts accounted for the maximum number of fresh infections today- Dakshina Kannada 133, Udupi 86 and Mysuru 74. **PTI**

PORNOGRAPHY CONTENT CASE

Raj Kundra seeks bail, court to hear plea tomorrow

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Three days after the Crime Branch sleuths of the Mumbai Police filed a comprehensive supplementary chargesheet against him in the alleged pornography content case, Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty's husband and businessman Raj Kundra on Saturday moved a bail application before a city court.

Kundra's bail application -- filed through his lawyer Prashant Patil -- is expected to come up for hearing on Monday.

Kundra, whose earlier bail applications have been rejected, has told the court that after the first chargesheet was filed against nine other accused in the case, eight were released on bail. He went on to seek bail on grounds of parity with the other accused already released on bail.

Kundra has made a case for his bail by saying in his application that since the Mumbai Police had already filed a charge-sheet, it was clear that the investigations against him were over and that he was now entitled for

bail. Among other things, he has told the court that he was associated with a company which owns the apps, HotShot and Bollyfame for only 10 months.

Kundra, who was arrested on the night of July 19 in connection with a complaint registered by the Crime Branch in 2021, has been booked under Sections 292, 293 (sale of obscene material) under the Indian Penal Code, Sections 66E, 67, 67A (transmission of sexually explicit material) under the Information Technology Act and provisions of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act.

Kundra, who lives in Mumbai with his wife Shilpa Shetty and two children, had earlier told the court that there was no evidence to link him against the HotShot App and was being made a 'scapegoat'. He had submitted to the court that he had been falsely implicated in the case while the Cyber Cell was making an attempt to connect him with the crime.

Kundra, who is the founder Viaan Industries Ltd, and his United

Kingdom-based brother-in-law Pradeep Bakshi, the Chairman of Kenrin Group, London, have been named masterminds of the porn content racket.

In April this year, the police had filed its first charge-sheet in the case against nine persons originally accused. After subsequent investigations, the police arrested two more accused, including Kundra.

Earlier, nine persons had been arrested. They comprised television actress Gehna Vashisht (32) Yasmin Khan (40) Monu Joshi (28) Pratibha Nalavade (33) Atif Ahmed (24), Dipankar Khasnavis (38), Bhanusurya Thakur (26) Tanvir Hashmi (40) and Umesh Kamat (39).

The HotShots app --- described as the "world's first 18+ app" showcasing some of the hottest models and celebs globally in exclusive photos, short films and hot videos (implying soft-to-hard porn) -- was removed from mobile platforms. Similarly, Apple and Google have removed the app because of the pornographic content in it. On his part, 46-year-old Kundra has denied any involvement

and has claimed that he had sold the "Hotshots" app to Pradip Bakshi. However, the police said Mr Kundra was kept in the loop about the finances of the app.

The two Kundra-linked firms -- Viaan and Kendrin -- made available porn content on mobile apps, offering subscriptions akin to the mainstream OTT platforms, advertise them on social media, all of which were illegal as pornography in any form is banned in India.

The laws against publishing and transmitting "obscene material" are considered illegal in the country, while watching pornography in private is legal.

The modus operandi involved in the production and circulation of pornographic films was: the porn films were allegedly shot in India, transferred using WeTransfer to the UK and released as paid mobile apps there.

The police said that Kundra had allegedly also set up a WhatsApp group on which matters relating to the production, distribution and selling of Hotshots clips were discussed.

Scribe assaulted during temple demolition protest in Mysuru

Mysuru: A journalist from an Urdu daily was allegedly assaulted by some persons protesting against the demolition of a temple in Mysuru, police said on Saturday.

The incident took place when Mohammed Safdar Kaiser, associated with Kausar news, was reportedly recording the speech of Hindu Jagaran Vedike leader Jagadish Karanth at the protest site on Thursday. They allegedly asked him to delete the video he had recorded despite him telling them he was a journalist and covering the event, police sources said.

Police personnel present at the spot rushed to rescue him and he was taken inside a room near the Kote Anjaneya Swamy temple near the

Mysuru palace premises, they said.

While Khaiser and a few journalists alleged that he was manhandled, the protesters claimed that they mistook him for an 'unknown' person trying to record proceedings at the protest venue. The Mysuru District Journalists Association has written to the city police commissioner, seeking action against the culprits.

The scribe has also approached the police with a complaint demanding action against those who allegedly assaulted him.

The protesters were opposing the demolition of an "illegally" constructed temple in Mysuru's Nanjangud recently by the administration. **PTI**

Mumbai: Security guard held for sexually harassing 11-year-old girl

Mumbai: A security guard has been arrested for allegedly sexually harassing a 11-year-old girl of the housing society where he worked for over a month in the eastern suburb of Kanjurmarg here, police said on Saturday.

The matter came to light when the victim's father lodged a complaint with the police on Friday after she confided in her parents about the harassment, an official said.

The 29-year-old accused, a resident of Hanuman Gully in Kanjurmarg, had allegedly been harassing the girl since August 15, he said.

A case has been registered under section 354(A) (assault or criminal force to a woman intending to outrage her modesty) and relevant provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the official said.

The accused was produced before a court, which remanded him to police custody till September 22, he added. **PTI**

Teen rapes 15-year-old girl, uploads video of act, held

PTI ■ MAHOBBA (UP)

The police here on Saturday arrested an 18-year-old boy for allegedly raping a minor girl and posting a video of the act online, officials said.

The 15-year-old victim has been sent to a Government Hospital for medical examination. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Rajendra Kumar Gautam said.

On the complaint of the victim's father, the accused was taken into custody and a case

registered at Kotwali Nagar police station.

Quoting the victim, Station House Officer (SHO) Balram Singh said the incident took place in August when the arrestee made an obscene video with the victim.

He threatened to post it on social media and raped her several times later, according to the complaint.

"The victim said when she stopped listening to the accused, he made the video viral," the SHO said.

Mumbai Police on high alert ahead of last day of Ganesh festival



Municipal council workers carry an idol of Lord Ganesha on a boat to immerse in the Krishna-Koyna river during Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in Karad district on Saturday

Mumbai: Mumbai Police is on high alert and security has been beefed up across the city for the 10th and last day of immersion of Ganesh idols on Sunday, especially in the wake of recent arrests of terror suspects, an official said.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad on Friday nabbed one person from Mumbai in connection with an alleged terror plot unearthed by Delhi Police.

The ten-day Ganesh festival will come to an end on Sunday. The celebrations have been subdued this year due to the restrictions imposed in

view of the coronavirus pandemic. Processions, the hallmark of immersion days, are banned.

Anti-sabotage measures are being taken and security around vital installations has been increased, said deputy commissioner of police S Chaitanya, the Mumbai police's spokesperson, on Saturday.

Apart from intensified patrolling in sensitive areas, there will be heavy deployment of security personnel at immersion points, he said.

Extra lights, cranes, swimmers/life guards, ambulances and fire brigade teams would

be arranged to handle any eventuality, he added.

As many as 100 additional officers and 1,500 personnel from the Local Arms and other branches will be deployed, the DCP said.

Besides, at least three companies of the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF), one company of CRPF, 500 home guards and 275 constables from outside units will be stationed in the city.

The police are also keeping tabs on known criminals and have increased surveillance at hotels, lodges, vital installations and sensitive locations. **PTI**



Tourists walk on the premises of Taj Mahal during rain in Agra on Saturday

Taliban replace Ministry for women

Afghanistan's new rulers set up a Ministry for 'propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice' in building that once housed Women's Affairs Ministry

AP ■ KABUL

Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers set up a Ministry for the "propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice" in the building that once housed the Women's Affairs Ministry, according to World Bank staff on Saturday as part of the forced move.

It's the latest troubling sign that the Taliban are restricting women's rights as they settle into Government, just a month since they overran the capital of Kabul. In their first period of rule in the 1990s, the Taliban had denied girls and women the right to education and barred them from public life.

Separately, three explosions targeted Taliban vehicles in the eastern provincial capital of Jalalabad on Saturday, killing three people and wounding 20, witnesses said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists, headquartered in the area, are enemies of the Taliban.

The Taliban are facing major economic and security problems as they attempt to govern, and a growing challenge by ISIS insurgents would further stretch their resources.

In Kabul, a new sign was up outside the women's affairs



Ministry, announcing it was now the "Ministry for Preaching and Guidance and the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice."

Staff of the World Bank's \$100 million Women's Economic Empowerment and Rural Development Programme, which was run out of the Women's Affairs Ministry, were escorted off the grounds Saturday, said programme member Sharif Akhtar, who was among those being removed.

Mabouba Suraj, who heads the Afghan Women's Network, said she was astounded by the flurry of orders released by the Taliban-run government restricting women and girls.

Meanwhile, the Taliban-run education ministry asked boys from grades 7-12 back to school Saturday along with their male teachers but there was no mention of girls in those grades returning to school. Previously, the Taliban's minister of higher education minister, had said girls would

be given equal access to education, albeit in gender-segregated settings.

"It is becoming really, really troublesome. ... Is this the stage where the girls are going to be forgotten?" Suraj said.

"I know they don't believe in giving explanations, but explanations are very important."

Suraj speculated that the contradictory statements perhaps reflect divisions within the Taliban as they seek to consolidate their power, with the more pragmatic within the movement losing out to hard-liners among them, at least for now.

Statements from the Taliban leadership often reflect a willingness to engage with the world, open public spaces to women and girls and protect Afghanistan's minorities. But orders to its rank and file on the ground are contradictory. Instead restrictions, particularly on women, have been implemented.

Suraj, an Afghan American who returned to Afghanistan in 2003 to promote women's rights and education, said many of her fellow activists have left the country.

She said she stayed in an effort to engage with the Taliban and find a middle ground, but until now has not

been able to get the Taliban leadership to meet with activists who have remained in the country to talk with women about the way forward.

"We have to talk. We have to find a middle ground," she said. Also on Saturday, an international flight by Pakistan's national carrier left Kabul's airport with 322 passengers on board and a flight by Iran's Mahan Air departed with 187 passengers on board, an airport official said.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorised to speak to the media, said the two flights departed on Saturday morning. The identities and nationalities of those on board were not immediately known.

The international flights were the latest to depart Kabul in the past week as technical teams from Qatar and Turkey have worked to get the airport up to standard for international commercial aircraft.

A Qatar Airways flight on Friday took more Americans out of Afghanistan, according to Washington's peace envoy, the third such airlift by the Mideast carrier since the Taliban takeover and the frantic US troop pullout from the country.

3 dead as series of explosions hit Af's Nangarhar province



Taliban fighters and residents gather at the site of an explosion in Kabul on Saturday. A sticky bomb exploded in the capital Kabul

AP ■ JALALABAD

Witnesses say a series of three explosions that targeted Taliban vehicles in the capital of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province has left at least three dead and 20 wounded.

No one immediately took responsibility for the attack Saturday in Jalalabad, but the increasingly violent Islamic State group affiliate is head-

quartered in eastern Afghanistan and are enemies of Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Taliban officials were among the dead and wounded.

Also on Saturday a sticky bomb exploded in the capital Kabul wounding two people, said police officials.

The target of the Kabul bomb was not immediately clear.

1ST CASE OF COVID IN AMERICAN SAMOA

Pago Pago: American Samoa, a US territory in the Pacific, reported its first case of coronavirus on Friday. The territory's acting governor, Lt. Gov. Taluaga Eleasalo Ale, and health officials said the islands' first case of Covid-19 was in a resident who returned to America Samoa from a trip to the US mainland and Hawaii earlier this week.

VIOLATIONS REPORTED IN RUSSIAN ELECTION

Moscow: The head of Russia's second-largest political party is alleging widespread violations in the election for a new national parliament, in which his party is widely expected to gain seats. Communist Party head Gennady Zyuganov said on Saturday — the second of three days of voting in the election — that police and the national elections commission must respond to reports of "a number of absolutely egregious facts" including ballot-stuffing in several regions.

UNSC URGES SOMALIA'S LEADERS TO COMPROMISE

United Nations: The UN Security Council urged Somalia's feuding Government leaders on Saturday to resolve their disagreements through dialogue and give top priority to holding long-delayed national elections this year.

Fearful US residents in Afghanistan hiding out from Taliban

Kabul: Every night in yet another house in Afghanistan's capital, a US green card-holding couple from California take turns sleeping, with one always awake to watch over their three young children so they can flee if they hear the footsteps of the Taliban.

They've moved seven times in two weeks, relying on relatives to take them in and feed them. Their days are an uncomfortable mix of fear and boredom, restricted to a couple of rooms where they read, watch TV and play "The Telephone Game" in which they whisper secrets and pass them on, a diversion for the children that has the added benefit of keeping them quiet.

All of it goes on during the agonizing wait for a call from anybody who can help them get out. A US State Department official contacted them several days ago to tell them they were being assigned a case worker, but they haven't heard a word since. They've also been talking to an international rescue organisation.

"We are scared and keep hiding ourselves more and more," the mother said in a text message to The Associated Press. "Whenever we feel breathless, I pray."

Through messages, emails and phone conversations with loved ones and rescue groups, AP has pieced together what day-to-day life has been like for some of those left behind after the US military's chaotic withdrawal — that includes US citizens, permanent US resident green-card holders and visa applicants who aided US troops during the 20-year war. Those contacted by AP — who are not

being identified for their own safety — described a fearful, furtive existence of hiding in houses for weeks, keeping the lights off at night, moving from place to place, and donning baggy clothing and burqas to avoid detection if they absolutely must venture out.

All say they are scared the ruling Taliban will find them, throw them in jail, perhaps even kill them because they are Americans or had worked for the US government. And they are concerned that the Biden administration's promised efforts to get them out have stalled.

When the phone rang in an apartment in Kabul a few weeks ago, the US green card holder who answered — a truck driver from Texas visiting family — was hopeful it was the US State Department finally responding to his pleas to get him and his parents on a flight out. Instead, it was the Taliban.

"We won't hurt you. Let's meet. Nothing will happen," the caller said, according to the truck driver's brother, who lives with him in Texas and spoke to him afterwards. The call included a few ominous words: "We know where you are."

That was enough to send the man fleeing from the Kabul apartment where he had been staying with his mother, his two teenage brothers and his father, who was in particular danger because he had worked for years for a US contractor overseeing security guards.

"They are hopeless," said the brother in Texas. "They think, 'We're stuck in the apartment and no one is here to help us.' They've been left behind."

After Afghanistan pullout, US seeks NATO basing, intel pacts

AP ■ ATHENS

Against the backdrop of the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, the top US Military officer is meeting in Greece with NATO counterparts this weekend, hoping to forge more basing, intelligence sharing and other agreements to prevent terrorist groups from regrouping and threatening America and the region.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the meeting of NATO defense chiefs will focus in part on the way ahead now that all alliance troops have pulled out of Afghanistan and the Taliban are in control.

Milley, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and

American intelligence officials have warned that al-Qaida or the Islamic State group could regenerate in Afghanistan and pose a threat to the United States in one year to two years.

The US Military has said it can conduct counterterrorism surveillance and, if necessary, strikes in Afghanistan from "over the horizon" — meaning from assets based in other countries. But they have made it clear that surveillance flights from bases in the Persian Gulf are long and provide limited time in the air over Afghanistan.

So they have talked about seeking basing agreements, over-flight rights and increased intelligence-sharing with nations closer to Afghanistan, including some neighbours.

Imran says he 'initiated a dialogue' with Taliban for inclusive Afghan Govt

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday said that he has "initiated a dialogue" with the Taliban for an inclusive Afghanistan government having Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks, a day after the SCO members sought representation for all ethnic, religious and political groups in the new dispensation.

The Taliban, which seized control of Afghanistan in mid-August, had promised an "inclusive" government that represents Afghanistan's complex ethnic make-up, but there is no Hazara member and no woman in the interim 33-member Cabinet.

Talking to Twitter, Khan said: "After mtgs (meetings) in Dushanbe with leaders of Afghanistan's neighbours & especially a lengthy discussion with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon, I have initiated a dialogue with the Taliban for an inclusive Afghan govt to include Tajiks, Hazaras & Uzbeks". However, details of the "dialogue" were not shared by him or other officials.

After 40 years of conflict, this inclusivity will ensure peace and a stable Afghanistan, which is in the interest not only of Afghanistan but the region as well, Khan said in another tweet.

Addressing the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit on Friday, he said: "the Taliban must fulfil the pledges made, above all for an inclusive political structure where all ethnic groups are represented. This is vital for Afghanistan's stability".

Khan said that it was also important to ensure respect for the rights while making certain that Afghanistan would never again be made a safe haven for terrorists.

The SCO leaders, in a joint declaration issued at the end of the annual Summit of the bloc in Tajikistan on Friday, voiced support for an independent, democratic and peaceful Afghanistan, free of terrorism, war and drugs.

Yemen's Houthis execute 9 over senior official's killing

AP ■ SANAA

Yemen's Houthi rebels on Saturday said they executed nine people for their alleged involvement in the killing of a senior Houthi official in an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition more than three years ago.

The public executions by firing squad were carried out in the rebel-held capital of Sanaa, according to the Iranian-backed Houthis who distributed photos apparently showing the executions. The executions took place despite repeated calls by rights groups and lawyers to stop the killings. They said the trial held in a rebel-controlled court where the nine were convicted and sentenced to death was flawed.

The nine were among more than 60 people the

Houthis accused of involvement in the targeted killing of Saleh al-Samad in April 2018. Former President Donald Trump was also accused, according to court documents obtained by The Associated Press. Also accused were top Western, Israeli and Gulf officials.

The Houthis accused the nine of spying for the Saudi-led coalition.

Al-Samad, who held the post of president in the Houthi-backed political body, was killed in an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition in the coastal city of Hodeida.

The nine, including a 17-year-old boy, were arrested months after al-Samad's killing. They had been forcefully disappeared for months in undisclosed places where they suf-

fered inhuman treatment, according to Abdel-Majeed Sabra, a Yemeni lawyer representing one of the people executed.

Hundreds of people, mostly Houthis and their supporters, attended the executions, which were also broadcast on big screens early Saturday in Tahrir Square in the capital of Sanaa. The executions and their display cause outrage across the country, including Sanaa, where people refrain from criticising the rebels for fear of reprisals.

The nine wore sky blue prison garb with their hands bound behind their backs. Masked guards led them an open area and forced them to lie down on their stomachs. Another officer with a rifle shot them to death in their backs.

France recalls envoy protesting Australia-US submarine deal

AP ■ CANBERRA

France's ambassador to Australia described Saturday as a "huge mistake" Australia's surprise cancellation of a major submarine contract in favour of a US deal, delivering a final protest as the envoy was recalled from the country in an unprecedented show of anger among the allies.

Jean-Pierre Thebault delivered his comments as he left his residence in the pandemic locked down capital of Canberra.

"This has been a huge mistake, a very, very bad handling of the partnership," Thebault said, explaining that the arms agreement between Paris and Canberra was supposed to be based "on trust, mutual understanding and sincerity".

Paris recalled its ambassadors to Australia and the

United States on Friday to protest a deal among the United States, Australia and Britain to supply Australia with a fleet of at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. Thebault flew out of Australia on a flight to Doha, Qatar, around 17 hours after the announcement from Paris.

The US deal scraps a 90 billion Australian dollar (\$66 billion) contract with French majority state-owned Naval Group, signed in 2016, to build 12 conventional diesel-electric submarines.

"I would like to be able to run into a time machine and be in a situation where we don't end up in such an incredible, clumsy, inadequate, un-Australian situation," the French ambassador added.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne's office earlier had issued a statement responding to the diplomat's

recall and noting Canberra's "regret" over its ally's withdrawal of its representative.

"Australia understands France's deep disappointment with our decision, which was taken in accordance with our clear and communicated national security interests," the statement said. It added that Australia values its relationship with France and looked forward to future engagements together.

Payne and Defence Minister Peter Dutton are currently in the United States for annual talks with their US counterparts and their first with President Joe Biden's administration.

Before he was recalled, French envoy Thebault said on Friday he found out about the US submarine deal: "Like everybody, thanks to the Australian press."

North Korea expanding uranium enrichment plant

Seoul: Recent satellite images shows North Korea is expanding a uranium enrichment plant at its main Yongbyon nuclear complex, a sign that it's intent on boosting the production of bomb materials, experts say.

The assessment comes after North Korea recently raised tensions by performing its first missile tests in six months amid long-dormant nuclear disarmament diplomacy with the United States.

The expansion of the enrichment plant probably indicates that North Korea plans to increase its production of weapons-grade uranium at the Yongbyon site by as much as 25 percent," Jeffrey Lewis and two other experts at Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey said in a report.

The report said satellite

images taken by Maxar shows construction in an area adjoining the uranium enrichment plant at Yongbyon.

It said a satellite image taken on Sept 1 shows North Korea cleared trees and prepared the ground for construction and that a construction excavator is also visible.

The report said a second image taken on Sept 14 showed a wall erected to enclose the area, work on a foundation and panels removed from the side of the enrichment building to provide access to the newly enclosed area.

"The new area is approximately 1,000 square meters, enough space to house 1,000 additional centrifuges," the report said. "The addition of 1,000 new centrifuges would increase the plant's capacity to produce highly enriched uranium by 25 per cent." AP

Office of the Executive Engineer, Construction Division,
Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Khatima
Pilibhit Road, Near Allahabad Bank, Khatima (U.S. Nagar) E-mail : eecdskhatima@gmail.com

E-Tendering/Tender Notice

Letter No. 1396/Nivida/64 Date : 18.09.2021

1. Name of Work :- Rising Main (DI Pipe), Over Head Tank, Pump House cum attendant Room, Boundary wall and all other appurtenant works etc.

Name of Scheme	Estimated cost	Period of completion of work:
(A) Nausar - Mohammadpur Bhudiya (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 56.37 Lakh	06 months
(B) Bhudiya Tharu (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 56.64 Lakh	06 months
(C) Bhagchuri (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 51.06 Lakh	06 months
(D) Mundeli (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 54.39 Lakh	06 months
(E) Tukari (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 54.08 Lakh	06 months
(F) Salmata (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 50.07 Lakh	06 months
(G) Pipaliya Pistaure (MVS) W/S Scheme	Rs. 51.99 Lakh	06 months

Key Dates-

1 Date of Online Publication	21.09.2021 at 17:00hrs.
2 Document download : Start Date	22.09.2021 at 10:00hrs.
3 Document download : End Date	05.10.2021 at 17:00 hrs.
4 Pre Bid Meeting	27.09.2021 at 14:00 hrs.
5 Bid Submission : Start Date	22.09.2021 at 10:00hrs.
6 Bid Submission : End Date	05.10.2021 at 17:00 hrs.
7 Offline submission of documents (Cost of bidding document, Bid Security, Original Affidavits & all the Supporting Documents in support of qualification).	06.10.2021 upto 17:00 hrs.
8 Date of Technical Bid Opening	07.10.2021 at 11:00 hrs
9 Date of Financial Bid Opening	To be announced Later
10 Details of tender, corrigendum or cancellation etc. may be obtained at web site: www.uktenders.gov.in	

Executive Engineer

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No-23, Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Santosh Gusain & Pushpa Gusain/ LBFBD0002370675	House No- 91p, 1st Floor, Residential Scheme Surya Nagar Phase-2 Sector-91, Faridabad, Haryana/ Sep 14, 2021	March 25, 2021 Rs. 39,90,504/-	Delhi/ NCR

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : September 18, 2021
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

Cryptocurrency Hyper Fund under Govt scanner

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is keeping a close eye on cryptocurrency floating in the market based out of the country following alert that agencies responsible to check financial fraud are watching a company called Hyper Fund.

Sources said Hyper Fund, a DEFI by Hyper Tech Group has come under the radar recently. The Group claims to have launched the Hyper Fund to provide a decentralized financial infrastructure. Hyper Fund was announced in mid-2020.

As per the company website it is led by Ryan Xu, however, with the Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) model Hyper Fund has been luring investors with higher returns and such offerings, a common practice under Ponzi Schemes, that got the authorities alerted in the first place.

According to sources, complaints against such Funds have started pouring in several states. In India, the RBI, Union Finance Ministry and SEBI had warned people against cryptocurrency trading. The RBI is planning to launch India's official digital currency - E Rupee soon.

The Finance Ministry has



clarified that Virtual currencies are also not legal tender. Hence, VCs are not currencies. The RBI has also clarified that it has not given any licence/ authorization to any entity/ company to operate or deal with Bitcoin or any virtual currency.

In June 2018, Amit Bhardwaj was arrested at the Delhi Airport by Pune police along with his brother Vivek Bhardwaj in connection with an alleged Ponzi scheme. Bhardwaj, started his own bitcoin mining operations and allegedly cheated more than 8,000 people to the tune of Rs 2,000 crore from across the country.

He has lodged a complaint with the Delhi Police special cell, alleging that he received an extortion call and was asked to

pay protection money on September 6, 2021. He had setup multi-level marketing (MLM) scam by luring investors to give him Bitcoins in return for promised higher returns, police had alleged.

Regulators in UK have issued warning against such fund and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) have warnings issued for both Hyper Fund and Fund Advisor.

On its website, which was first published on in March 23, 2021 and later updated on August 31, the FCA said, "We believe this firm may be providing financial services or products in the UK without our authorisation. Almost all firms and individuals offering, promoting or selling financial services or products in the UK have to be authorised or registered by us.

Opposition-ruled States demand extension of GST compensation regime beyond June 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Ministers of Opposition-ruled states have demanded that the GST compensation cess regime be extended beyond June 2022.

Briefing reporters after the 45th GST Council meeting in Lucknow on Friday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said the regime of paying compensation to states for revenue shortfall resulting from subsuming their taxes such as VAT in the uniform national tax GST will end in June next year.

However, the compensation cess, levied on luxury and demerit goods, will continue to be collected till March 2026 to repay the borrowings that were done in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to compensate states for GST revenue loss.

In his speech at the meet-

ing, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister P Thiaga Rajan demanded continuation of the compensation mechanism, and deferment of a decision on this issue.

"While we are broadly, and firmly in favour of the continuation of the compensation mechanism, we are concerned by many of the details," he said.

Thiaga Rajan said all the Council Members will require some time to analyse and assess the features and consequences of the options presented during the 45th meeting, and hence expect that any decision on the way forward will be deferred to the 46th meeting at least.

"To be doubly sure, we formally place a request that no final decision be made on this most important issue without the benefit of the time needed to fully assess the options," Thiaga Rajan added.



Deadline for PAN-Aadhaar linkage extended till March 2022

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Centre has extended the deadline for linking Aadhaar with PAN by six more months, till March 2022.

The earlier deadline was till September 30.

Accordingly, the decision came as a relief measure for tax players during pandemic era.

"The Central Government, in continuation of its commitment to address the hardship being faced by various stakeholders on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, has, on consideration of representations received from various stakeholders, decided to extend timelines for compliances under the Income-tax Act, 1961," CBDT said in a statement late on Friday night.

"Time limit for intimation of Aadhaar number to the Income tax Department for linking of PAN with Aadhaar has been extended from 30th September, 2021 to 31st March, 2022."

Besides, the due date for completion of penalty proceedings under the IT Act has also been extended from September 30, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

BRIEFS

GM OFFERS SHRAMDAN AT NETAJI BHAVAN METRO STATION



Kolkata: Metro Railway has been observing Swachhta Pakhwara from 16th - 30th September, 2021. As a part of this drive Shri Manoj Joshi, General Manager and other senior officers of Metro Railway offered Shramdaan at Netaji Bhawan Metro station today on 18.09.2021. Shri Joshi also inspected platform, mezzanine floor, staircases, Machine Room, dustbins of the station to check the standard of cleanliness being maintained. General Manager also urged all Metro users and staff to maintain the high standard of cleanliness of Metro premises and trains. At Noapara Car Depot Complex a special cleaning drive was also undertaken today to clean the Depot Complex. Officers and staff of the DUT took part in this activity.

IRCTC DEDICATES A NEW FOOD PLAZA AT NEW DELHI RAILWAY STATION

New Delhi: The Indian Railway Catering And Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) has been playing a pivotal role in revolutionizing the hospitality and catering business of Indian Railways across the country. In its latest drive, the company has recently dedicated a new Food Plaza - "Pop n Hop" for the passengers at New Delhi railway station on Platform No. 16 towards Ajmeri Gate side. The "Pop n Hop" Food Plaza is one of the most exquisite and extensive food and beverage facility created by IRCTC for the passengers and tourists to have wide variety sumptuous food offered in a hygienic and extremely comfortable environment. The passengers and tourists visiting New Delhi railway station will no more have to hunt for quality food or bring food along with from home as the new Food Plaza will promise to offer quality food to tantalize the taste buds at reasonable prices.

AMIT SHAH PLANTS SAPLING AT CRPF TRAINING CENTER



Union Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah planted 10 million sapling at CRPF Training Center in Nanded, Maharashtra under "All India Tree Plantation Campaign-2021" being run by Central Armed Police Forces CAPFs have done the work of planting 10 million trees in more than 170 districts across the country. We had set a target that all the paramilitary forces together will plant more than 10 million trees and take good care of them till they grow to a height above our heads, and today we have accomplished this year's target of 10 million ahead of time.

CLW JOINS RAIL KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA

To empower the youth of vibrant India with industry-relevant skills, Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) has joined the 'Rail Kaushal Vikas Yojana', on 17.09.2021. Shri Ashwini Vaishnav, Hon'ble Minister for Railways, Communications and Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, launched the 'Rail Kaushal Vikas Yojana' on all India level in 75 Rly. Training Centres including CLW via video conference, on 17.09.2021. It is an integral part of Skill India Mission adopted by Indian Railways under the aegis of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana as a part 75 years of "AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV".

LIVE LEARNING PLATFORM IN REGIONAL LANGUAGES

New Delhi: Taking ahead the National Skill Development Corporation's initiative to boost employability and enhance enhancement training and placements, Orion Edutech unveiled LearnHat, an interactive live learning platform that acts as a bridge between students and tutors primarily focusing on smaller towns. Its value proposition rests on delivering its sessions in a number of regional languages. "India is a diverse country, where regional language forms a comfort bond unlike any other. We therefore wanted to extend this to education as well, to make learning more fun, engaging and a meaningful experience," said Priyadeep Sinha, CEO of LearnHat.

Come Jan 1, non-filers of monthly GST return to be barred from filing GSTR-1

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Businesses that default on filing summary return and paying monthly GST will not be able to file GSTR-1 sales return of the succeeding month from January 1 next year.

The GST Council in its Lucknow meeting on September 17 has decided to take a host of measures to streamline compliance, including mandatory Aadhaar authentication for businesses to file refund claims.

These moves would help prevent revenue leakage due to

evasion of Goods and Services Tax (GST), which was launched on July 1, 2017.

The Council decided to amend Rule 59(6) of the Central GST Rules with effect from January 1, 2022, to provide that a registered person shall not be allowed to furnish Form GSTR-1, if he has not furnished the return in Form GSTR-3B for the preceding month. Currently, the law restricts filing of return for outward supplies or GSTR-1 in case a business fails to file GSTR-3B of preceding two months.

'Telecom players' ARPU to grow even without tariffs hikes

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The average revenue per user (ARPU) of the cellular industry could grow even without tariffs hikes as data usage and penetration zooms over the last 1-2 years.

As per India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra): "The sliding voice tariffs, growing data tariffs, increasing data usage per subscriber and increasing data subscribers in the overall subscriber base over the last one year indicate that the average revenue per user of the industry could grow even without tariffs hikes."

Covid might shift India's growth model

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The Covid-19 pandemic could act as an inflection point to shift India's growth model from being consumption driven to investments-led.

In its Ecoscope report, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said: "With Covid-19 hurting India's 'Household' (HH) and 'Government' sectors adversely, the continuity of

strong consumption growth is in question."

"On the contrary, with listed companies' financial positions improving and an uptick in household investments in the Real Estate sector (called physical savings), the narrative of investment-led recovery is gaining momentum."

The report prescribed that various economic participants - households, governments, listed companies, and unlisted

corporates -- to increase their fixed asset investments in the immediate future based on their financial position.

At present, the listed and unlisted corporate sector accounts for only about half of total investments in India.

The 'HH' sector includes unincorporated enterprises accounts for 35-40 per cent in India's investments, while the remaining 12-13 per cent is contributed by centre and states

governments. Besides, the report cited that demand environment is expected to remain subdued due to weak financial position of 'HH' and government sector. "Despite household investments picking up strongly in 2HFY21, given that Indian households bore the maximum brunt of Covid-led losses in CY20 (and CY21), we believe household spending would remain subdued over the next few years."

Profit booking, global volatility to impact stock moves

IAN S ■ MUMBAI

Sky-high valuations along with global tapering fears will impact stock market movements during the upcoming week.

Accordingly, market observers, pointed out high possibility of profit booking led slide on the back premium valuations and likely absence of positive domestic triggers.

Nonetheless, key indices - S&P BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty50 -- are expected to reach new intra-day record highs of 60,000 points and 18,000-mark, respectively.

Last Friday, the Sensex closed at 59,015.89 points after making an intra-day record high of 59,700, while Nifty ended the day's trade at 17,585.15 points.

It had breached the 17,790

level intra-day on last Friday. "Broad market correction amidst high volumes gives the first hint of distribution," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

"An adverse US Fed meet outcome next week could accelerate the correction that is typical in September, especially in the US markets."

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ
E-Procurement Tender Notice No. 21/07 Dated: 14.09.2021
E-Procurement Tender Notice
On behalf of President of India, Sr. Divisional Material Manager, North Central Railway, Prayagraj invites the E-procurement tenders:
Tender No. Description Qty. EMD (Rs)
19215445 Steel Bed with Box. Size-L-1980 mm. W-925mm. H-840mm, Ply 12mm as per drawing attached in PDF. 137 Nos. ₹ 29,600/-
Tender Opening Date-07.10.2021. Note:- 1- The complete information of above E-Procurement Tender are available on IREPS website i.e. http://www.ireps.in. 2-Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above Tender. For this purpose, Vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with class III digital signature certificates issued by CCA under IT Act-2008. 3-Rates entered into financial rate page and duly signed digitally shall only be considered. Rates and any other financial entry in any other form/letter head if attached by vendor shall be straight away ignored and shall not be considered. 4- Documents being attached should be signed on their body. 5- Allocation for "Cost of Drawing" is 2-650 and for "Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)" is Deposit Misc. Stores-00844517. The above tender notice has been uploaded on http://www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in". In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the IREPS website may be approached. 10/12/2021 V
North Central Railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRONCR

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL
General public is hereby informed that this girl **Name:** Puja, D/o Sh. Ramu, R/o R Block 118-19, Mangolpuri, Delhi, **Age:** 20 years, **Height:** 5 Feet, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing:** Green Color Suit and White Color Salwar and Slippers in feet, has been missing/ kidnapped since 25.07.2021 from her house. In this regard a DD No. 85A, dated 26.07.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Burari, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.
E-Mail: cbc@cbi.gov.in **SHO**
Website: http://cbi.nic.in **P.S. Burari, Delhi**
Fax: 011-24368639 **Ph. 011-27616844, 8750870132**
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 **DP/1381/N/2021**

HOUSING BOARD HARYANA SECTORE-23, FARIDABAD
PUBLIC NOTICE
It is for the information of the General Public that House No. 527/LIG, Sector -22 Faridabad was transferred / allotted in the name of Smt. Pratibha Saxena D/o Late Sh. A.P. Saxena R/o H.No. 527/LIG, Sector -22, Faridabad vide letter No. 4423 dated 22/12/89. Now above allottee / transferee Sale Deed Holder Sh. Girraj Prasad S/o Sh. Begraj has expired on 04/04/2018 Now Sh. Smt. allottee / transferee / Sale deed holder Sh. Raj Kumar Aggarwal and Sh. Lalit Aggarwal both S/o late Sh. Girraj Prasad R/o H.No. 527/LIG, Sector-22 Faridabad has submitted the documents for the transfer of the allotment of the above mentioned house due to the death of the allottee / Transfer being his/her legal heirs.
Now by the present Public Notice, it is informed to all public in General that in case anybody has objection to the above said transfer of allotment of house, in the name of Sh. Rajkumar Aggarwal and Sh. Lalit Aggarwal. He/She can file the objection within 30 days from the publication of this notice after that necessary action for the transfer of the above mentioned house will be taken by this office as per Rules and no objection will be entertained after 30 days from the date of publication of this notice.
Estate Manager
Housing Board Haryana,
Faridabad

WESTERN RAILWAY
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE NO. S/34/2021 Date : 16.09.2021
S.N. Short Description of item Quantity T.O.D
887 NAFTA sheet 1000 Nos. 01.10.2021
888 Amalgamated Transformer Rectifierunit 20 Nos. 05.10.2021
889 Cut Off Angle Cock 3674 Nos. 06.10.2021
890 Coronary Non Complaint Balloon 834 Nos. 07.10.2021
891 Blind Socket Assembly with Locking 90 Nos. 08.10.2021
892 MSDAC Transportation Install. Testing and Comm. 4 Set 08.10.2021
893 POH Kit 950 Set 08.10.2021
894 Membrane for Crowned Gear Coupling 225 Nos. 09.10.2021
895 Set of Suspension Tube 43 Set 11.10.2021
896 4.5 KW Understung 60 Nos 13.10.2021
Regarding detailed notice, EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website www.ireps.gov.in and www.wr.indianrailways.gov.in.
0422 For Principal Chief Materials Manager
Like us on : [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly) Follow us on : twitter.com/WesternRly

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (PHE): WATER: ASSAM CUM
ADDD. MISSION DIRECTOR, JAL JEEVAN MISSION ASSAM HENGRABARI, GUWAHATI-36
No. PHE-19/JJM/PB/2020-21/T-
Notification
It is for general information of all concerned those contractors who submitted their EOs against EOI No. 14 of 2021-22 of this office for "Empanelment of Non PHE contractors under JJM Assam" on or before 16:00 hrs. of 04.09.2021 but not considered for empanelment due to shortage of required documents as per EOI Document or submission of erroneous documents are requested to submit the requisite shortfall document(s) within 16:00 hrs. of 27.09.2021 for consideration for empanelment. Submission of such required documents after 16:00 hrs. of 27.09.2021 shall not be entertained under any circumstances. The detailed required documents to be submitted by such defaulting contractors may be seen from the Notification section in the web site www.jimassam.in up to 27.09.2021. This may be treated as a final intimation and no further communication after the closing date shall be made from this end in regards to the empanelment process after the closing date and time.
Sd/-
Chief Engineer (PHE) Water, Assam
CUM
Additional Mission Director, JJM, Assam
Janasanyog/C/5686/21 Hengrabari, Guwahati-36

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Vijay Prakash S/o Kapil Muni R/o WZ-783, Naraina Village, New Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case DD No. 44-A dated 13.04.2015 u/s 53/116 DP Act. P.S. Naraina, New Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Vijay Prakash** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Vijay Prakash** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said **Vijay Prakash** accused of DD No. 44-A dated 13.04.2015 u/s 53/116 DP Act. P.S. Naraina, New Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **21.10.2021**.
By Order :
Sh. Himanshu Raman Singh
Metropolitan Magistrate,
Room No. 20, Main Building,
Patiala House Court, New Delhi
DP/553/WD/21

Public Notice
This is to inform that I, Smt. Kamlesh W/o Shri Prem R/o 15/315, Dakshin Puri Extension, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, South Delhi, Pushpa Bhawan, Delhi is also the owner of property address D-137,138, 139, Sai Vihar, Phase II, Bhupani Mor, Faridabad declares through this public notice that Smt. Kamlesh Disown her son namely Vinesh from her Property and he has no right towards her moveable and immovable assets and only reason is due to his and his wife nature and misbehavior towards her.
Nishkarsh Gupta (Advocate)
Mob No: 7011887119

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

THANKSGIVING
Thank you Holy Spirit for Blessings Celine.
PD(9080)C

LOST AND FOUND
This is to inform that I Sushil Anand S/o Subash Anand R/o F-16 Sector 20 Noida 201301 have lost the Sale Deed executed between Noida Authority and Mr. Shiv Nandan S. Ahluwalia S/o S.S. Ahluwalia Registered with Noida Authority with JdNo 749 Wd. no. 11 Page no 4016 Dated: 24/08/2011 and Original Transfer Permission Letter No. 13932 Noida/Housing / 2005 dated 29.6.2005 between Mr. Shiv Nandan S Ahluwalia S/o. S.S. Ahluwalia and myself I E Sudhir Anand. I have Registered a FIR for the same with The Noida Police via FIR No. 80 Dated 10.09.2021. This is to inform that I am the lawful owner of the property via Bahi no. 1. Jld no 749/754, page no. 11/49/368, M.No. 4016 Document no. 4015 Dated: 24.08.1991. There is no Original/Original/Mortgage or any kind of Dispute against the captioned property. That I am selling the property to Priya Sharma & Yogesh Kumar Sharma and that I stand to fully indemnify the buyer in case of any misrepresentation, fabrication, concealment of facts pertaining to property being sold by me.

Mu-tation worry

Even as cases of the COVID-19 delta variant continue to spike the world over, a new variant, Mu, has become a variant of interest for the WHO. This new strain appears to have mutations with the potential to evade immunity provided by a previous COVID-19 infection or vaccination. Could Mu be a variant of concern? SUPRIYA RAMESH speaks with experts to tell you more

Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the globe last year, there has been no let up — either in the number of cases globally nor in the emergence of new variants. When the second wave hit India, there was talk of how the third wave would affect the children more. But now, it appears that there are more worries ahead. A new variant — Mu — that had been detected in Colombia, South America is the new worry — not just for India but for the entire world.

The good part is that the Government has said that the variant has not been found in India yet, there is no telling when it may enter the country and wreak havoc.

The country reported its first COVID-19 case in Kerala on January 27, 2020, and the country has been cuffed by the virus ever since and coming out of this pandemic dungeon looks only like a distant dream. Since the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Delta variant as the Variant of Concern (VOC) on May 6, 2021, the country has seen a new wave of cases and death worldwide, slowing down the nation's recovery, threatening economic stability and severe social and political impacts.

The new variant is getting more attention now as it has started to spread around parts of the country and it is something to make a note of. Mu is not only being seen in high numbers or high percentages but it is being detected in different places throughout the US with highest prevalence of the variant in Colombia currently.

It carries a cluster of mutations in the genome of COVID in the genetic structure. According to the WHO, it is still a Variant of Interest (VOI) and no samples have been detected in India yet.

"From Colombia it has spread to other South American countries such as Ecuador (13%) and Chile (around 40%). The Mu variant has now been detected in 43 countries including the United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, Ecuador, Canada and parts of Europe. So far, it has not been detected in India," says Dr Rahul Pandit, Member, COVID-19 Task Force, Maharashtra Government.

He further adds that there are more than 4700 cases of the Mu variant worldwide. Although with 2000 cases, the US has recorded the highest number of Mu cases, it is not yet regarded as an immediate threat.

"A VOI becomes a VOC when we see documented evidence that there is an increase in transmissibility of the virus, it is more dangerous, have more resistance to vaccines, and higher infectivity rate," says Dr Ankita Baidya, Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Manipal Hospital, Dwarka, New Delhi.

Despite making its first presence in January 2021, and being around since, the Mu variant doesn't seem to be as bad as Delta, which is the dominant variant across most of the world. But Mu has mutations which possess the potential of evading the protection we get from the COVID vaccines.

However, the concern is that it can lead to immune escape phenomena in the form that the existing antibodies through natural infection might not be able to protect us from this infection. "When we see such novel strains circulating in the world, it becomes a concern especially with so many mutations in it that can evade our immunity and can also reinfect a person who has already recovered from the virus from some different strain," Baidya tells you.

The WHO has said, "The Mu variant has a constellation of mutations that indicate potential properties of immune escape. Preliminary evidence shows that these mutations may allow it to escape vaccine- and convalescent serum-induced antibodies, similar to the Beta variant."

Dr Shomeshwar Singh, Lead Consultant, ENT, Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital says that though the reports have suggested its



decline in most of the world apart from South America lately, we have to watch carefully how this strain spreads.

The exact infection rate as of now is not well established and requires more data because there have only been sporadic cases. "With the mutation that it is carrying, there are chances of having a more severe infection from this strain as it is showing some sort of immune escape phenomena, which means that the previous antibody is not working and it can result in higher infectivity rate," says Baidya.

Talking about the efficacy of vaccines, there is still a lot of research to be done in order to confirm whether the existing vaccines will be effective against the Mu strain or not. Simultaneously, the risk that it can lower the vaccine's effect is also present.

Baidya says that the signs and symptoms of the mu strain are very much similar to the Delta variant. It also has a good amount of gastrointestinal symptoms along with the normal viral symptoms of upper respiratory tract that is the cough and cold, mild fever, loose motions, abdominal symptoms, nausea and dyspepsia. There can also be some headache, leg pain and body pain as with the other viral symptoms.

- A report from England's public health agency last month suggested the mu variant might be as resistant to vaccines as the worrisome beta variant first seen in South Africa, but said more real-world data was needed
- WHO officials said the mu variant appears to be rising in some countries in South America, but that the delta variant still spreads far more easily
- The mu variant doesn't seem to be

- spreading quickly: It accounts for fewer than 1% of COVID-19 cases globally
- In Colombia, it may be responsible for about 39% of cases
- Scientists monitor emerging COVID-19 variants based on suspicious genetic changes and then look for evidence to determine whether the new version is more infectious or causes more severe illness
- Viruses evolve constantly and many new variants often fade away

Currently, only symptomatic treatment is given for any variant, similar to that of existing strains. The treatment is mostly designed according to the severity of the disease whether it is mild, moderate or severe.

Many of us are wondering how quickly the virus mutates and with every new variant emerg-

ing, recovering from this deadly pandemic seems difficult and looks like a far-fetched dream. On the other hand, we are learning to live with the pandemic and now consider it as a part of life. The virus will continue to undergo mutation in the genetic structure to evade the immune response, to evade the antibody

pressure and to evade the antiviral pressure. The new mutations may be less or more severe than the existing strains but at the same time we should not stop from taking adequate infection control precautions like wearing a mask, practising hand hygiene and maintaining social distancing. "Today, the world is a smaller place since people travel far and wide in a matter of hours, this helps the virus spread. We need to exercise carefully drawn up social isolation and quarantine measures to fight the virus spread. Vaccination is very important," Singh tells you.

The Mu variant has severe mutations such as T95I, Y144S, Y145N, R346K, E484K, N501Y, D614G, P681H, Y144T, K417N and D950N in the spike protein. Some of these mutations have been detected in the variants of concern. The N501Y and P681H mutations are also present in the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7, first detected in the UK) and have been linked to rapid transmission. The N501Y mutation is also present in the Beta and Gamma variants of concern (VOC). The E484K and K417N mutations, which also occur in the Beta variant (B.1.351, first detected in South Africa) are associated with immune escape. However, the significance of other mutations is not yet known.

'To prevent new variants, get swiftly vaccinated'

The World Health Organization (WHO) has added a fifth variant of interest (VOI) — B.1.621.1 and labelled it — Mu variant — on August 30, 2021. The other four present VOIs are Eta (B.1.525), Iota (B.1.526), Kappa (B.1.617.1) and Lambda (C.37).

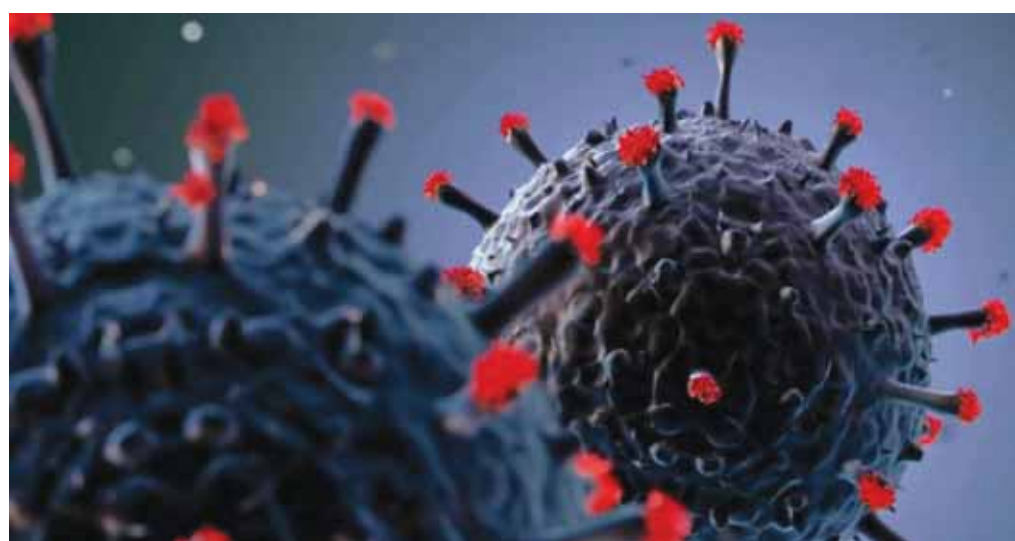
The Mu variant was first identified in Colombia in South America in January 2021, where Mu has been detected in 39 per cent of the samples analysed. From there, it has spread to other South American countries such as Ecuador (13 per cent) and Chile (around 40 per cent).

The Mu variant has now been detected in 43 countries including the US, the UK, South Korea, Japan, Ecuador, Canada and parts of Europe. So far, it has not been detected in India.

According to Dr Dr Rahul Pandit, Member, COVID-19 Task Force, Maharashtra Government there are more than 4,700 cases of the Mu variant worldwide. Although with 2000 cases, the US has recorded the highest number of Mu cases, it is not yet regarded as an immediate threat.

Last month, the WHO has said that the Mu variant has a constellation of mutations that indicate potential properties of immune escape. "Preliminary evidence shows that these mutations may allow it to escape vaccine- and convalescent serum-induced antibodies, similar to the Beta variant," Dr Pandit says.

The Mu variant has severe mutations like as T95I, Y144S, Y145N, R346K, E484K, N501Y,



D614G, P681H, Y144T, K417N and D950N in the spike protein.

"Some of these mutations have been detected in the variants of concern. The N501Y and P681H mutations are also present in the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7, first detected in the UK) and have been linked to rapid transmission. The N501Y mutation is also present in the Beta and Gamma variants of concern (VOC). The E484K and K417N mutations, which also occur in the Beta variant (B.1.351, first detected in South Africa) are associated with immune escape. However, the significance of other mutations is not yet known," Dr Pandit tells you

The Delta variant (B.1.617.2) continues to be the predominant variant across the world and the major cause of resurgence of cases

in many parts of the world.

At present, the Mu variant accounts for only 0.1 per cent of cases globally, even though it has been around since January this year.

Although it is not a variant of concern (VOC) yet, it is being closely monitored to detect any changes that would make it more transmissible than the delta variant, cause more severe disease and make vaccines less effective. If this happens, it may be re-categorised as a VOC.

"The best strategy to prevent emergence of new variants is to swiftly vaccinate as many people as possible. The larger the vaccinated population, the less the vulnerable population for the virus to infect and mutate," Dr Pandit says.

Bopanna and Ramkumar crack in must-win doubles match, India lose 1-3 to Finland

PTI ■ ESPOO (FINLAND)

Rohan Bopanna and Ramkumar Ramanathan blew their chances in the must-win doubles match as India lost the World Group I tie 1-3 to hosts Finland in the Davis Cup, here on Saturday.

Captain Rohit Rajpal changed the doubles combination by pairing Bopanna with Ramkumar instead of left-handed Divij Sharan but they lost the crucial match 6-7(2) 6-7(2) to Henri Kontinen and Harri Heliövaara in one hour and 38 minutes.

Coming into the match down 0-2, Indians needed to win the doubles to stay alive in the tie.

Prajesh later beat Patrik Niklas-Salminen in the dead fourth rubber 6-3 7-5, while the fifth match was not played.

India will now have to compete in the Play-offs next year to keep their place in the World Group I.

Heliövaara was considered the most vulnerable of all four players on the court but he raised his game by several notches and created a huge impact on the outcome of the match with his fearless approach.

The Indian, on the contrary, fumbled even when they had advantage as they up by a break and had four break-points in the eight game of the second set but squandered the chances.

After doing all the hard work, the Indians cracked at crucial junctures.

Bopanna said the fact that the Finnish players have played together at a higher level made a difference to the match.

"We were playing first time together at this level. In close points it did make a difference. But we played a great match, (considering) we were playing for the first time together," said the 40-year-old.

Bopanna also backed the captain's call in changing the combination saying, he and Ramkumar were the right pair for today's match.

He also said that India needs to do well in singles matches if the team has to win



ties in Davis Cup.

"Four points are from singles matches, that's where we need to focus. It's been six years that an Indian singles player has beaten a higher-ranked player in Davis Cup.

"We need to have good structure back home, good junior system. Cricket does well because there is a fantastic structure, so every sport needs something like that. You can't do it on your own. The Federation and the government has to come together," he said.

In the opening set, at 3-3, the Indian pair attacked the serve of Heliövaara, going 30-all but the home player served big on the next two points to ensure the set stays on serve.

Eventually the opening set went to tie-breaker. Heliövaara found a stunning service return winner off Bopanna on the second point to get the mini break and also held his serve as Finland took a 4-1 lead.

Then came Ramkumar's double fault and a volley error at the net that gave Finland players five set points. They converted the second when Ramkumar could not return Kontinen's serve.

A forehand winner by Ramkumar at 30-all in the second game of the second set, set up the first break chance for India and they converted when Kontinen could not return Bopanna's backhand.

However, the big-serving

Bopanna dropped his own serve in the next game when he made consecutive unforced errors.

Bopanna's serve again came under attack but he managed to hold after going down to deuce points from 40-15 as India led 4-3.

In the next game, the Indians went up 40-0 on Heliövaara's serve but blew away all three breakpoints and later one more to let the rivals hold for a 4-4 scoreline.

Another tie-breaker followed. Heliövaara pulled off a sensational forehand winner at 5-2 to get to first match point and it was all over for India when Ramkumar could not return the ball in the next point.

Extended NZ squad flies out of Pakistan on chartered plane



PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

An extended 33-member New Zealand cricket squad left for Dubai on a chartered flight from Islamabad on Saturday evening, a day after abandoning its entire tour of the country over security fears.

The New Zealand players and officials had to undergo rapid COVID-19 tests at the airport and after all the reports came negative, they were allowed to board the flight amid tight security protocols.

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) called off the series in Pakistan abruptly on Friday just before the first One-Day International at the Rawalpindi stadium, citing they had received a serious threat.

Neither the New Zealand board nor their government has shared the nature of the

threat with the Pakistan government, security officials or the Pakistan Cricket Board.

A clearly upset interior minister, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, said on Saturday that there was no threat to the New Zealand team and they just made up an excuse to leave for home as they didn't want to play the series.

New Zealand had arrived in Pakistan on September 11 for a white-ball series after 18 years and were scheduled to play three ODIs and five T20 Internationals.

They also held a few practice sessions at the Pindi stadium under tight security but on the day of the match, all hell broke loose when the two teams didn't leave the hotel before it emerged that the visitors had got a threat leading to their government advising them to abandon the tour.

Channelise your anger, become a world class team: PCB Chairman Raja to his players

PTI ■ KARACHI

New Zealand's abrupt decision to pull out of their cricket tour of Pakistan has created "an unfortunate scenario" but the hosts know how to overcome such crises, the chairman of the country's cricket board Ramiz Raja said on Saturday.

New Zealand abandoned the tour on the day of the

opening fixture on Friday citing a government security alert, while England are also reconsidering their men's and women's team visits to Pakistan next month.

The tour was due to start with the first of three one-dayers in Rawalpindi but New Zealand did not travel to the stadium.

"It's an unfortunate scenario," Raja, who took over as



Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman on Monday, said in a video posted on the board's Twitter handle.

"But we've faced similar situations in the past and have always overcome them. We've tremendous resilience... it's a setback to staging international cricket in Pakistan but we'll overcome this crisis too."

Several Pakistan players

took to Twitter to vent their anger and frustration at New Zealand's decision. Raja advised them to channel it into improving their performance.

"My message to the team is -- vent your anger and frustration through your performance on the field. If you become the best team in the world, others will queue up here to play you in Pakistan."

Honey Baisoya ends title drought, lifts J&K Open trophy

PTI ■ SRINAGAR

Delhi's Honey Baisoya on Saturday ended a three-year title drought by claiming a four-stroke win over Gurugram-based Veer Ahlawat at the J&K Open. Six-time PGTI winner Baisoya (67-69-66-68), who was struggling for form through the season, totalled 18-under 270 for the week following his classy final round of four-under 68 at the Royal Springs Golf Course.

He thus skyrocketed from 85th to 22nd place in the PGTI Order of Merit.

Ahlawat (67-71-70-66) also made his presence felt in the last round with a score of 66 to finish second at 14-under 274 in the Rs. 40 lakh event.

Patna's Aman Raj (68-71-70-66) too shot a 66 on day four to take the third place at 13-under 275.

Baisoya, the overnight leader by four shots, had a nervy start to the day as he made some tough par putts from five to six feet on the first six holes



even as the likes of Angad Cheema and Kartik Sharma piled on the pressure on the leader with early birdies.

Baisoya almost found the hole with his chip on the seventh but eventually tapped in for his first birdie of the day. A 20-foot birdie conversion followed on the ninth as he made the turn with a two-shot cushion.

He dropped his first bogey of the tournament when he three-putted on the 13th. That narrowed down his lead over Veer Ahlawat to just two shots.

Baisoya made a final push for victory with birdies on the

14th and 15th as a result of some long conversions thanks to his new putter.

The 25-year-old landed his approach from 134 yards to within a foot to set up another birdie on the 17th that all but sealed the deal for him.

"It still feels like a dream because till last week I was very low on confidence and not even sure of shooting an under-par score. So this win is all the more special," said Baisoya, who had just one top-20 from 10 starts in the season. "Normally I'm a very aggressive player but with the confidence not being up there I

tried to play more conservatively than I usually do. I used the 2-iron a lot and struck it to perfection all week.

"I also didn't make mistakes on the green like I had done in preceding events. The goal this week was to make the cut and I ended up winning. So it's still sinking in," added Baisoya, who took home the winner's cheque worth Rs. 6,46,600.

Ahlawat posted his second straight runner-up finish on the PGTI to move up from fifth to third in the Order of Merit.

Raj's 66 lifted him seven places to the third position. He made seven birdies and a bogey. Om Prakash Chouhan (66) of Mhow and Panchkula's Angad Cheema (70) shared fourth place at 12-under 276.

Delhi's Chiragh Kumar (67) finished a further shot back in sixth place at 11-under 277.

Kolkata's Viraj Madappa shot the day's lowest score of 65 to secure tied seventh along with Kartik Sharma (72) of Gurugram at 10-under 278.

Mohammad Hussamuddin enters quarterfinals at National Boxing Championships

PTI ■ BELLARY (KARNATAKA)

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Mohammad Hussamuddin (57kg) stormed into the quarterfinals with a 5-0 win over Chhattisgarh's Sahil at the National Boxing Championships here on Saturday. Defending champion Hussamuddin, who is representing Services Sports Control Board (SSCB), displayed smart and mature boxing and landed the plenty of punches to secure a unanimous 5-0 win.

He will face Rushikesh Goud of Maharashtra on Sunday.

In the other round of 16 match in the 57kg category, Haryana's Sachin was up against Manipur's Jobson Yengkokpam.

World youth champion Sachin, who caused a huge upset on Friday by defeating

world championship medallist Gaurav Bidhuri, made light work of his opponent and won 5-0 to book his spot in the quarters. In 54kg, Goa's Roshan Zamir produced a dominant show in the last round to outwit Suraj Bhan Singh of Rajasthan 3-2 in one of the closest bouts of the day.

Rajasthan's Bhim Pratap Singh (51kg) and Delhi's Rohit Mor (57kg) too progressed into the quarterfinals with identical 5-0 victories on the fourth day of the championships.

In the 60kg match, Tripura's Parvinder Poonia beat Prabhur Murali of Tamil Nadu 5-0. Chandigarh's Aman (67kg) and Sachin (71kg) impressed everyone with their attacking boxing as both of them won after forcing the referee to stop the contest (RSC) in the second round and sailed into the quarters.

Young, stacked US team faces familiar battle in Ryder Cup

AP ■ GOLF WRITER

The Americans would seem to have a lot in their favor at the Ryder Cup.

They are on home soil at the Whistling Straits along the Wisconsin shores of Lake Michigan. A full house is expected, along with louder than usual cheering for the Stars & Stripes because of COVID-19 travel restrictions for European-based fans. As for the players? Younger than ever, to be sure, but no less stacked. The Americans have eight of the top 10 in the world ranking — Europe only has Jon Rahm at No. 1 — on a team that has won twice as many majors.

This is nothing new, of course. With one exception, the Americans always bring a better collection of players to the Ryder Cup. They just rarely leave with the precious gold trophy.

"We have the best players this year," said Paul Azinger, the lead analyst for NBC Sports who still uses pronouns as if it were 2008 when he was the U.S. captain. "And obviously, they (Europe) roll in with the most confidence and maybe the best team."

The trick is getting the American players to realize that. At the last Ryder Cup in France three years ago, the U.S. was just as loaded, with nine major champions on the 12-man squad who had combined to win 10 of the last 16 majors.

They got smoked again.

"I feel like on paper, from head to toe, the world ranking, I would say we're a stronger team," U.S. captain Steve Stricker said. "But I don't think our guys feel we're better. They know deep down how hard it is to beat them." All that matters on paper are the results. Europe has won nine of the last 12 times in the Ryder Cup. And while the U.S. still holds a 26-14-2 advantage



dating to the start in 1927, that's not the real measure. Continental Europeans did not join the fray until 1979, and since then they are 11-8-1.

Europe, with Padraig Harrington now at the helm of the juggernaut, tries to extend its dominance at the 43rd Ryder Cup, which was postponed one year because of the pandemic.

Three relentless days of matches Sept. 24-26 will be held at Whistling Straits, the cliffside course with 1,000 or so bunkers that has hosted the PGA Championship three times in the last 17 years. American players, it should be noted, have been runner-up in all three.

Why do the Europeans keep winning the Ryder Cup?

They relish the role as underdogs. They seem to play with a chip on their shoulders, perhaps because the Americans don't — and probably should — have one on theirs. "That's our advantage, I guess, in a way, right?" Ian Poulter said in a SiriusXM PGA Tour Radio interview. "That we have delivered when perhaps we shouldn't have delivered. And this is the magical question that gets asked all the time. That's what has the American press scratching their head. That's what has the American team scratching their heads at times.

On paper — on paper — the U.S. team should have delivered.

"It's for us to enjoy and for the American team to figure out," he said. "There is a level of magic sauce which we've been able to create over the years."

Europe is bringing winning experience to Wisconsin.

Lee Westwood ties a European record by playing in his 11th Ryder Cup at age 48. He joins Sergio Garcia, already with the highest points total in history, on a short list of those who have played in Ryder Cups over parts of four decades. Garcia has contributed 25 1/2 points, the same amount as this entire U.S. team combined.

Whatever experience the Americans bring are mostly bad memories. Their lone victory in the last decade was at Hazeltine in 2016 against a European team that had six rookies. Only one of them, Matt Fitzpatrick, made it back on another team.

The six rookies are the most for the Americans since 2008 when they won at Valhalla.

Those include Collin Morikawa, who was an amateur when the last Ryder Cup was played and since then has won two majors, a World Golf Championship and led the U.S. standings in his first year of eligibility.

Lewandowski scores again as Bayern Munich routs Bochum 7-0

AP ■ BERLIN

Robert Lewandowski scored yet again for Bayern Munich's 7-0 rout of promoted Bochum in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

Lewandowski stretched his scoring run to 19 consecutive games across all competitions for Bayern. The Poland star's second half goal also ensured he became the first Bundesliga player to score in 13 consecutive home games.

Bayern was already confident after starting the Champions League on Tuesday beating Barcelona 3-0, while Bochum arrived in Munich after two league defeats.

The visitors made a solid start until Leroy Sané opened the scoring with a brilliant free kick in the 17th minute. It was Bayern's first shot on target.



Sané set up Joshua Kimmich in the 27th and Serge Gnabry picked the far corner for Bayern's third in the 32nd.

An own goal from Vasilios Lampropoulos completed a first half forget for Bochum — though history

showed an improbable comeback was possible.

The clubs also met in the Bundesliga 45 years ago to the day, when Bochum — then playing at home — was four goals up against Bayern at halftime. Bayern fought back in the second half to win 6-5 with future club president Uli Hoenes scoring the winner in the 89th.

Lewandowski has his own history to write, however. The Poland striker made it 5-0 in the 61st to extend his club-record scoring run. He has scored in every game since Feb. 15.

Kimmich got his second goal four minutes later and substitute Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting made it 7-0 in the 79th. It could have been worse for Bochum. Thomas Müller thought he made it 8-0 but his goal was ruled out through VAR for offside.

Mane reaches 100 goals for Liverpool in 3-0 win over Palace



AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Sadio Mane scored for the ninth straight time against Crystal Palace and reached 100 goals for Liverpool to set his team on its way to a 3-0 win in the English Premier League on Saturday. The Senegal forward got to the milestone at Anfield by converting from close range in the 43rd minute after Mohamed Salah's header from a

corner was parried out by Palace goalkeeper Vicente Guaita. Of Mané's century of goals for the Reds, which have come in 224 games, 10 have been scored against Palace.

Salah added the second in the 78th and that also came from a corner, with the Egypt international volleying in after a delivery from the left was deflected to him at the back post. Naby Keita scored the best of the lot in the 89th minute with a volley from the edge of the area after the ball was punched clear by Guaita. It proved to be a tough game for Liverpool, which was without its two attacking full backs because Trent Alexander-Arnold was ill and Andrew Robertson was rested, and there were some nervy moments before Salah's goal. Liverpool has won four of its five games in the league and conceded only once, its improved defensive showings coinciding with the return from injury of center back Virgil van Dijk.

Falcao scores in debut as Rayo beats Getafe 3-0

AP ■ BARCELONA

Radamel Falcao scored 10 minutes into his debut with Rayo Vallecano on Saturday, completing a 3-0 league win over Getafe in a derby between the Spanish capital's two more modest clubs.

The veteran striker went on as a 71st-minute substitute with Rayo 1-0 ahead. Midfielder Pathé Ciss doubled the lead shortly before he set up Falcao with a pass for the Colombian to score from an angle.

Oscar Trejo had put Rayo ahead with a penalty nine minutes into the match at Vallecas Stadium.

Rayo goalkeeper Stole Dimitrievski denied Getafe a late goal when he saved Enes Unal's penalty.

Rayo has two wins, a draw, and two defeats in its return to Spain's top division. Getafe is



last after losing all five games. The 35-year-old Falcao signed with Rayo earlier this month as a free agent.

"I had dreamed of being able to go out there and score a goal," Falcao said. "My team-

mates have given me a lot of support. I feel right at home."

Falcao had two highly successful seasons with Atlético Madrid from 2011-13, when he helped it win the Europa League and the Copa del Rey.

IPL RETURNS AS PRECURSOR TO T20 WORLD CUP

PTI ■ DUBAI

Dubai, Sep 18 (PTI) Players will be getting valuable experience in the UAE conditions ahead of the T20 World Cup while the Indian cricket board will be hoping its money-spinner stays away from the looming COVID-19 shadow when the IPL resumes with the blockbuster Chennai Super Kings-Mumbai Indians clash here on Sunday.

As the second wave of COVID-19 wreaked havoc in India in April-May, the water-tight IPL bio-bubble was also breached, forcing the suspension of the tournament after 29 games.

With too much at stake for all stakeholders including the players, teams and BCCI, there was little doubt over the completion of the world's biggest T20 competition. It was only about when the BCCI would squeeze in the IPL in an ever-pack global calendar.

After a few alterations in the franchise cricket and international calendar, the best possible window was found with the BCCI slotting in the tournament as the lead up to the T20 World Cup.

Last week, doubts over smooth conduct of the tournament resurfaced with the outbreak of COVID-19 in the Indian team's camp in England but fortunately for the organisers, the issue did not escalate and the available Indian and English players arrived here safely.

The entire IPL was held in the UAE last year without any hassles and the BCCI will be hoping for a similar experience this time around.

Fans, albeit a limited number, will also be present at an IPL venue for the first time since 2019, adding immensely to the event's spectacle.

Though the squads have already been announced for the World Cup, an IPL performance seldom gets unnoticed and there could be some players, including Indians, who make the squad in the 11th hour in case of injury with the ICC allowing changes until October 10.

India skipper Virat Kohli, who will step down from T20 captaincy after the World Cup, would love to get his hands on the elusive trophy and Royal Challengers Bangalore showed signs earlier in the season that they could finally go all the way.

Delhi Capitals, who finished runners-up in 2020, are leading the points tally and are primed to win their maiden title. The other teams in the top four are CSK, RCB and the mighty Mumbai Indians, the winner of a record five titles and the team to upstage.

There are 31 games to be played in UAE conditions instead of the usual 60 and that could mean good pitches for the majority of the tournament. With the conditions different from India and pitches expected to be slower, all teams have emphasised on starting from scratch.

CSK and MI renew their

Match: **IPL 2021** Sept 19
30 7:30 pm
Chennai Super Kings
VS
Mumbai Indians
Dubai International Stadium, Dubai

celebrated rivalry to kick start the IPL resumption on Sunday.

Having already played half of their 14 league games, MI, who have three wins from seven games, can't afford another slow start.

CSK, aka Dad's Army, finally seemed to have found a winning combination after the disappointment of 2020. Their young guns like Rituraj Gaikwad and Sam Curran delivered in the first half of the season while their spinners -- Imran Tahir, Moeen Ali and Ravindra Jadeja -- also came to the party. Moeen and Jadeja also impressed with the bat.

Now the team will be hoping its stalwarts, skipper Dhoni and Suresh Raina, too find their touch.

MI, on the other hand, will be hoping to up their game like they often do in pressure situations. Their famed middle-order did not exactly set the

stage on fire and their bowling in the powerplay also can be better.

Skipper Rohit Sharma, who has been in stellar touch of late, will be expected to continue in the same vein and the likes of Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and leggie Rahul Chahar, come into the event a more confident trio having made the World Cup squad.

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya would be expected to bowl regularly in the tournament which will also tell the India selectors on how he is shaping ahead of the ICC showpiece.

The teams which have been affected by withdrawals of key players include Punjab Kings, Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders, who all are struggling to survive in the competition.

Punjab had to seek replace-

Chennai Super Kings
Total IPL matches played: 186
Won: 111 Lost: 74
Highest total: 246/5 No results: 1

Mumbai Indians
Total IPL matches played: 210
Won: 124 Lost: 86
Highest total: 223/6

Head-to-Head in IPL
Matches played: 31
GSK Won: 12 MI Won: 19
Highest total: 218/4 Highest total: 219/6
KBK SportsGraphics

ments for Dawid Malan, Riley Meredith and Jhye Richardson. They managed to rope in the services of rising Australian

pacer Nathan Ellis to boost their death bowling. England leggie Adil Rashid too has come into the squad.

Hasaranga and Chameera have provided new dimension to team: Kohli

PTI ■ DUBAI

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli on Saturday said his side will not take the good showing in the first leg of the IPL for granted, adding that latest additions, including Sri Lanka's Wanidu Hasaranga and Dushmantha Chameera, have added a new dimension to the team.

The IPL-14, which was suspended midway into the league in May owing to multiple COVID-19 cases in its bio-bubble, will resume in the UAE on Sunday.

RCB are missing the services of a few of their players who featured in the first leg, including the Australian duo of Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson.

"We have made changes, we've got a few replacements. Kane Richardson, Adam Zampa who were with us in the first leg, made a decision not to play in the second leg for reasons which are absolutely understandable," Kohli said at the unveiling of team's blue jersey.

"The replacements we have got for those guys are two players who know these conditions, the conditions in the sub continent around this time are similar.

"Wanidu Hasaranga, Dushmantha Chameera have played so much cricket in Sri Lanka and know how to play in pitches like these. Their skill sets will be of huge help to us.

"We haven't spoken at all on what we have missed out on because players have pulled out. We feel stronger, the new additions have given us a new dimension," Kohli added.

RCB are currently placed third in the league table, having won five of their seven matches but the skipper said the team will start the second phase with the same passion and commitment they showed in April-May.

"Having played the game for so long at this level you understand that whether you are seven wins in a row you have to start the eighth with the same passion and commitment and professionalism.

"Whether you have no wins out of five games you still have to find motivation and the passion inside to go out



and change the result. You can't take anything for granted.

"On the outside there are many analyses and data points but the game is not played on that. The game is never about information from the outside it is about reaction, belief in certain moments, game plans and making sure you have the will and commitment to execute those plans."

Asked if the players not getting enough time to spend as a group ahead of the tournament affect preparations in any way, Kohli said the team's performance in the first half instilled a lot of confidence.

"It is an important factor (players joining the squad at different times) but that isn't going to take away from what we set out to achieve and what we already set in motion in the last time.

"We had a great start to IPL 2021 to the campaign and that is a driving factor that we can play a certain brand of cricket that we have already shown in the first leg with really strong and consistent performances, every player chipping in somewhere or the other etc."

RCB are slated to take on Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday in Abu Dhabi and the Kohli-led RCB players will be wearing blue jerseys resembling the colour of the PPE kits of frontline warriors.

These signed jerseys will be auctioned and the proceeds will be used for free vaccination among lesser privileged communities in India.

Mumbai pick Roosh Kalaria as replacement for injured Mohsin

PTI ■ DUBAI

Defending champions Mumbai Indians have added fast bowling all-rounder Roosh Kalaria to their main squad as a replacement for the injured Mohsin Khan for the UAE leg of the IPL.

The 28-year-old Kalaria had travelled to Abu Dhabi with the Mumbai Indians squad as a back-up player, and now has earned his first IPL contract. Kalaria was part of the India U-19 team in the 2012 ICC U-19 cricket World Cup.

He has been a key player for Gujarat in the domestic cricket over the years since his debut in 2012.



Kalaria was inducted in the squad on Saturday during the team's training session. The lucrative league resumes here on Sunday with a much-awaited clash between five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians and three-time winners Chennai Super Kings.

Tried sitting on balcony to get acclimatised to conditions: Pant

PTI ■ DUBAI

Coming off a long tour of the United Kingdom, Delhi Capitals captain Rishabh Pant sought to get acclimatised to the UAE's extreme heat by spending time on the balcony of his hotel room during the mandatory quarantine.

However, it was still not comfortable when he did his first training session on Friday ahead of the IPL's resumption.

Pant said that he is currently focussing on getting used to the conditions in the UAE. "It's pretty hot here in the UAE. I was trying to sit on the balcony during my quarantine period as much as possible to get used to the conditions. But, it still felt quite hot



when I took part in my first practice session here.

"I'm just trying to get used to the conditions now and hopefully, I will be fully acclimatised to the conditions in 2-3 days," Pant said in a release issued by Delhi Capitals.

eight matches.

"Our ultimate goal is to win the trophy, but we are going to focus on our process. Hopefully, we can continue to play the way we did in the first half of the IPL 2021 season and we can go on and win the IPL trophy this year," said Pant.

He has also expressed his excitement about meeting his teammates after completing his quarantine period.

"It's really nice to meet everyone after coming out of quarantine. It's been great meeting the teammates here in training."

Delhi Capitals will take on Sunrisers Hyderabad on September 22, in their first match on resumption.

No regrets on book launch, no-one got Covid from that party: Shastri

PTI ■ LONDON

London, Sep 18 (PTI) India head coach Ravi Shastri says he has no regrets about organising the book launch, which was widely perceived to be the reason for a COVID-19 outbreak that forced the cancellation of the fifth Test against England in Manchester.

Shastri, fielding coach R Sridhar, bowling coach Bharath Arun and physio Nitin Patel were found infected during the Oval Test and when junior physio Yogesh Parmar's test came positive ahead of the fifth Test in Manchester, the game was controversially called off with India leading the series 2-1.

There were reports of people not wearing masks at the event.

"I have absolutely no regrets because the people I met at that function were fabulous. And it was good for the boys to get out and meet different people rather than constantly being in their rooms," said Shastri in an interview to "The Guardian".

"At the Oval Test, you were climbing stairs used by 5,000 people. So to point a finger at a book launch?"



he asked.

"...but I wasn't worried because incubation probably takes weeks. There were about 250 people there and no-one got COVID from that party."

Talking about his time in isolation, Shastri said: "It was funny because in my 10 days, I didn't have a single symptom barring a little sore throat. I never had any temperature and my oxygen level was 99 per cent all the time."

"I didn't take any medication through 10 days of my isolation, not a single paracetamol. I tell the guys: 'Once you're double jabbed, it's a bloody 10-day flu. That's it!'"

The book launch got even more attention after the fifth Test was can-

celled with the outcome of the series yet to be decided.

Asked if he was made the scapegoat in the aftermath of the abandoned Test, Shastri said the truth was otherwise.

"I've not got it at my book launch because it was on the 31st (August) and I tested positive on 3 September. It can't happen in three days. I think I got it in Leeds. England opened up on 19 July and suddenly the hotels were back, lifts were back. No restrictions."

Shastri said he wasn't involved in the decision to not play the Manchester Test while he was isolating in London. He also didn't discuss the matter with the players.

"No. I didn't know who had got it. I didn't know (the junior physio) got it suddenly and tested positive. He physically treated five or six players. I think that's where the issue started. We were aware that the incubation period meant that someone might get it in the middle (of the Test)."

"A lot of players had their families there. So it became a situation where you don't know what that player is thinking."

BCCI may approach Anil Kumble, VVS Laxman for head coach's post

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Life may come to a full circle for Anil Kumble as the Sourav Ganguly-led BCCI might ask him to apply for the post of head coach of the Indian team along with VVS Laxman once Ravi Shastri finishes his term after the T20 World Cup.

Kumble was the coach of the Indian team for a year between 2016-17 when the Cricket Advisory Committee headed by Sachin Tendulkar, Laxman and Ganguly had appointed him, replacing Shastri.

However, a bitter fall-out with captain Virat Kohli led to Kumble tendering his resignation after the Champions Trophy final defeat against Pakistan.

Along with Kumble, the board may also approach Laxman, who has been a mentor of the IPL side Sunrisers Hyderabad for some years now.

However, Kumble will be favourite even as Laxman will also remain in contention.

"Anil Kumble's exit needs course correction. The manner in which the CoA succumbed to the pressure of Kohli and removed him, wasn't the best example set. However, it also depends on whether Kumble or Laxman are ready to apply for the job," a senior BCCI source privy to development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Kohli has already announced that he will quit as T20 captain after the World Cup.

For the BCCI brass, a reputed Indian coach



is always the first choice and both Kumble and Laxman with their stature in Indian cricket with 100 plus Test matches along with coaching experience fit the bill perfectly. A foreign coach is the second option.

"The criteria for BCCI's coach's job will be such that only a select few with very good record as player as well as experience of coaching/mentorship can apply for the top job," the source said.

Asked if Vikram Rathour is in contention, the official said, "He can apply if he wishes to but he doesn't have the stature to become a head coach of the Indian cricket team."

"He is at best an assistant coach. However, when we select the new coach, he will have a team all by himself. So let's wait and watch," the source concluded.

Dhoni as mentor will benefit bowling: Sehwaag

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mahendra Singh Dhoni was always a bowlers' captain in white ball cricket and his presence as team mentor for the T20 World Cup will immensely benefit Jasprit Bumrah and Co, feels former India opener Virender Sehwaag.

Dhoni was recently named mentor for the mega event by the BCCI.

"I am very happy that MS accepted the offer to be the Team Mentor for the T20 World Cup. I know many people want that MS should again comeback into the mainstream of Indian cricket and being roped in as the mentor is the best thing that could have happened," Sehwaag told PTI in an exclusive interview.

Sehwaag, who has played alongside Dhoni for a decade, knew what his core strength was as a captain and that is under-

standing his bowlers' psyche in limited overs format.

"As a keeper, MS was exceptional with his understanding of field placements and this is something that will help the bowling unit in this World Cup. The bowlers can pick his brains and get useful tips on planning against a batsman," the explosive opener of yesteryears said.

For Sehwaag, there can't be a better 'mentor' than Dhoni when it comes to young players, who are a bit introvert and need someone to guide them as they try to express themselves on the field.

"There are always players in any international side, who are shy and do hesitate to go up to their skipper and strike up a cricketing conversation. MS has always been that kind of a person who is easily approachable and also a perfect trouble shooter for youngsters."

While the BCCI has announced the 15-member squad with three reserves, Sehwaag believes that with ICC giving a window to change teams till October 10, there could still be room for some good performers, who have missed the bus.

"100%. We have around seven matches minimum left for the teams. That means you still have a platform to perform and those who are on the fringes could still impress the Indian selectors who would be watching the tournament closely.

"Since ICC allows a window to change teams, I will not be surprised if there are some changes in the original squad," the Nawab of Najafgarh said.

Talking about Virat Kohli, Sehwaag said that Kohli at least owes one IPL trophy to Bangalore since he enjoys such a huge fan following.

"IPL is important for every captain but

I think more so for Virat as with his huge fan base, everyone wants Virat to win a trophy for the Bangalore franchise. If not multiple times then at least once in his tenure as captain," the 42-year-old said.

"This has been a strange year off the field due to pandemic and who knows it might be a different year for Bangalore from previous seasons and they go on to win the trophy," said Sehwaag.

Just like that last edition of IPL in the UAE, Sehwaag again feels that Mumbai and Delhi are favourites to win the tournament.



Bengaluru might face some problems.

"Chennai's average score in India was 201 during the first phase but I think when it comes to UAE tracks, they would be lacking a bit in batting firepower. If I have to pick one team, that will be Mumbai."

He said that for Chennai, after such a long gap, it might take "some more matches" to settle down and get into the "groove".



Pelé in 'semi-intensive' care, daughter says he's doing well

AP ■ SAO PAULO

Brazilian soccer great Pelé "took a little step back" in his recovery from surgery to remove a tumor from his colon but he is "recovering well" at a Sao Paulo hospital, his daughter Kely Nascimento said.

However, the Albert Einstein hospital said the 80-year-old Edson Arantes do Nascimento had returned to intensive care after "a brief breathing instability" Thursday night. Pelé was currently stable in "semi-intensive" care, the hospital said, and he "continues recovering." It did not give further details.

Kely Nascimento posted a picture Friday with her father on Instagram which she said she had just taken in his room at the Albert Einstein hospital.

"He is recovering well and within normal range. Promise!" Kely Nascimento said.

"The normal recovery scenario for a man of his age after an operation like this is sometimes two steps forward and one step back. Yesterday he was tired and took a little step back."

"Today he took two forwards!" she added, without giving more details.

The hospital had not previously issued a new statement on Pelé's health since Tuesday, when he was removed from intensive care.

Later Pelé confirmed on social media that he is feeling well and that he had been visited by family members during the day. "I continue to smile every day. Thank you for all the love I get from you," Pelé said. The tumor was found when Pelé went for routine exams at the end of August. His surgery took place on Sept. 4.

Pelé won the 1958, 1962 and 1970 World Cups, and remains Brazil's all-time leading scorer with 77 goals in 92 matches.

talktime

FLORA SAINI

The actor who made her debut with Tollywood and has done Blooywood projects like Begum Jaan and Bahut Hua Samman speaks with Shalini Saksena about her latest film Kaboom, her role and how she got into acting

'TO BE AN ACTOR ONE HAS TO BE BRAVE'



What's your role in Kaboom?

I play an office going girl. It's been a lot of fun because in office you make friends with a lot of people, you like few of them and there are friends who would totally change the course of your life. It's a story of five guys and all the women in their lives.

How is it different from other roles you have done?

I have played an office going lady before but it is slightly different. No two characters can be the same. You could probably dress up alike but characters would be different. For example, in *Inside Edge* and *City of Dreams*, I'll be dressed the same way but the roles are different. All characters are different. In *Kaboom*, I have not been a part of such a story before. That is what excited me and made me say yes.

How did you get into acting?

After my Board, I had a lot of time while waiting for the result. I ended up walking the ramp that my mom and aunty had asked me to participate in. Then I took part in beauty contest in Delhi. I was the first runner's up. It was a huge moment for me. I went to Mumbai, did an acting course. In the second month into my training I got my first Telugu film. While I was doing my first film, I signed my second, a major blockbuster, which got me a ticket to Bollywood.

What were the challenges that came your way to make space in the entertainment industry?

Many. Even after I had lost weight I still had the baby fat on my face and body. I have gone through so much rejection. I got work in the South but everytime I came to Mumbai



EVEN AFTER I HAD LOST WEIGHT I STILL HAD THE BABY FAT ON MY FACE AND BODY. I HAVE GONE THROUGH SO MUCH REJECTION. I GOT WORK IN THE SOUTH BUT EVERYTIME I CAME TO MUMBAI AND AUDITIONED, I WAS REJECTED & TOLD TO LOSE WEIGHT



and auditioned, they would just say: "Sorry, please lose weight. Second would be the challenge of meeting good and bad people and knowing the difference. Third would be having periods of no work. Every actor has to be brave to be an actor. But it has been a fun ride with lots of lessons learnt."

You have primarily worked in Tollywood. How did Bollywood happen?

I always wanted to do Bollywood. Tollywood happened by chance and I am glad it did. In Bombay, I only got rejections to begin with. My mom was a teacher and the principal of that school was the producer of my first film, *Love in Nepal*. It was my faith that I started with South and Hindi happened because they knew I am working in South.

From Punjabi to Telugu to Tamil to Hindi movies how has the journey been thus far?

The journey has been amazing. But I have many miles to go. I am grateful that I am at present, in the best phases of life.

Is there a co-star you loved working with?

There are lots. I have learnt something or the other from all of them. But I would like to talk about Sonu Nigam. We were shooting for *Love in Nepal* (2003). It was November-December in Nepal and very cold. We were shooting a song and all the locals came and sat on the wall of the bungalow. Someone asked him to sing a song and he did. He is a people's person. That's what I loved about him. What I have learnt was that it is the love of people that makes you a star. I never heard him saying no, he would do anything and everything.

Bolly World

Rashmi Agdekar on The Interns 2

The *Rashmi* actress Rashmi Agdekar will be seen in the upcoming web series *The Interns 2* on September 24.

The young actress is known for her debut web series *Dev DD* and *Im Mature*, where she played the lead role.

In a candid chat, Rashmi shared about being part of *The Interns 2*.

"I'm so excited for this season. Season 1 received so much love. This season we'll see more of the intern life, everyone who has gone through an internship will totally relate to the series," said Rashmi, who made her Bollywood debut in *Anhadhun*.

The actress will be seen alongside Ahsaas Channa, Revathi Pillai and Khushbu Baid, in the series directed by Durin Das. "This series is close to my heart as I got to work with people who are also my friends, Rashmi said.



— IANS

PM Modi biopic starring Vivek Oberoi

The biopic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, starring Vivek Anand Oberoi, titled *PM Narendra Modi* is going to get a digital release.

Talking about the movie, Vivek said: "I have immense respect for our Prime Minister, and it was an honour to have been given an opportunity to be able to tell his story to the world, through cinema."

"It traces Modi's journey from his modest origins to his historic victory as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and eventually his nomination as the Prime Minister of India. I feel immense pleasure that this inspirational story will now have a wider reach with the release," he said.



IANS

Masterstroke

It appears that the rain Gods are here to stay for some more time. Monsoons are seen as beauty and rage, all in one frame. This is the time when the windows call for all those outdoor shades, indoor blinds, multi-layered curtains and sheer shutters designed to watch over your space.

The cloudburst and drizzles are cloaked in all different forms— intricate finespun drapery, clean-lined bamboo louvres, woven jute rollers and quilted curtains have a unique take on the interior persona. The sheer choices befit the spaces overlooking good vistas and lighter showers, while opaque alternatives become the first choice for a rougher microclimate.

With an aesthetic overlay of motifs, botanical prints or chintz patterns, these shades are everything we need on a rainy day. — Courtesy Punam Kalra, Creative Director, I'm The Centre for Applied Arts



NatureTalk

It is not always possible to ensure that the plant that you bring is going to live. Hence, it is important to take care of it properly. Let's take the pitcher plant. So how does one take care of it if one wants to keep it indoors even if it is a carnivorous plant?

Depending on the species, some require full sunlight and those that originate in the floor of the rainforest may need filtered light. It requires moist soil, keep the potting soil moist, but not soggy. Allow the pot to drain thoroughly after watering and never let the pot stand in water or the roots will rot.



A NOE BOLT IDEA

Wheelchair users are generally restricted within the four walls of their homes. However, now a motorised wheelchair developed by IIT Madras is transforming the lives of the physically challenged. SHALINI SAKSENA tells you more

India is still not a very friendly when it comes to movement for the physically challenged. However, a lot has changed and now malls and many theatres have ramps. Yet, there movement is entirely dependent on a family member or a friend. But what if there was a way where these people could be independent in their movement? Go to the market? Go to work without having to depend on others? All this and much more is now possible.

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras has developed the country's first indigenous motorised wheelchair vehicle that can be used not only on roads but even on uneven terrains!

The NeoBolt as the vehicle is called makes it possible for the wheelchair user to move with a convenient, safe and low-cost mode of outdoor mobility. The motorised wheelchair has been developed by a team led by Professor Sujatha Srinivasan, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Madras and commercialised through a start-up NeoMotion and co-founded by Srinivasan and an IIT Madras alumnus Swostik Sourav Dash who is the CEO.

Interestingly Professor Srinivasan also led the team that developed India's first indigenous-designed standing wheelchair — Arise. It helps a wheelchair user to shift from sitting to standing position.

Professor Srinivasan who is also the faculty head, TTK Center for Rehabilitation Research and Device Development tells you that their vision is to transform the disability landscape in India by creating functional and affordable assistive devices. Dash says that the features of the

NeoBolt are available only in the global market but these are at least three to five times more expensive. After graduating from IIT Madras and working in the corporate sector for a couple of years, Dash decided that he had had enough and he wanted to get back to product designing that has social impact.

"To begin with, we launched standing wheelchair. In 2015, while travelling for one design and development product, I interacted with around 200 wheelchair users across 40 locations. It was during these interactions that we understood the ground reality — what kind of wheelchairs people have been using and the challenges that came with it. Based on our findings in 2016, we started NeoMotion," Dash says.

One is told that the NeoFly is the first wheelchair in the country that is customised to the user. It is built to provide comfort, efficient propulsion, higher manoeuvrability and superior ergonomics. This means more comfort for the user with no back pain due to sitting long hours on the wheelchair.

It is estimated that three lakh wheelchairs are sold annually in India, of these 2.5 lakh are imported. Nearly 95 per cent of all wheelchairs sold are one-size-fits-all, which restricts mobility and damages health.

"Once we realised what the market was like, we decided to develop NeoFly, a customise wheelchair. The advantage is that it covers three to five times more distance for every push since the user has the right posture, a rigid frame and an ergonomic push-rim. As the wheelchair is conforms to user's body, the user more visible than the wheelchair. Also, the cushion, that comes with each of our



wheelchair is designed to enhance skincare, stability and ease of transfer," Dash explains.

But this is not all. The best part of the NeoFly is that it can be converted into a NeoBolt — a motor-powered clip-on. In other words, after the 18 customised paramentres that are taken into consideration while designing the wheelchair for better comfort of the user, the motorised clip-on makes it possible for the user to be independent; he can drive up to 25 km for a round trip. "With an additional battery this dis-

The motorised wheelchair comes with great features. It has safety anti-tippers, digital dashboard, headlight, side indicators, horn and a mirror. It was a reverse function and a telescopic suspension

ance can increased," Dash says.

So, how does it work? The wheelchair comes with a design that makes it possible for the user to attach the wheelchair to a motorised part in such a manner that from the front it looks like a bike. Once the wheelchair is clipped in and locked, it gets converted into a safe, road-worthy vehicle that can navigate any kind of terrain. It can drive through unpaved streets or climb a steep gradient. To be able to do this easily and comfortably it has suspensions to absorb the shocks. If this did not impress you here are some more features that are an eye-opener. It has safety anti-tippers (prevents the wheelchair from tipping over on the road), a digital dashboard, headlight, side indicators, horn and a mirror. It was a reverse function, has telescopic suspension with a rugged built chassis. The motorised wheelchair has a speed of 25 km per hour and travels up to 25 km per charge. It is powered by a lithium-ion battery.

Till now, the start-up has sold has sold over 600 such wheelchairs across 28 States. "The feedback has been positive. People can go and see the demo units that are available at 15 dealer outlets and four rehabilitation centres in major cities. Also, the entire customisation is done remotely. It takes around 35-40 days for it to reach the user's doorstep," Dash says.

The personalised wheelchair is available at ₹39,900 and the motorised add-on is available at ₹55,000. Though the price may be high given that normal wheelchair costs around ₹7,000, the benefits that this wheelchair offers is worth every penny.

Those looking for EMI options, can pre-book with ₹1,000 by registering on company website," Dash says.

GOUROV DASGUPTA, who composed music for films like *Chehre*, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about his solo compositions and other upcoming projects

'It has been a tough year for music'

Bhuj: The Pride of India is a war movie. How is composing different here?

It was extremely challenging to compose it. I went to Amazon and ordered myself a Khaki shirt and pants, an army jacket, a helmet and a toy gun. I took my guitar, sat on my balcony and made Hanjugam. Later I got in touch with my lyricist Devshi Khanduri, she wrote the most incredible lyrics and Jubin Nautiyal sang it.

You have released two singles this year Saiyonee and Dream Main Entry. How different is the experience working on an independent track then a movie track?

Indie music is at par with Bollywood and in some ways has actually surpassed it because in the last two years due to the lockdown Bollywood has taken a back seat to a great extent, which breaks my heart completely. But independent music is at an

all time high and *Saiyonee* was my last song with Sony music, I did eight singles with them.

Dream Main Entry is my first association on the independent music front with Saregama. I have done film *Total Dhamaal* with them and it was really huge. I was surprised at the way Saregama handled and executed this song as I personally did not expect the song to be as big as it is.

Your track from Chehre is receiving a lot of love? How was the overall experience while working on the track?

Composing for *Chehre* was really challenging because to be working with Emraan Hashmi, you can't fool him with an average song. He is someone who goes hand in hand with good music since the time I can remember. He understands his music. When a song works, you already know it in your heart so, this is one song I am very proud of.



How tough has it been since the pandemic?

It has been tough, we didn't see it coming. It has been

tough on the entire industry, especially the music industry because so many artists were dependent on the shows and gigs for livelihood. But there has been a complete blast on the digital forefront as far as music is concerned. Hopefully there will be a filter soon where we will know what is good and what is not.

What are your upcoming projects?

I have a few very interesting films and a couple of singles coming out soon. Just that in our industry till you finally see your name on the list, you really don't know what is happening anymore. Those times are gone when you would verbally commit to a film and then it would just sail through. Now, anyone can be replaced on the 11th hour. So, I am a little superstitious about that but I will definitely keep my fan posted as there are a lot of interesting releases this year.

Sound of music

Music is the best medicine. Here are the top 10 songs of the week that will lift up your weekend mood

BOLLYWOOD VIBES

- Mann Bharryaa 2.0 (B Praak)
- Baarish Ban Jaana (Stebin Ben, Payal Dev)
- Bepanah Ishq (Yasser Desai, Payal Dev)
- Sakhiyan 2.0 (Maninder Buttar, Zara Khan)
- Ishq Mein (Sachet Tandon)

ENGLISH VINGLISH

- ILY (Surf Mesa)
- Where Are You (Otricka)
- Butter (BTS)
- Willow (Taylor Swift)
- Stuck With You (Ariana Grande)

the pioneer agenda

You have to be the best of whatever you are, but successful, cool actresses come in all shapes and sizes
—Jessica Alba



FROM THE INSIDE

Taming the dragon

Blinkers Off serves as an important tool in understanding that the threat Beijing poses is multi-dimensional, & response to it should also be the same

2



4

Turn Ahamkara into asset

How you negotiate the present, defines the way future may unfold, and which could stretch on even to the next birth



MAKING OTT PLATFORMS PROFITABLE IN INDIA

If streaming services are looking at making profits in India, they should adapt to regional realities, start thinking creatively and take a leaf out of what has worked globally, writes AJAYYA KUMAR

The Covid-19 induced lockdown might have given a shot in the arm for streaming services, but making substantial profits in the Indian market still remains an elusive dream for most of them. In the financial year 2020, Netflix India recorded a revenue of Rs 924 Crore and managed to eke out a marginal profit of Rs 9 crore. The streaming giant's overall profits globally for the same year stood at a whopping \$2.8 billion.

Disney+Hotstar in India, on the other hand, recorded revenue to the tune of Rs 1629 Crore with losses amounting to Rs 362 crore. Hotstar is currently India's largest streaming platform with a subscriber base of 300 million.

According to an analysis by Media Partners Asia, India's online video market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 26 per cent over 2020-25 to reach US\$4.5 billion. Another report by Boston Consulting Group notes that the OTT video streaming market alone in India is set to touch US\$5 billion by 2023. And for a share of this pie contend not just Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+Hotstar, but around 30 streaming platforms including AltBalaji, Zee5, SonyLiv, MXPlayer, ManoramaMax, Neestream, and so on.

The right revenue model still remains an enigma, thanks to the uniqueness of the Indian market. There are no proven models in the Indian media industry to show that subscription-led growth is if at all possible. Be it the newspapers or entertainment channels, the advertisement brings in the lion's share of the revenue. While Netflix and Amazon Prime banks entirely on subscriber revenue, Disney+Hotstar which has a base of both paid and unpaid subscribers see its share of ad revenue coming in through the advertisements shown to the unpaid subscribers. While it is yet to be cracked which of these models would ultimately work, there are few things streaming platforms could work on meanwhile.

EXPLORE THE UNEXPLORED

On June 1, 2021, a review of the Malayalam Movie *Joji*, starring Fahadh Fazil and directed by Dileesh Pothan, appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine. This wasn't the first time the international magazine reviewed an Indian movie. In fact, on April 15 it had published Richard Brody's take on *Davidha*, the 1973 film by Mani Kaul. But *Joji* was different. For one it was a regional language movie. And rarely has international media recognised non-Hindi movies, probably with the exception of the works of Satyajit Ray, as Indian movies. To take a review seriously or not is one thing. But to me, it was the beginning of a change; Undeniably the world is starting to take note of Indian regional content, especially from the South. Now, this is a moment to be seized; not only by the language movie industry but also by the OTT players that are looking to turn profitable in the Indian market.

If *Joji* premiered on Amazon Prime, *The Great Indian Kitchen*, yet another Malayalam movie that garnered critical acclaim from across the world, made its first appearance on Neestream, a regional OTT platform. The movie later became available on Amazon Prime too. *Nayattu* and *Jagame Thandhiram* streaming on Netflix, *C U Soon*, *Kuruthi* and *Karnan* streaming on Amazon Prime and *Netrikam* streaming on Disney+Hotstar are some of the notable movies from regional productions that premiered on international OTT platforms during the pandemic season. Some of the other notable Malayalam films currently streaming include *Aarkkariyam* and *Santhoshathinte Onnam Rahasyam*, while the Tamil movie industry came together to produce the anthology *Navarasa* now running on Netflix.

Meanwhile what particularly stands out is the glaring absence of any noteworthy productions from the behemoth that is Bollywood. Clearly, it is the regional language movies that have helped the streaming platforms to offer a diverse range of content and cash in on the subscription surge during the pandemic. This is a signboard. The first step towards profitability for OTT platforms is to spot the industries that are nimble, agile, dynamic and quick to adapt to the changing socio-economic circumstances. But the efforts shouldn't stop at simply sourcing the content. Given the diversity of movie industries in India, streaming platforms are looking at a cornucopia of possibilities.

Let's start from the South. Given the high literacy rates in the Southern states, OTT platforms are looking at a large market for their English and international content. While *The New Yorker* might have reviewed *Joji* this year, what is to be noted is that there already exists an international audience for Malayalam movies and a Malayali audience for international movies, thanks to IFFK and various other film festivals.

Then there is the large Indian diaspora outside the country. According to a report by the United Nations, India has the world's largest diaspora population — 18 million — living outside the country. A large part of them is Malayalis, Tamils, and Punjabis. In other words, by exploring regional content, streaming platforms would be striking a goldmine.

OFFER MORE DIVERSITY, LEARN FROM WHAT HAS WORKED INTERNATIONALLY

Streaming services in India should take a leaf out of what has worked internationally for their global counterparts.

According to news reports, French show *Lupin* streamed on Netflix held the number one spot in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Germany, Italy and Spain and the number two spot in the US. This only means one thing — out there, there seems to be a genuine and ever-increasing demand for premium non-Anglophone content. In this sense, India is a

goldmine for streaming services with its linguistic diversity.

But linguistic diversity alone doesn't serve the purpose. Barring a handful of shows or movies, Indian content has not been able to create much of a ripple in the international arena, owing to the relatively poor quality of the content.

Now here is something to consider. One of the features that have set Netflix a class apart from its competitors globally is its huge investment in original content. Reports suggest that in 2019 about 85% of its new spending was set apart for original content, more than any of its competitors dared to. In India too Netflix has taken a lead by setting up its first global post-production facility in Mumbai.

Producing original content of all hues and (Indian) languages with strict quality checks for a pan-Indian and international audience could work magic for Indian streaming services. Keep experimenting and do not hesitate to disrupt your own revenue/content models if need be. Because now this is a bus that OTT platforms cannot afford to miss.

ROPE IN THE STALWARTS

What streaming platforms should further aim is to bring traditional producers into their folds. If the initial focus of OTT platforms was to license existing content, the pandemic has changed their course of action to producing original content and premiering movies. But there is still a large section of producers who are wary of these platforms. These traditional producers have been deciding the ways of the industry for a long time. Many of them are actors and even superstars controlling production, distribution, and the overall dynamics of the industry. Alienating them or even appearing as a threat to their business would in no way bode well for the new-age players.

But if streaming platforms could come up with ways to accommodate them and make a business model around it, it would be a win-win for all. OTT services so far have more or less been working with the new crop of movie makers from the regional cinema and have been able to successfully give shape to new movie aesthetics and language. Roping in the traditional players would be the cherry on top and will help attract a wider segment of the audience. For example, consider streaming services tying up with AMMA, the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists. Such a partnership would mean that now the streaming services would get to enjoy the benefits of the clout wielded by the stalwarts of the industry, while the industry reaps the benefits of being in alliance with platforms that are international, sophisticated, and professional. If streaming services this way get a dip in the massive pool of talent, for artists and technicians it would mean more work even during crisis times like the pandemic and therefore more stability.

Such partnerships would also help to usher in a world where theatres do not view OTT platforms as a threat. It would open up a new world of complementary existence where theatres would still benefit from the rush during the initial release and for sustained viewing and wider reach, there would be the OTTs. And no doubt, the ultimate winner would be the movie itself which would get the grand release it deserves without worrying about 'running' days being cut short as new movies come in.

In a nutshell, being creative in the ways it associates with the movie industry and its stakeholders should be the way forward for OTT services.

EXPERIMENT WITH DYNAMIC CONTENT

While all that is said about static content, what still remains uncharted territory for streaming services is dynamic content. Exploring live content like music concerts and stand-up comedy will help the OTT players further their reach and bring in a new audience who have been deprived of live shows during the pandemic. It is in fact surprising that such programmes are still largely hosted on video communication platforms like Zoom given that the pandemic has been the perfect opportunity for the Netflixes and Amazon Primes of the world to experiment with it.

If you are further looking to expand your reach, ever thought of news and the popularity of news programmes in India? Sure, there may be regulatory issues for OTT channels to broadcast news as of now. But, learn from the radio. In India, All India Radio holds the right to broadcast news and current affairs programmes, and private broadcasting stations are prohibited from airing the same. But several FM stations have found workarounds in the form of programmes that are satirical takes on current affairs or other fun variations which are essentially not news programmes, but yet manage to pass on the news to the audience. To sum it up, be creative. If OTT platforms could come up with shows similar to that of 'Last Week Tonight with John Oliver' it is bound to capture the attention of a huge section of the audience.

There is also a growing audience for art and science content. Although streaming services have covered this to an extent, to make it a more balanced mix would be a welcome move.

All that said and done, ultimately the success and profitability of OTT platforms would depend on how well they can gel with our lifestyles. Movies and theatres succeeded by doing the same, by being our oases of entertainment and our weekly escape from reality. Streaming services should pull all stops to replicate the same and leave no stone unturned in this journey.

The writer is an ethical Investor, start-up mentor, art curator and author

“ ACCORDING TO AN ANALYSIS BY MEDIA PARTNERS ASIA, INDIA'S ONLINE VIDEO MARKET IS PROJECTED TO GROW AT A CAGR OF 26 PER CENT OVER 2020-25 TO REACH US\$4.5 BILLION. ANOTHER REPORT BY BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP NOTES THAT THE OTT VIDEO STREAMING MARKET ALONE IN INDIA IS SET TO TOUCH US\$5 BILLION BY 2023. AND FOR A SHARE OF THIS PIE CONTEND NOT JUST NETFLIX, AMAZON PRIME, AND DISNEY+HOTSTAR, BUT AROUND 30 STREAMING PLATFORMS INCLUDING ALTBALAJI, ZEE5, SONYLIV, MXPLAYER, MANORAMAMAX, NEESTREAM, AND SO ON



MASTER BOOKS, BUT DO NOT LET THEM MASTER YOU. READ TO LIVE, NOT LIVE TO READ — EDWARD G. BULWER-LYTTON

TAMING THE DRAGON

Unravelling the many aspects of China's statecraft, *Blinkers Off* serves as an important tool in understanding that the threat Beijing poses is multi-dimensional, and response to it should also be the same, writes MAJ. GEN. DHARUV C KATOCH (Retd)

The transformation of China under the Fourth Generation's leadership has indeed been incredible. China sees itself as taking the lead in world affairs by the middle of this century and towards this end, it seeks to establish the country's primacy in the Asia-Pacific region while concurrently moving towards establishing Chinese leadership of the international order. In Asia, Delhi is Beijing's only economic and geo-strategic rival. No surprise then, that Beijing's policy towards Delhi will continue to be shaped by its desire to achieve pre-eminence in the region.

If successful, what will China's international leadership look like? It would certainly aim at a different world order, in which Chinese interests remain paramount. That, of course, is an objective which all nations strive for. In the case of China, however, it perceives itself as the 'Middle Kingdom', and the 'centre of the universe', around which all other nations revolve. Here, competition would most certainly lead to confrontation. While the Chinese would, in all probability, seek to avoid war with the US, though this does not include proxy wars, they may seek a limited military engagement with India, when they feel that they have the capacity to achieve a decisive result in their favour. That makes a future war scenario with India a certainty, though not so with the US.

In China's world view, they would aim at forcing the US to not just accept, but respect China's authority as the global leader and refrain from harming Chinese interests. The consequences of Chinese success in strategic competition could be severe for the United States and disastrous for India. So what should India and the international communities do, to remain relevant in the world stage?

This book, *Blinkers Off: How Will the World Counter China* (Pentagon Press), authored by senior journalist Gaurie Dwivedi, gives a perspective on a counter strategy. It rests on a fundamental premise that unlike the Cold War, where America was able to take on erstwhile USSR on its own due to its economic and political might, Washington now needs partners to address the challenge of an autocratic and rising China. It presents a 360 degree perspective on building deterrence against an



expansionist Beijing which poses a threat not just to India and the United States, but to the present world order.

Divided into four segments, Dwivedi documents China's rise as it spread its tentacles from Asia to Europe to Africa and makes a case that Beijing's "long term waiting game" was to topple the very institutions of the liberal world that aided its growth. From the WTO to the WHO to the UNHRC; Dwivedi highlights specific instances when China was successful in 'gaming the system'.

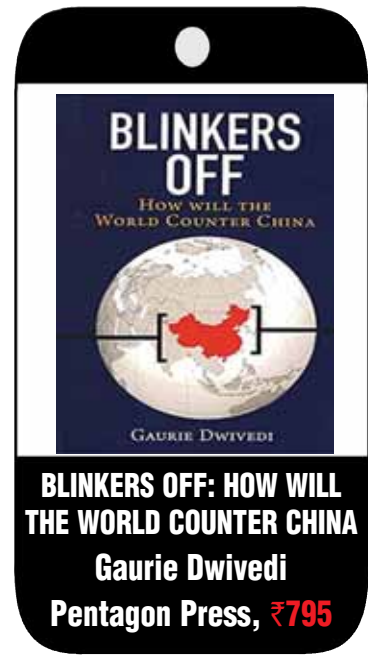
Though written prior to the developments in Afghanistan, *Blinkers Off* suggests that the world has now firmly tilted

towards a bipolar scenario, with China forming a nexus with other authoritarian and likeminded nations like Pakistan, Iran and Russia. The present security climate in Kabul seems to be testimony to the altered geo-political outlook that Dwivedi mentions to be the primary driver for building strong deterrence. Failure to create them would see China further building on its strengths, continuing its wolf warrior diplomacy and pushing the pedal on its hegemonic agenda. This would adversely impact not just India and Asia, but will destabilise the world. For it to be effective, Dwivedi says, the deterrence must encompass both military and non-

military aspects of engagement with China. It also highlights the role India will play in any such global endeavour. Non-military challenges like trade, technology, and information are highlighted as key domains for any potential clash with China, since these may not elicit a sharp response from India, US and others due to the non conventional nature of warfare. Even before the pandemic, the book points out instances when China used such domains to further its global political and military objective.

India, due to its geo-political and geo-economic potential is expected to contribute significantly. In the Indo-Pacific,

where China has gained clout on the back of its large infrastructure investments; *Blinkers Off* suggests a more active maritime and economic role by India. Enhanced utilisation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands beyond the present focus on reconnaissance, larger investments in its naval capabilities and identifying opportunities for collaboration are some of the recommendations for India to counter China's enhanced influence. To provide an alternative for the BRI investments in the Indian Ocean Region, which is India's geo strategic orbit, the book suggests New Delhi could tie up with Japan and America to provide sustainable infra



funding to the smaller nations.

By combining useful insights with vivid language, Dwivedi has presented a case for global cooperation against China and identified newer age dimensions of warfare. Perhaps most interesting is the argument that India could leverage its trade deficit against China since it has been following the same template against other economies. It is the nature of India's trade with China, where it predominantly exports raw materials, needs to undergo a change, rather than the fact that New Delhi is a net importer.

Unravelling the many aspects of China's statecraft, *Blinkers Off* serves as an important tool in understanding that the threat Beijing poses is multi dimensional, and response to it should also be the same. It is hence a must read for those dealing with foreign policy in the government of India, to all in the Indian military fraternity, the think tanks, the educational institutes as also to all China watchers in the lay public.

The reviewer is Director, India Foundation and Editor, Salute Magazine

NEW ARRIVALS

THE DON'T-DIET PLAN: A NO-NONSENSE GUIDE TO WEIGHT LOSS
Kavita Devgan
Rupa, ₹295

Say goodbye to fad diets, restrictive eating or other forced behaviours that do not come naturally to you. Weight loss is a journey that must be traversed with patience, over time (just like you gained weight over time). In this book, you will learn how to: lose weight in a sustainable, permanent way; stop living in the fear of food; make small changes that would lead to big paybacks; and draw from your ancestors about hearty eating habits.

Bestselling author Kavita Devgan offers strategies that she has tried and tested as a practising weight-loss consultant with over thousands of patients. With her practical advice that are easily inculcated, you will be able to make simple lifestyle changes that will lead to a more vibrant, confident and healthier you.

VULTURES OF PARADISE
Atulya Misra
Rupa, ₹495

A story of greed, love and sacrifice narrated in the backdrop of a crippling human tragedy. Acclaimed author Atulya Misra tells a gripping and powerful story that traverses numerous cultures and geographies. The story follows the life of Neha, who, at first, is driven by blind ambition. The heights she achieves in business dissipate once she starts spiralling in the opposite direction. Just when she appears to be an abysmal failure in the eyes of everyone, Neha creates a corporation to counter the biggest threat to the planet—the human propensity to consume endlessly and create more and more waste. Her enterprise becomes so large and successful that it becomes a danger to the very people who created it. Humanity has been a parasite for long enough on this planet. It's time we become vultures and clean up our habitat.

Becoming a National Champion

Swimming Against the Tide: True Story of Para Swimmer by Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu is a true story of an extraordinary sportsperson who challenged her circumstances and physical disability to overcome the odds to emerge as a winner. An edited extract

Many of my friends suggested that I try my luck in Paralympics. I learned from the Internet that Dr Dabas was the head of Para Swimming Federation of India. His contact number was also available on Google. So I contacted him and expressed my wish. He informed me that he used to frequently visit Chennai for some work and promised to let me know when he would plan his next visit.

After a few months, I contacted him again. He told me that he was about to call and inform me about his forthcoming visit to Chennai. I thought it would be great if I arranged a get-together with all our well-wishers when he would visit Chennai; I needed a venue for the same. So I requested Gita, the head of corporate affairs at my work, for her permission to arrange the meeting in our office. She accepted my request and also agreed to make all the arrangements, including to provide refreshments.

I invited all our well-wishers and the people who had approached me after reading the article in *The Hindu*; Anand, Dr Karthik (who was my pool mate), Mr Narsa Reddy, Father Antony Samy, Dr Rema Devi, Ms Uthira and Sai were also there. Dr Dabas attended the meeting and explained his efforts to promote para swimming in India through a nice presentation. We then explained our plans to create and increase awareness on hydrotherapy/swimming in Tamil Nadu. The guests also shared their experiences in supporting our efforts. Dr Dabas suggested us to form Tamil Nadu State-level Paralympic Swimming Association and send the participants for the forthcoming nationals to be held in Kolhapur, Maharashtra.

We took Dr Dabas to the Andhra Club pool. Our swimmers exhibited how we practised swimming and sought his guidance to improve our skills. He gave his valuable suggestions to us and appreciated our efforts. We also introduced our coach Gopi to him.

I had a discussion with Anand, Preetha, Dr Rema Devi, Ms Uthira, Sai and other well-wishers. We started the Paralympic Swimming Association of Tamil Nadu informally, with Dr Rema Devi as president, Ms Uthira as vice-president, Preetha as treasurer, myself as the general secretary, Sai as joint secretary, Dr Ponraj as medical director and Anand as technical director. With great efforts, we convinced Rema Devi aunty to be our



Left: Participation that made us champions; Right: PSATN family (Standing from left—Preetha, Anand, Dr Ponraj, Ms Uthira, Sai Krishnan, Sitting—me and Dr Rema Devi)

president. They treat us like their children, so we all thought their guidance would help us in taking this initiative forward successfully. Mr Narsa Reddy accepted to be our patron. We started to practise swimming vigorously. We tried hard to find more people to train but ended up with only four swimmers: Uthira aunty, Venkatesh, Jyothi and myself.

We all went to Kolhapur along with our coach Gopi. At that time, I was feeling a little under the weather as my stomach was upset. I consulted a doctor and took the prescribed medicines. My friends asked me to reconsider my participation but I didn't want to lose the opportunity. Our transit time from Chennai to Kolhapur by train was almost 2 days, with a 10-hour layover at Bengaluru. During the layover, we had to wait at the railway station itself. We were all very tired by the time we reached Kolhapur.

Local organizers told us that they could not make the arrangements as planned, as they did not receive the promised funds from the sponsors. We decided to find an accessible hotel for our stay, as we were not comfortable with their stop-gap arrangements.

By the time we reached there, I started to feel better. It was the 11th National Para Swimming Championship, and our team won eight medals. Venkatesh and I won the championship in our respective categories. It was an amazing moment in my life — winning three gold medals (50-m freestyle, breaststroke and



backstroke) and becoming a national champion at the age of 40+ years. It was an unbelievable achievement even for me. My joy knew no bounds.

There, I could see persons with different types of disabilities to swim with ease. When I saw blind swimmers maintaining a straight line in the pool, I was very surprised. If I close my eyes for a few seconds, I cannot maintain the line of direction in the pool. I was unable to understand how they managed to do it.

We noticed that there were very few participants from South India in the championship. I thought that it might be due to the general notion that these sports are dangerous for persons with disabilities. In my experience, when I tried to encourage participation of children with disabilities, often their parents were reluctant as they thought that swimming was risky for their children. If I tried to convince them by giving my example, they would respond saying that it was possible for me because I was a superwoman and it may not be the case for their kids. As I drive, swim, work for an MNC etc., they thought that I had some extraordinary skills.

Dr Dabas put up the proposal to host the next nationals to various states; I strongly wanted to accept his offer with three aims. First, to create more awareness in South India. Second, to give confidence to the parents of children with disabilities, officials, and the general public. Parents because, I hoped that by seeing the participation of persons with different types of disabilities and different levels of abilities, they would understand the benefits of hydrotherapy and participation in sports. Also, if the concerned officials understood the benefits and the possibility, then the persons with disabilities would get more support. Finally the third, to conduct championships at par with other Olympic sports events. I observed an inferior feeling and sympathy towards adaptive sporting

events among the public instead of treating it like any other sporting event.

Anand also agreed with my views, and we thought of discussing with our association members. On the way back, our coach told us that IITM had a pool with international standards, and if we requested accommodation there, it would be easy to host the event in Chennai. After coming back to Chennai, we called for a meeting with all our members. We all knew that it was going to be a very challenging task. In the meeting, we decided to first register our association officially, and soon thereafter started that process. Dr Rema Devi, with the support of her husband, arranged for an office address and to fulfil all the statutory requirements to register the association and for its functioning.

Also, after coming back to Chennai, we got a lot of media coverage on our achievements in the championship. I gave so many interviews. Everyone wanted to take a video or a photograph of me while swimming for an article. It gave me an opportunity to create more awareness about hydrotherapy/para swimming. Till then, I was the one to reach out to the media, schools and colleges. But now, they started to approach me. It made my job to create more awareness much easier. These articles reached a wider audience, and I received a few invitations from outside Chennai.

At that time, I got an opportunity to give a talk at IITM. I felt very happy. I was looking for an opportunity to connect with them so I could request them to allow us to host the national championship in their pool. My talk was received very well, and I got a standing ovation. Later, I came to know that their pool was under renovation. All my hopes were shattered.

After my talk, many professors wrote to the director of IITM, Professor Bhaskar Ramamurthi, to incorporate the suggestions I gave in my talk to make their pool accessible; he responded to their suggestions positively. The concerned staff from IITM were in touch with me. Later, I connected them with Dr Hutzler for his guidance on the accessible swimming pool, whom I met at a conference in Coimbatore.

Excerpted with permission from *Swimming Against the Tide: True Story of Para Swimmer* by Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu, published by SAGE Publications India

Challenges before US in post-Taliban Af

With great power comes great responsibility. This age-old maxim is a pertinent poser before the American defence and strategic dispensation in a post-Taliban Afghanistan. Americans call their humanitarian and democratic zeal in Afghanistan part of their super cop and regulator stature imbued with yeomanly and philanthropic verve. Undeniably, there is an iota of value-laden foreign policy analysis premised upon what transpires in the larger global polity and the regional dynamics of South Asia. One can also cite, as an attendant strategic constraint, America's failure to justify the long war, as far as the American presence in Afghanistan after September 11 is concerned. President Joe Biden arranged for the American withdrawal from the twilight zone's battle stations but it is not his personal decision. The decision to make the exit had already been taken by President Donald Trump where-in, a deal was struck with the marauding Taliban that Afghanistan will not be deftly utilised as a springboard for terror attacks on the American homeland. President Biden has merely walked the talk as he persisted with the White House's decision to evacuate the American interests from Afghanistan as the culmination of a mission.

The question that we need to ponder over is that is it the kosher time to leave Afghanistan? And, are the detractors correct when they contend that when the United States of America could not neutralise the Taliban in a two decade-long "Long Occupation" and the attendant "Long War", could they have made a difference in the political and security scenario after the Kabul's state forces collapsed without waging any major semblance of aggression and resistance.

Now, in the aftermath of the IS Kohorasan machinated casualties of American marines at the Kabul Airport, will Washington carry out a mission as they had done in 2014 in Iraq as the power vacuum there had been surreptitiously occupied by the Islamic State and its novae dictum of territorial dominance. One opinion contends that the US could have negotiated with the Taliban in Qatar and also continued to aid and abet the battle in the twilight zone of

Afghanistan. American presence was required as it was hugely successful in diminishing the influence and the advent of the nefarious Islamic State (ISIS). American interests could have stayed on till the menace of the Taliban was completely eradicated. With the Pakistan strategic depth in the west of the contested Durand line, it was difficult for the US to topple the Taliban juggernaut. The excruciatingly high pace of a week within which the Mullah Baradar's men overtook the entire nation was not adequately forecasted by the American think tanks and the American Fourth Estate. The US denomination was expecting the fall of the Taliban in two to three months but the mind boggling one sidedness of the long war's culmination left even the most hardened analysts flummoxed by the high riding military spectacle of the Taliban vis-a-vis the defence strivings forwarded by the NATO aided and US backed ANSF.

Now, as the Taliban have emerged triumphant in Kabul and beyond the capital, what one can eke out for the role-play of the Americans? Though it would be too far-fetched to compare the American withdrawal with the dirty war, that is, the American intervention in Vietnam, still, the American resolve has not been so quintessentially steely and stealthy as was expected when the outcome of the American nay-saying is there to be witnessed and captioned by all and sundry. America would either have to rebalance its ties with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in the light of Prime Minister Imran Khan shamelessly wishing for the Taliban's ascendance along with his ISI chief's hobnobbing with the Taliban. As Pakistan has always enjoyed the status of a frontline state for the US, one can witness a re-run of the eighties and nineties when the Americans seldom quizzed Pakistan about their efforts in propping up the Taliban's fervid Frankenstein.

The US will have its task cut out as the New Delhi dispensation will point at the new camaraderie which has been spawned between the Taliban and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Since the last couple of years, a few Taliban negotiators have visited Beijing and it appears as the wraith of China-Taliban nexus rolls



out, the Taliban have promised and analyses in the *Foreign Policy* magazine that, "The withdrawal of all US troops from Afghanistan is likely to accelerate current trends in India's relations with the US, China, and Russia: greater cooperation with Washington, deeper conflicts with Beijing, and wider fissures in the traditional strategic partnership with Moscow. Reinforcing these structural shifts — and their mirror image — are Pakistan's changing relations with the US, China, and Russia." Thus, it is bound to witness a splurge in the context of systemic and

structural modifications as far as India and the US are concerned. The proximity of the Indian State of Kashmir to Kabul and the rekindled Pakistan's ambition might bring the White House and New Delhi closer to each other as it's the very own dictum of the US, GWOT (Global War on Terror), which is bound to take a new violent turn in the near future.

Also, the American strategy of containing terrorism originating from Rawalpindi might too become much more hoarse and strident leading to a further wedge in the relationship between Islamabad and Washington. The White House needs to realise that India will be impacted by the jihad from Taliban-occupied Afghanistan, though the Taliban have promised otherwise. The million dollar pertinent question is how can a terror group be venerated and relied upon when the US too has listed several of the members of

the Taliban Government as terrorists. Can the Americans trust a nation whose cabinet ministers ride in SUVs and carry guns in meetings in the Presidential house with the heady rolls of bullets hanging afire. It brings us back to the strivings of Jaswant Singh during the Indian passenger plane's hijacking to Kandahar.

The same game returns akin to the classical great game but it is very apparent that if the terror factory and enterprise goes awry in Afghanistan, then the US might have to rethink on a "re-surge" of intervention in order to stem a conflagration in South Asia. And is it a mission unaccomplished, as far as, the reconstruction and nation building responsibilities of the US go?

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The million dollar pertinent question is how a terror group can be venerated and relied upon when the US too has listed several of the members of the Taliban Government as terrorists. Also, the American strategy of containing terrorism originating from Rawalpindi might become much more hoarse and strident leading to a further wedge in the relationship between Islamabad and Washington



MANAN DWIVEDI

PERSPECTIVE

Abraham Accords for peace in West Asia a misnomer

Establishing normal ties among the nations is a positive development in international relations. However, the Abraham Accords do not promise any hope for normalcy between Israel and the rest of West Asia. The central point here is the establishment of the Palestinian state. The great peacemakers and the global governance institutions are mute spectators to one of the oldest boiling points of West Asia — Palestine. Unless the issue of a permanent Palestine is addressed, the Abraham Accords will simply turn into a footnote for sure

The historic Abraham Accords completed one year this week. Hopes and fears, as expected, have continued in the West Asian region since then. The agreement has heralded no credible peace so far. But the pact has marked a fundamental shift in Arab-Israeli relations. Of course, the Donald Trump Administration then, amid all the chaos, had brought three warring nations — Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain — to the negotiation table.

Foreign policy experts across the globe are divided on the reasons for the signing of the Abraham Accords. This agreement, signed on September 15, 2020, by Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, and mediated by the US, has paved the way for normalisation of relations among three nations in West Asia. It was indeed an unprecedented move initiated by the Trump Administration. Basically, this 12-point agreement highlights the much-needed peace to be brought in among these rival nations in the region. In fact, the name "Abraham" was accorded to the treaty to honour the patriarch of three most significant monotheistic religions on this earth — Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Known as the "Father of Faith", Abraham can well be regarded as the unifier of all the three religions as they all draw their origin from him only.

While signing the agreement, the UAE and Bahrain pledged to normalise relations with Israel. Interestingly, within a week of the signing of the accords, the two other Muslim nations from the African continent Sudan and Morocco followed suit. What was surprising was that the issue of Palestine was nowhere pegged to the accords by the signatories. Precisely, the unrest in Palestine has been the hornets' nest for decades now for which Israel has turned out to be the arch enemy of many of these Arab nations in the region. Another striking point was



that the UAE and other signatories to the agreement did not demand more critical concessions like the end of Israeli annexation of more territories or most importantly, the final establishment of a Palestinian state in the region. Truly, all these could have been set as preconditions for signing the historic pact.

It clearly shows how the parties to the pact and its high-profile mediator, Trump, were trying to push the vexed issues to the background. And, thus the understanding among all the three rival nations of West Asia seemed more like a business deal than a historic diplomatic milestone. Further, the international community must note here that the last year's deal demanded that Israel refrain from *de jure* annexation of territories in the most contested region. But then who could stop Israel today? Everyone knows how outgoing Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu pursued his larger goal to establish the legitimacy of the state of Israel. And for all practical purposes, he received full support of the Trump Administration. This accords, in fact, helped Netanyahu get some important benefits like: first, he proved himself as a world statesman among his voters and sympathisers when he was facing serious allegations of corruption back home; second, he managed to make peace with the Arabs during his reign, but not with the Palestinians; and finally, he was cleverly diverting the attention of the Israeli public from the mismanagement of the Covid crisis by his office. In all, Netanyahu tried to enhance his image and pushed back the Palestinian cause much farther.

All the signatories to the Abraham Accords are still enemies. But then why such rival nations wanted to come to the negotiation

table? Was it because of America's intervention, both for long-term business interest and for achieving another milestone in global peace and diplomacy? Many experts say that some of the Gulf States like the UAE, having a global ambition, rightly see business opportunities in the normalisation of relations with Israel. It seems Washington has already promised Abu Dhabi advanced weapons like the F-35 stealth fighter and the EA-18 G Growler electronic warfare aircraft. All these were once inconceivable for the UAE, and these armories are needed both to demonstrate regional leadership and possibly to effectively counter Iran, its potential enemy on the other side of the Gulf. And the interesting point is that both Israel and the US are equally suspicious of the role of Iran like the way it is perceived by the Emiratis and Bahrain. Till 1969, Iran used to claim

Bahrain as a part of its territory. Therefore, even today, the restive Shia majority of Bahrain is regarded as the fifth column of Iran by the successive rulers of the country. The UAE and Bahrain can easily explore business opportunities in Israel, particularly in its most advanced high-tech sector. On the other hand, these two Gulf states can easily attract millions of Israeli tourists who are avid holiday makers.

Another significant impact of the deal is that Iran is now fully surrounded by all its enemies in the region — the Sunni regimes accompanied by an all-powerful Israel. This agreement has added pressure both to the clerics and to the political leadership of Iran. Besides the tough economic sanctions of Washington, Teheran is now facing a strong strategic pain. Clearly, once again Palestinians who have been waiting for a homeland are feeling betrayed by the accords. This agreement breaks the decades-long understanding among the Arab nations that the normal ties with Israel could be established only when an independent Palestinian state would be formed. Sadly, since 2020, Israel is coming closer to major nations of West Asia and Africa while continuing its occupation both in the West Bank and in the East Jerusalem.

Moreover, the accords have enhanced the status of Israel in the West Asian region. In a sense, it has clearly put an end to its isolation among the Arab nations. And definitely, America is celebrating after offering Israel a golden opportunity to establish its identity among the most powerful Gulf States of the zone.

Today, West Asia is trembling as paradigm shift is happening faster than expected. Stable peace still eludes West Asia. And the question is how far? Probably, chaos in this part of Asia is a never-ending process. Frankly speaking, estab-

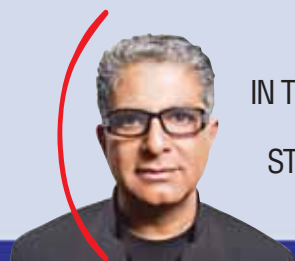
lishing normal ties among the nations is a positive development in international relations, but when it comes to Abraham Accords, it could be a misnomer to say so. Nowhere does it promise any hope for normalcy between Israel and the rest of West Asia. The central point here is the establishment of the Palestinian state. And it is not happening and may not come to reality soon. This agreement was a great victory for Trump, the crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the de facto ruler of the Emiratis Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman, and then Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. In fact, all of them needed the accords more than anyone else.

Today, the Joe Biden Administration is fully supportive of normalisation of relations between Israel and the rest of the Arab nations. But unfortunately, his regime is not able to offer the same inducements to Naftali Bennett, the new Prime Minister of Israel. And the situation in West Asia has remained the same as every single day new wounds are appearing both in West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The Palestinians are crying foul over the occupation of their land. The great peacemakers and the global governance institutions are mute spectators to one of the oldest boiling points of West Asia, i.e. Palestine. Finally, unless the Israeli occupation ends and the issue of a permanent Palestine is addressed, the Abraham Accords will simply turn into a footnote for sure.

(Dr Makhan Saikia has taught political science and international relations for over a decade in institutions of national and international repute after specialisation in globalisation and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He is the chief editor of the Journal of Global Studies, an international research journal)



MAKHAN SAIKIA



IN THE MIDST OF MOVEMENT AND CHAOS, KEEP STILLNESS INSIDE OF YOU — DEEPAK CHOPRA



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week you may face anger issues and get into heated arguments. Those having health issues might be advised to undergo medical tests. Deepen your spiritual awareness and practice. Try something new, even if reading, for new clarity. Meditation practices would prove useful. Your job or professional responsibilities move at breakneck speed. Some obstacles are seen that could hamper your growth. The position you were aspiring for may not fall in your kitty. Work could be a challenge for you. On the personal front, the power of your words is stronger than action. This could make your relationships complicated. Stay grounded and enjoy the energy of the day. Work with your heart rather than mind and be flexible in your approach with the loved ones

Lucky number 28
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Saturday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Health needs immediate attention. Get clinically examined if you detect a problem. Take second, or need be, third opinion in case there is confusion in diagnosing. Rest and renewed energy would bring a state of calm and stability back into your life. Take a quick decision if you have to undergo treatment. On the career front, you are action-oriented and would be inspired to pursue a new idea or a project. You can use your creative energy and passion to get the project underway. Under your leadership, the people will be inspired. On the personal front, your focus would be to create a safe and trusting environment on which you can fall back on. Allow space to others and be tolerant of their needs.

Lucky number 10
Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Tuesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

A balanced lifestyle is the first step for healthy living. Ensure that you are making full efforts from your end. Watch what you eat, how much you eat, and get good sleep. Take time out for entertainment and activities for rejuvenation and to regain energy. Your positive attitude plays an important role too. On the career front, this week is favourable. You will want to reach out to people and interactions & understanding will play a major role in keeping you on the move. On the personal front, you may feel the need to be liberated from certain restrictions and spread your wings and experience a freedom that may be your heart's desire. Traditions and family are important currently. Married couples will seek advice from elders.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Thursday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week you may feel stuck or restricted in your life. Get in touch with your real feelings and work to release yourself from these restrictions. Your health could be affected if you are not open and expressive. Learn to express yourself, share your sorrow and happiness to maintain equilibrium. More than physical, mental peace is required. On the work front, things are not as good as you expect them to be. Those willing to put themselves in the limelight may feel cheated. Other people might take the credit for your hard work. Beware of insecure and overly suspicious people. On the relationship front, this is a good week which has happiness, laughter and sharing time with loved ones stored in it.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week there are strong chances of you picking up seasonal ailments. Avoid outside food. If you feel that something is amiss with your body, trust your instincts and follow through. Stay away from bright colours. Go for light pastel colours. Meditate when you get the time and stay natural. On the work front, your exceptional sense of cooperation and bonding with people at the workplace will prove to be an asset. You can progress by leaps and bound provided you share your findings with your boss. On the personal front, you may be dealing with some conflict at home. If you're looking for love, you have to deal with your partner with great humility. Allow your partner to have his or her space.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Monday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week there is a need to bring positive changes to your lifestyle for sound health. Make sure you are not doing too many things at a time. Anger, aggression, and hyper actions could spoil your health. You can bring changes in your life by correcting yourself in certain matters. Check your diet, exercise, and working hours. At work, you are practical in your approach and very hard working. Determination and courage will be applied to all your endeavours. Results may be slow in coming but you will hold your own. You may need a boost to carry your goals. On the relationship front, you divert your attention through art, music, and entertainment with your partner. Your final decision matters a lot to someone. Express your confirmation or rejection.

Lucky number 30
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Saturday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week your energy and stamina will be outstanding. You have the confidence, and you will emerge strong. Everything seems to get better than what it was. On the work front, a new opportunity would show up, but it would depend on how you perceive it. This is the time to have a broader vision and an open mind. Discussing your career with a professional will be helpful for you. Update your knowledge and current happenings in technology and other fields. On the personal front, you may get occupied in something new and even more exciting and inspiring. You can look forward to progress in a relationship. There is no stopping you right now as you are full of energy and enthusiasm to move quickly.

Lucky number 25
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Sunday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

Keeping your stress level manageable is a must to stay in good health at the moment. Deal with any problems that come up physically. Ensure proper rest and avoid alcohol or intoxication. If you need healing, ask for it on both the literal and the spiritual planes. Professionally, if you work emotionally things may not turn out well for you this week. You need to make some firm decisions on certain matters. Financial matters should be dealt with extra precautions. Those looking for a job, will get support from a female in your life. Your energy and confidence increase dramatically. On the personal front, some impulsive decisions could make your relationships complicated. Be careful as you may be swept off your feet.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Tuesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week health may suffer, so take adequate rest. Be open to spiritual healing. Those struggling with a serious illness, may require some therapy or surgery. Consult a medical professional without further delay. Professionally, you will be able to make a mark this week. You feel confident of your choices and decisions, and this helps you to move towards the achievement in your goals. A fortunate outcome is indicated whatever you do or start at this time. Your skills & potentials will be duly recognised. On the personal front, your loved ones will be supportive, and you will have new feelings and new hopes. Don't let your desire for fun make you overlook the real and deep love that may come your way.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Friday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You have been thinking about bringing a major change in your life. Something is provoking you and there exists a feeling of dissatisfaction in life. This inner discontent demands a few changes. Improve your life by bringing more spirituality and imagination into the picture. Professionally, ensure that your day-to-day affairs are in order. If not, there is an urgent need for good time management and financial management. Check your expenditure/investments. It may sound tedious having to focus your attention on these more mundane issues, but these are fundamentals which pave the way for career success. On the personal front, increasing domestic requirements could affect the quality of your work, but you look at life more joyfully. You spend time on entertainment and celebrating life.

Lucky number 21
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Wednesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

If you have not been feeling well or have been feeling low on energy, the phase will soon pass. Those with ongoing health issues may benefit greatly from undertaking some sort of alternative therapy. This is an excellent time for you to undertake some form of spiritual study. On the professional front, you may need to keep your eyes open for opportunities. The energy of the week is not favourable. You may feel stressed over minor details or the job you do and the recognition you get for it. Prioritise your work and give attention to your responsibilities to win the situation. Relationship area requires your attention. You need to turn your world around and view your situation from a different perspective.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week the health is good. You have the confidence within yourself and present yourself as strong, vibrant, and persevering. Things are going to get better with the warmth and care of your loved ones. Don't push yourself too hard. Withdraw for a moment and take a break to restore your energy. Professionally, the week stores some negative energy. Your job responsibilities may be at a standstill position at this time. Expecting a promotion or increment will prove disheartening. Instead of feeling stuck or restricted in life, think of other ways to earn a livelihood. On the personal front, there is a need for balance with family, friends, and relatives besides work. If you're already in a relationship, it's about to get a new meaning.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Gray
Lucky day Tuesday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Turn Ahamkara into asset



Human beings enjoy the exclusive privilege to guide their action by choice and discrimination. But choice action carries equal probability of use and misuse. And there are no free lunches in life. You have to bear with the consequences of the choices you make and the actions thereto — good or bad — will depend on their intent and quality. This binds us into a cause-effect chain, which sets the premise on which the theory of Karma works. Things happening at the moment are a culmination of doings and undoings in the past. How you negotiate the present, defines the way the future may unfold, and which could stretch on even to the next birth. Your indwelling discriminatory ability though empowers you to weigh the options in hand and make reasoned choices, but this privilege doesn't play out involuntarily. You need to consciously invoke it for due diligence before you take any call, which needs being on full alert, which we seldom are.

Truth remains, that we often end up making inappropriate choices. Why? For the answer, a look into the construct and chemistry of mind becomes imper-

ative. There are three functional dimensions of mind — *Buddhi*, *Ahamkara*, and *Manasa*. *Buddhi* offers the faculty of discriminate intelligence, intrinsic to which is a sense of dispassion. Applying which, the mind evaluates, unbiasedly makes right judgment, and directs *Manasa* to accordingly act upon.

Ahamkara brings in the sense of 'I' in a being, which willfully makes choices, commits to the tasks undertaken and owns up all actions on our part. The way *Ahamkara* wills is how the ordinary mind works.

Manasa working from the front, drives through sense aided functionalities of mind. It is supposed to gather outer-field data, relay it to *Buddhi* for due diligence; and then act upon as guided. Also, it puts into action desires projected by *Karmic* imprints carried over from the past, or under external influence. And, if ever *Ahamkara* unmindfully wills to take things on face value, ignoring the necessity to invoke *Buddhi*, *Manasa* could also act upon instinctive judgement.

About mind, let me add here that it is just an instrument, which can't act on its own. Just like earth mass, which

lends ground to the seed sown to grow into a plant, the mind gets fuelled into action by indwelling thought-seeds (*Karmic* carryover from the past). These

imprints, varying from person-to-person, involuntarily build individual-specific belief patterns, which holds the key to our inherent desire trends, habits &

attitudes, as well as virtues and attributes. That defines the way the mind works. As the mind gets going, it also picks up and responds to inputs drawn out of environmental influences. Mind does also carry the potential to absorb fresh educational inputs consciously fed into it. Now, the mind first excites desire trends in accordance with the callings of inlaid thought seeds. Desires, in turn, excite thoughts, which when gravitate, following further processing in the mind, get translated into action.

Now, coming back to the three operative tools of mind again, they are supposed to work in perfect coordination with each other, as an inseparable unitary mechanism. If applied as mandated, the mind comes out with its optimum best. But, at the end of the day, it is *Ahamkara's* prerogative to take the final call. The paradox, however, is more often, *ahamkara* identifies itself with the inherent desire trends and then pursues it passionately as its end game. It also gets caught by the tempting influences of the seeming world, and makes it its dream destination. In both cases, taking things on the face value, *ahamkara* doesn't feel the necessity of invoking

buddhi for due diligence, often leading to undesirable ends.

We, therefore, need to train our mind to follow its usual design, with special focus on *ahamkara*. The irony, however, is that caught up in the usual mills of life, our habit tendencies trap *ahamkara* into its fold, which proves limiting. So, the challenge before us is to remain alert enough to use our choice option in order to ensure that *ahamkara* turns into a resolve to come out with one's best. In that case, it will transgress the limits of habit tendencies, and use other two dimensions of mind optimally.

A person faced with a serious challenge came seeking guidance the other day. His inflated ego was in evidence, as Jupiter was placed adverse to both Sun and Mars. When advised to turn his ego into a resolve that could lead him to his targeted destination, it was difficult for him to digest. I had to explain it in detail to make him understand.

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