



115 new cases, 4 deaths in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Delhi recorded four more COVID-19-related deaths and 115 new cases on Friday with a positivity rate of 0.15 per cent, according to a health bulletin issued here.The new fatalities pushed the death toll due to the infection to 24,952, it said. Delhi recorded eight deaths and 109 fresh cases of coronavirus on Thursday as the city's positivity rate dipped to 0.14 per cent. On Wednesday, Delhi recorded 111 COVID-19 cases and seven fatalities, while the positivity rate stood at 0.15 per cent. On Monday, Delhi had reported 89 coronavirus cases with a positivity rate of 0.16 per cent, both lowest this year so far, while 11 people died, according to the data.

2nd terrorist surrenders

SRINAGAR: One terrorist was killed while another surrendered with an AK rifle during an encounter between militants and security forces in the Hanjipora area in south Kashmir's Shopian district on Friday, officials said. "The second terrorist of proscribed outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) surrendered along with an AK 56 rifle during the encounter. Search is still going on," the police said. The firefight between LeT terrorists and security forces took place after a joint team of the police and the army cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about the presence of terrorists.

6 die in UP as car falls into ditch

LUCKNOW: Six people, including two minors were killed after a car carrying them crashed in Balrampur district on Friday. The police said that the car, travelling at a high speed, turned turtle and fell into a ditch after colliding head on with a bike. The incident took place in Shivanagar. The deceased have been identified as Krishna Kumar, 39, Snehlata, 36, Utkarsh, 12, Niki, 14, Shatrughan, 50, and Saumya, 18. Two bikers also sustained injuries and have been admitted in the district hospital, Maharajganj Tarai police personnel said. Superintendent of Police, Balrampur, Hemant Kutiya said that the car was bound for Devipatan Shaktipeeth while the bike was headed towards Balrampur city. "The crash took place around 11.a.m. The impact of the collision was so great that the car plunged into the roadside ditch."

LUCKNOW

RENOWNED Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawad has raised questions over the working of the ATS and has asked for a fair investigation into religious conversions case slapped on two men in Uttar Pradesh. Following the arrest of Mufti Jahangir and Umar Gautam by UP ATS, the links of religious conversion are being probed all across the state. Talking to reporters, Jawad said: "UP ATS should ensure a fair investigation of this whole matter. Also, it should be kept in mind that no innocent person is punished." Maulana Jawad said, "The statements of those who have been con-

verted should be recorded. Were they really forced to convert to Islam or did they convert voluntarily? If a person voluntarily converts, then he cannot be held guilty in the Indian Constitution, because every religion has the right to promote its religion as per the Indian Constitution. "Whether it is Hinduism, Muslim religion or Christianity, there is complete freedom in any religion to propagate its religion." He further explained that "Forced conversion cannot be done in Islam. Moreover, if a person is forced to convert, then that person is not considered to be included in Islam." On the issue of foreign funding, Jawad said that it is a failure on the part



TWITTER BLOCKS PRASAD'S ACCOUNT FOR AN HOUR

NEW DELHI

AMID the tussle between Twitter and the union government over the new IT rules, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad was denied access to his Twitter account for almost an hour over alleged violation of the US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Although, he was subsequently allowed to access the account, taking to India-made micro-blogging platform Koo, the minister called the action by the US-headquartered Twitter as "a

gross violation of the IT guidelines".

"Twitter's actions were in gross violation of Rule 4(8) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 where they failed to provide me any prior notice before denying me access to my own account," he said.

Prasad, who has been at the forefront of government's drive to bring in more compliance and stricter norms for social media platforms, added: "It is apparent that my statements calling out the high handedness and arbitrary actions of Twitter, particularly sharing the



clips of my interviews to TV channels and its powerful impact, have clearly ruffled its feathers."

Further, the minister, who also handles the portfolio of law said that it is now apparent as to why Twitter is refusing to comply with the Intermediary Guidelines because if Twitter does comply, it would be unable to arbitrarily deny access to an individual's account which does not suit their agenda.

In a series of posts on Koo, the minister also said that Twitter's actions indicate that they are not the harbinger of free speech that they claim to be but are

only interested in running their own agenda, with the threat that if you do not toe the line they draw, they will arbitrarily remove you from their platform. "No matter what any platform does they will have to abide by the new IT Rules fully and there shall be no compromise on that," he added.

Twitter, on the other hand, has lost its status of intermediary platform in India over non-compliance to the new intermediary guidelines.

As a result of the development, the company has lost its legal shield in the country from prosecution over posts.

52 cases of Delta Plus variant in 11 States

NEW DELHI

INDIA has recorded a total 52 cases of the Delta Plus variant so far. National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Director Sujeet Singh informed on Friday that 50 cases of Delta Plus variant have been recorded in 11 States of India, however, two more cases were added later, taking the tally to 52.

During a press conference on Friday on the Covid-19 situation in the country, the NCDC director said that the Delta variant is "much stronger", stronger than Alpha, the variant formerly known as B.1.1.7 and first identified in the UK.

At least 90% of cases in India being driven by B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, said the government

Singh added that eight states have been found with more than 50 per cent of the Delta variant, which is now a variant of concern in India. These state are: Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Telangana & West Bengal.

The central government earlier this week declared the 'Delta Plus' variant of the virus causing Covid-19 as a 'variant of concern' in India.

In a press statement on the rising



number of Delta Plus cases in the country, the Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said Delta Plus is "currently a Variant Of Concern". With Covid-19's newest mutant Delta Plus claiming its first victim - an 80-year-old woman from Ratnagiri - the Maharashtra government has decided to make unlocking rules stricter. The state currently has 20 more active Delta Plus variant cases.

Amid reports of Delta and Delta Plus variants of coronavirus and a potentially imminent third wave, the

Maharashtra government has said that while easing of restrictions can't be risked, total RT-PCR tests and, not Rapid antigen tests, will be a decisive factor. The government further said the focus will be on the vaccination of the highest number of people possible.

According to the latest order, all administrative units, including Pune and Thane, will be placed under a minimum of level 3 restrictions, which implies that the previous permissions to open malls and other public places will be withheld.

Allow marriages in hotels, banquets: CTI to Delhi govt

NEW DELHI

THE Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) on Friday urged the Delhi government to allow marriage functions to be held in hotels and banquets during the next phase of unlock process, saying the business related to matrimonial programmes was suffering huge losses.

In a letter to the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), the trade body demanded that at least 50 or more people in Delhi should be allowed for wedding functions in hotels, banquets and public places. "At present, there is a ban on marriage ceremonies in public places in Delhi. The DDMA has allowed marriages only at home or in court.

"Due to this, the business related to matrimonial programs is in great loss," the CTI said. Delhi residents were getting married in Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Sonapat as neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have allowed wedding programmes with 50 guests, a statement quoting CTI chairman Brijesh Goyal and presi-



dent Subhash Khandelwal said. "Due to this, the employment of about five lakh businessmen related to Delhi's banquet, hotel, textile, sweets, jewellery, tent, catering, photograph, make-up etc has come to a standstill," the statement said. It added that a lot of people who deal with wedding-related businesses had taken advance bookings from the clients, which they have had to return.

According to Goyal, marriages under Hindu customs would not be able to take place for four months af-

ter 'devshayani ekadashi' (July). "Now that there are few wedding 'muhurtas' left, so the CTI has written the letter to DDMA demanding that at least 50 or more people in Delhi should be allowed for wedding functions in hotels, banquets and public places," the statement said. The CTI also met Delhi Banquet and Hoteliers officials, who too have requested that in the next phase of the unlock process, at least 50 or more people should be allowed to participate in the marriage programmes, the statement said.

ED to probe money laundering angle in UP religious conversion case

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a criminal case of money laundering in connection with alleged conversion of some deaf students and poor people to Islam in Uttar Pradesh with purported funding from Pakistani intelligence agency ISI, officials sources said on Friday.

An Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), the ED equivalent of a Police FIR, has been filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. The matter came to light after the UP Police anti-terrorist squad (ATS) arrested two men, residents of Jamia Nagar in Delhi, earlier this week. The UP Police had identified the arrested accused as Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi and Mohammad Umar Gautam. The ATS claimed that they ran an outfit, named Islamic Dawah Center, that purportedly had access to funds from Pakistan's inter-services intelligence (ISI) and other foreign agencies to carry out their alleged illegal activities.

5 jump off wrong train, 1 dead

JHANSI

ONE man died when five passengers jumped off a train in Jhansi after realizing that they had boarded the wrong train.

The deceased, identified as Ajay Kumar, 33, came under the wheels of the train, while four others, including his two siblings, were injured in the incident.

The victims had boarded the wrong train at Jhansi station and panicked when it left the station.

In a hurry, they all jumped off the train which resulted in Ajay's death.

The incident took place on Thursday, barely a kilometre away from Jhansi railway station.

Ajay was travelling to Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh along with his younger siblings Vijay Kumar and Sanjay, cousin Sandeep Kumar and uncle Jagmohan.

They all work as daily



crease production of LMO from about 5 per cent - 8 per cent of gaseous industrial oxygen. Government should support and subsidize concerned industries.

The panel suggested that in an emergency, the states may actively explore setting up some field/make-shift hospitals in proximity of industrial oxygen production units which can supply piped oxygen with necessary modifications and strict quality control and technology to be put in place to convert nitrogen plants to oxygen producing plants in case of an emergency situation.

wage labourers in a private company in Andhra Pradesh.

Vijay suffered serious injuries and is in coma. The remaining three persons escaped with minor injuries.

Sandeep Kumar, one of the five, told reporters, "They reached Jhansi from Gorakhpur in a bus and had to board a train for Rajahmundry. But by mistake, we boarded a Delhi bound train." GRP personnel of Jhansi division said they received a distress message of the incident.

"The five men had jumped off the train after it had travelled nearly a kilometre. The victims panicked and jumped off the train after they realized the mistake," said sub-inspector Sandeep Kumar.

Ajay's body has been sent for autopsy, while the injured have been admitted to the government medical college in Jhansi, the official said.

Religious Conversion: Shia cleric raises questions over arrests



Shia cleric Maulana Kalbe Jawad

of agencies if funding was going on from foreign countries.

"If the agencies say that funding was being done from abroad and that is why religious conversion was being done, then they should prove this.

"They should also reveal from which countries the money was coming and how the money kept coming for so long and the investigating agencies did not even know about it. This is a big lapse in terms of security," he pointed out.

The UP ATS arrested two clerics, accusing them of converting people under duress using "fear and temptation".

During their interrogation, the police found that Gautam himself converted to Islam.

"He had disclosed that they have con-

verted at least 1,000 people to Islam so far. The two men have also disclosed that they received funds from international organizations with the purpose of converting people into Islam," UP ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar had said.

The matter came to light when parents of a student of Noida Deaf Society reported that their son has been missing and was later found to have been forcefully converted to Islam.

Both accused have been booked for promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc, injuring or defiling place of worship with intent to insult the religion, criminal conspiracy and cheating.

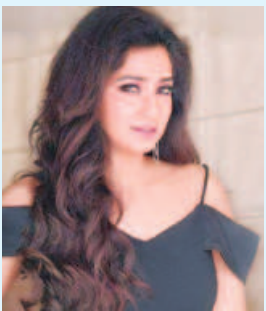
Womenia

TWEET PATROL



SHREYA GHOSHAL
@SHREYAGHOSHAL

Giving you the gift of HOPE and HEALING today from all of us with love! @arrahman #GulzarSahab #AlkaYagnik #SadhanaSargam @kschithra @sashasublime @ArmaanMalik22 @AseesKaur #MeriPukaarSuno @sonymusicindia @BTToSProductions



KAKINADA SOLOPRENEUR UPLIFTS ARTISANS

TEJAL SINHA

Kavea R Chavali has been dabbling across industries and has hosted 1400 shows across 15 countries and close to 800 brands. In India she has toured the length and breadth of the country, hosting live events.

Chavali has dabbled into acting as well with three years in theatre and a one-episode role in Push-pavalli season 1. She was also seen on AIB- A Woman's Besties part 1 & 2 on youtube. She has bagged multiple awards and accolades, some of the significant ones are RashtriyaSanman Award 2012-2013 for the best anchor in India, Voice of Asia 2019, Best Emcee of the year (Corporate events) & Best Emcee, (Female) in 2020 by Exchange4media Group.

Belonging to a small and beautiful town of Kakinada in coastal Andhra Pradesh, she planned to expand her horizons by packing bags and achieving her dream of becoming an Anchor. Few years into the world of Anchoring and several reputed awards later, the solopreneur within her decided to add another leaf of impact with her Brand 'Kalaneca' to impact the artisans of India.

Kavea talks to "The Hans India" about her journey and her brand Kalaneca.

Please tell us about your journey

Always a traveller at heart, I come from a fauji family with my father being a Naval officer, acquainting me with the possibilities and adventures of life. I am a quintessential happy person at heart who seeks success in happiness. I studied Engineering and graduated from NIT Warangal post which I dabbled my way in the corporate and the media world.

Please share about Kalaneca

KALANECA was an idea born from the simple possibility of impacting a small village of Andhra and exposing their craftsmanship to the world. Our brand name comes from 2 important words. Kala stands for the art/skill while Neca comes from the Arabic/urdu word Nikah which means marriage. Our sarees have always showcased a marriage of different art forms intertwined in the warp and weft of the loom. We believe in amalgamating the Art, the Artist and the Artisan and thereby empowering that expression through our sarees. We are working with more than 68 weavers across 172 looms across 8 villages now with 35% of our revenues coming from abroad.

Kalaneca was born out of an



A fireside chat or a debate, a product launch or a panel discussion, an award presentation to an evening soiree where million dollars ideas are exchanged or deals signed, Kavea wields the microphone, anchoring high profile corporate events and setting stage for business behemoths to take over. Kavea was also appreciated by the late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam in an event

collect how he stepped towards the podium, looked at the kids and then looked at me and said-

"Kavea, I see what you do is not easy, but you have such a lovely voice and you have done such a commendable job. Thankyou"

How is your brand socially responsible?

Our brand ethos has always stemmed from the fact that everything that is handmade is celebrated which is why right from our sarees to our handwritten notes on seedpapers to our saree bags for packaging, everything hand stitched and woven with responsibility. The looms are inside the small houses of the weavers and we do not indulge in any kind of machinery work which allows us to participate in minimal usage of electricity and water. Our mantra for being socially responsible comes from being proud of creating a brand that celebrates slow yet premium fashion and not dilute the happiness with mass production.

and for our high end customers.

How did the pandemic impact you?

The pandemic did affect our weavers's work and we as a brand and as a team did take a monetary hit while the uncertainty allowed us to pause, regroup and repurpose our way of working. It wasn't easy but we took a break and while the world took its time to open up post the new normal, we reinvested our time and efforts towards our narratives. The narrative wear your power was born during a time when everything felt powerless. We realised that this was the best decision as it aligned our collective goals in creating a much better roadmap than expected. Revenues dipped for sure but they eventually picked up from November.

You were also appreciated by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, please tell us about it

This moment will always be special. I have had the opportunity to be praised by some of the best personalities in the industry and it's been humbling to work with them. This was during 2013-2014, when he was invited to be the Chief Guest for the centenary celebrations of a school. After hosting the 1st part of the program, I took to mic to share my interpretation of the leader that he is and I invited him to the podium to share his words. It's still fresh on my mind when I rec-

artistic expression that we co-founders shared. With mom being our original saree influencer, it was easy for us to embrace the six yards of happiness. We are often told that a lot of brands have driven a father's legacy, while we decided to take forward our mother's legacy of bringing beauty and fame to the local artisans who might be sitting in the corners of rural bharath but designing a contemporary look for the urban India and the world.

What were the initial challenges you faced while starting it?

Our initial challenge which also continues to be a slight challenge even now was to educate customers and weavers about authentic handloom. Being exposed to polyester and power loom fabrics, it wasn't easy to make a customer understand that authentic handloom involves the weaver putting every thread on the loom and weaving with his bare hands which can also impact the colour variation and threads finish. We are specialists in the customised saree segment where the team brainstorms with the weaver and the wearer to create bespoke one of its kind saree which does take time, our initial challenge was to do with lack of technology to make the process seamless and faster but today we can happily say that the bespoke creations are some of the most inspirational creations for our brides

Protect your precious jewellery in monsoon

PUJA GUPTA

Did you know that the heightened humidity during the monsoon season has detrimental effects on your precious jewels? Be it gold ornaments, delicate silver, precious pearls or sparkling diamonds, all need to be handled with care during the rainy season. Moisture hampers the quality of numerous metal alloys and tarnishes their original lustre.

Here are some tips shared by experts at Reliance Jewels on how to protect your various jewellery pieces.



Diamond

Since diamonds are least prone to any damage, individuals tend to wear them frequently. However, daily usage exposes them to moisture and dirt, eventually reducing their shine. It hampers the overall look and feel of diamond jewellery, which typically costs one a fortune. To protect your prized items, you should gently clean your pieces using a mixture of soap and water or wipe them with a soft damped cloth.

Silver

Silver is very prone to oxidation and tarnishing. Oxidization often turns silver jewellery black in colour, simultaneously robbing them of their charm. Due to the increased humidity in the atmosphere during the monsoon season, these items face a greater risk of corrosion. You can use toothpaste to clean your oxidized silver jewellery. You can even use a soft cotton cloth. Individuals

can also apply 'silver dip' to safeguard the shine of their silver items. However, irrespective of the protection technique, the cardinal rule remains to avoid any contact with water.

Gemstones

These include pearls, coral, amber and many more. Gemstones are characterised by their organic and delicate nature. During the monsoons, if you plan on wearing jewellery items made of gemstones, then make sure they are not directly exposed to perfumes or sprays of any kind. Such contacts might lead to irrevocable damage. Hence, adequate care and precaution need to be taken while using gemstones. Further, these items are prone to developing scratches due to their fragile properties. To avoid any such occurrence, one must store different gems in separate boxes.

Gold and platinum

In moist conditions, gold jew-

ellery is bound to get dirty and dusty. The same happens in the case of platinum as well. Being neutral metals, they do not demand additional attention. However, completely neglecting their condition during the rains can cost you the quality of your precious jewels. To protect their lustre, make sure gold and platinum pieces are thoroughly cleaned, using a mixture of mild soap and water. A general factor to consider for your entire collection is its proper storage. Individuals should opt for boxes that have hard exteriors and soft interiors. One must compartmentalise their jewellery based on their type. Silica gel pouches should be placed inside the boxes, to absorb any excess moisture.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Vedika Bhandari on how her parents backed her dreams

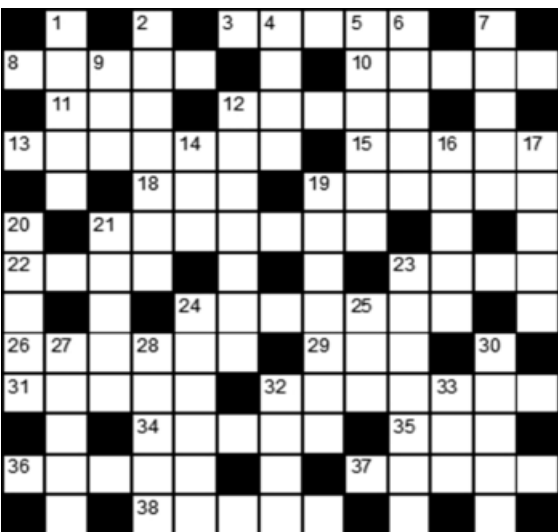
Actress Vedika Bhandari, who recently played Tara in the nine-episode drama series "Indori Ishq", says her parents were her biggest strength when she decided to take up acting after giving up chartered accountancy.

The actress has earlier been part of shows like "Sanjivani", "Kasam Tere Pyaar Ki", besides the Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer "Dream Girl". "My mother used to take me to auditions when I was a kid. Although I did a few assignments back then, I decided to focus on completing my basic education before taking a deeper plunge into this profession at a later date," says Vedika.

"The thought evaporated from my mind as I grew up but when I started pursuing chartered accountancy, I gradually felt that my calling was to perform as an actress. I was clearing levels in my studies but my heart was beating for something else," she added.

"I finally spoke to my parents about it and they readily let me chase my dreams. I travelled for a course in acting to the New York Film Academy. After returning to India, I also completed a course at Anupam Kher's academy, Actor Prepares. My parents encouraged me throughout the time when I was auditioning for work. Af-

ter the first show, there was no looking back," Vedika said. When asked about her preparation for her role of Tara, a heartbreaker, in "Indori Ishq", Vedika said, "It was very difficult for me to believe that someone could be so cold to her lover. When I read the last episode of Indori Ishq, I was shocked. My mother told me to treat it clinically and not get too personal about it. Also director Samit Kakkad helped me understand and believe that I am Tara and that's how I think. I had to stop behaving like a cutesy miss."



SOLUTION TO JUNE 25

CROSSWORD

Across

- Move rhythmically (5)
- Mafia bosses (5)
- Illuminated (3,2)
- Insect (3)
- Favoured (5)
- _____ dwelling : a tent ? (7)
- India's first P.M. (5)
- Give help (3)
- Yell (6)
- Scope (7)
- Stronghold (4)
- Scandinavian books (4)
- Mends or darns (7)
- Speaks publicly (6)
- Express what is false; convey a false impression (3)
- Hindu holy man (5)
- Quieted or calmed ? (7)
- West Indies magic (5)
- Excuse (3)
- Architectural feature (5)
- Diplomatic agent (5)
- Terminated (5)

Down

- Custom or practice (5)

- Canine transport vehicle, should we say ? (7)
- Being dry (4)
- Grip (6)
- Large duck (5)
- A discourse of the Buddha (5)
- Place in a location (3)
- Tranquilizes or soothes (7)
- Hurry (3)
- Listens to (5)
- Eskimo boat (5)
- Furtiveness (7)
- 70s hairdos (5)
- Baked dough (5)
- Soon (7)
- Type of sandwich (6)
- Three for the Roman (3)
- Indian music forms (5)
- Fulcrum for an oar (5)
- Advance or make progress ? (3,2)
- A plant used in cooking, or another word for 'wise' (4)
- Brother of Kush (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO JUNE 25



BEAUTICIAN DAY

We all need a little help looking our best now and then, and Beautician's Day celebrates those cosmetologically experts who can help hide our flaws and bring out the absolute best of our beauty. There are multiple disciplines within the realm of cosmetology, including such areas as skin care, manicures, electrolysis, hair care, and cosmetic application. When it's a special day for you, it's always good to remember that without these, we could be locked in a perpetual bad hair day. The world of fashion and style is in constant flux, evolving with the changing of the seasons, and these wonderful navigators of the beauty world will see you through.

Cosmetics is one of the foundations of the beauticians art, with the knowledge of how colors, skin tones, and hair color all come together to create the unique palette that is your skin. Cosmetics have to be carefully selected to enhance your natural features, with considerations needing to be taken for dry skin, oily skin, and the always tricky combination skin. While most people think merely of the colorants that are standard 'make-up', cosmetics actually include those products used for treating the various issues tied into the nature of your skin.

Skin care is done through a variety of methods, and Beautician's Day is a great time to check in with your cosmetologist to help you adjust for your new look. There are several processes involved in properly caring with your skin, including regular cleansings, masks (such as clay-based, peel masks, sheet masks, and others). Exfoliation helps to get rid of dead skin to help the fresh new skin underneath truly shine, or to even out rough spots on your skin. Combining these habits with Toning, moisturizing, and products to protect your skin from skin and wind damage.



Prez Kovind embarks on train journey to visit birthplace in UP

NEW DELHI

PRESIDENT Ram Nath Kovind on Friday embarked on a train journey to visit his birthplace in Uttar Pradesh, where he will interact with his old acquaintances from school days and the early days of his social service. It would be after a gap of 15 years that an incumbent president is travelling by train.

"President Kovind boards a special presidential train from Safdar-

jung railway station to Kanpur. The train will make two stop-overs, at Jhinhak and Rura of Kanpur Dehat, and will reach Kanpur Central in the evening," the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted.

Railway Minister Piyush Goyal can also be seen in pictures tweeted by the Rashtrapati Bhavan of the president boarding the train. This is the first time that Kovind will visit his birthplace after becoming the president. Though he had desired to visit the place ear-



lier, it could not materialise because of the coronavirus pandemic. "As he boards the train, the president will be travelling down the memory lane that will cover a span of seven decades of his life, right from his childhood to holding the top constitutional position in the country," a statement issued on Wednesday by the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said.

The two stop-overs at Jhinhak and Rura are close to the president's birthplace, Paraunkh village

in Kanpur Dehat. The last time a president travelled by train was in 2006 when A P J Abdul Kalam boarded a special train from Delhi to Dehradun to attend the passing-out parade of the Indian Military Academy (IMA) cadets. Records show that the country's first president, Rajendra Prasad, often undertook train journeys, the Rashtrapati Bhavan had said. Soon after taking office as the president, he visited his birthplace, Ziradei in Bihar's Siwan district.

Prasad boarded the president's special train from Chhapra to reach Ziradei, where he spent three days, the statement said. He travelled across the country by train. Prasad's successors also preferred train journeys to connect with the people of the country. On June 28, Kovind will board the train at the Kanpur Central Railway Station to reach Lucknow for his visit to the capital city of Uttar Pradesh. On June 29, he will return to New Delhi on a special flight.

SP, Cong allies of Islamic terrorists, says UP Minister

BALLIA

AN UP Minister has accused the Congress and Samajwadi Party of being "allies of Islamic terrorists", and said madrassas are helping in the religious conversion of the poor with people involved in it getting money directly in their accounts from Muslim countries.

The allegations were made by Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Anand Swaroop Shukla, while talking to reporters on Thursday late night.

The minister also attacked PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti saying "her heart is in Pakistan" and asked her to go to Pakistan.

"Facts have come to light that help of madrasas and voluntary organizations is being taken for the conversion and the people involved in the religious conversion of the poor and the deaf-mute

'Mehbooba Mufti must go to Pakistan'



children are getting money from Muslim countries in their personal accounts," Shukla said while talking to reporters at his residence here.

"The conversion by inducing fear, greed and delusion is completely illegal and unconstitutional. The Yogi government and

the ATS is taking and will take strict action against this," Shukla said, referring to the recent arrest of two men allegedly involved in running a campaign to convert the poor and deaf-mute children to Islam. The Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Uttar Pradesh police had early this week arrested two

men from Delhi's Jamia Nagar, allegedly running an outfit involved in converting deaf students and other poor people to Islam in Uttar Pradesh with funding from Pakistan's ISI.

Following the duo's arrest, the Enforcement Directorate too has registered a case of money laundering in the alleged conversion drive with funding from Pakistani intelligence agency ISI, officials sources said on Friday.

Attacking the opposition, the minister accused them of being pro-Muslims.

"The entire opposition, whether it be the Congress or the SP, they all are pro-Muslim, and to garner their votes, they hail Pakistan, saying Pakistan Zindabad and they say Hindustan Murdabad when they visit Pakistan. They have been left with no political dignity," said the minister.

COOPERATIVE SOCIETY FRAUD CASE

ED attaches assets over ₹365 cr in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI

ASSETS worth over Rs 365 crore have been attached by the ED under the anti-money laundering law in a probe linked to alleged embezzlement of funds by a co-operative society that duped about 20 lakh people in Rajasthan, the agency said on Friday.

The properties belong to Adarsh Group of companies/firms, LLPs (limited liability partnership), Riddhi Siddhi Group of companies/firms, AOPs (association of persons) and others.

"The attached assets are in the form of agricultural, residential and commercial land parcels located in Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi and fixed deposits and bank balances," the Enforcement Directorate said in a statement issued here.



The total value of the attached assets, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is Rs 365.94 crore. The case pertains to the ED taking cognisance of a Rajasthan Police special operations group (SOG) FIR filed against the Adarsh Credit Cooperative Society Limited (ACCSL) and its promoters Mukesh Modi,

Rahul Modi and others.

Probe found, the ED alleged, that "Mukesh Modi in collusion with his relatives Virendra Modi, Rahul Modi, Rohit Modi and associates including society officials, siphoned off depositors' funds from ACCSL by way of inter-linked fraudulent transactions."

Junior clerk held for accepting bribe in Rajasthan

JAIPUR

A junior clerk posted in the office of Chief Medical and Health Officer Jaipur-I was arrested by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) allegedly for taking a bribe of Rs 4,000 on Friday, an official said.

The accused clerk, Rakesh Kumar Katta, had demanded the bribe from a man to get him an ex-gratia amount on the death of his father who was a ration dealer due to COVID-19, he said.

The state government considers ration dealers as corona warriors and gives an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh on death due to COVID-19. After verification of the complaint, a trap was laid and the accused was held while taking the bribe amount, he said.

Doctor booked for sex determination tests, absconding

MUZAFFARNAGAR

A doctor was booked and her clinic raided here for allegedly conducting sex determination tests, officials said on Friday.

A police team from Haryana's Riwari district with the help of health department here raided 'Dipti Nursing Home and Ultrasound Centre' at Circular Road on Thursday and found illegal sex determination test reports.

According to Chief Medical Officer (CMO) MS Faujdar, a case was registered at Civil Line police station against Doctor Dipti Aggarwal and her two staff members, Amit Kumar and Lavi, under Sections 4, 5, 6, 23, 29 of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act and 420 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Police seized an ultrasound machine and some documents from Aggarwal's clinic.

The authorities have ordered for suspension of her medical licence, they said, adding she has absconded.

PHONE-TAPPING CASE



Congress workers protest Delhi Police summons to Mahesh Joshi

JAIPUR

CONGRESS workers here protested the Delhi Police summons in a phone-tapping case to the party's chief whip in the Rajasthan Assembly, Mahesh Joshi.

The Delhi Police had asked the Congress leader to appear before it on June 24 for questioning in the case lodged on a complaint by Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who is also the BJP MP from Jodhpur. Joshi had refused to appear before po-

lice. The phone-tapping controversy had erupted in July last year in Rajasthan. Audio clips of alleged telephonic conversations between Shekhawat and Congress leaders surfaced amidst a rebellion against Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot by his then deputy Sachin Pilot and 18 party MLAs supporting him. Congress leaders backing Gehlot had alleged that BJP leaders were indulging in horse-trading to topple the state government.

Congress workers workers from the Hawamahal constituency assembled

at Badi Chaupad and raised slogans against Shekhawat. They waved posters with slogans against Shekhawat and called him a "fugitive". "Shekhawat should apologise from Mahesh Joshi. He should also come to Jaipur to give voice samples to the Anti-Corruption Bureau," a local Congress worker said, in an apparent reference to the telephonic conversations allegedly aimed at toppling the state government last year. They made a human chain and protested for nearly two hours.

Cong didn't learn from mistakes it made during Emergency: Poonia

JAIPUR

RAJASTHAN BJP state president Satish Poonia on Friday said the Congress did not learn from the mistakes it made during the period of Emergency in the country and was gradually disappearing from national and state politics.

Terming the Emergency the "second mistake" in India's history after partition, he stressed the youngsters should know about it. The state BJP chief was addressing

a press conference on the 46th anniversary of the Emergency. Poonia said the Congress did not learn from the mistakes it made during the period of Emergency and was gradually disappearing from national and state politics.

"Whenever Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot speaks, he talks about the threat to democracy but he or any other

Congress leader does not speak about the Emergency, which was

chthon that followed. "It (imposition of Emergency) was the second mis-



also an attack on democracy," he said. Poonia said the younger generation should learn and know about the Emergency and the anarchy that followed. "It (imposition of Emergency) was the second mis-

take in history after partition," he said.

A 21-month Emergency was imposed by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi from 1975 to 1977. During this period, curbs were imposed on citizens' fundamental rights. Gandhi lifted the Emergency in 1977 and called for Lok Sabha elections in which the Congress was handed a crushing defeat, its first ever since the country's independence in 1947, by the combined opposition of Janata Party.



AMRITSAR

UAE-based Indian businessman S P Singh Oberoi travelled all alone on an Air India flight.

Oberoi was pleasantly surprised to have the whole plane to himself when he boarded Air India's flight from Amritsar to Dubai with an economy-class ticket in hand.

Oberoi, who holds a golden visa that allows 10-year long residency in the UAE, was the sole passenger on the national carrier's Dubai-bound three-hour flight that departed from Amritsar around 3.45 am on Wednesday, an official said.

During the flight, he snapped pictures with the crew members and paced up and down the aircraft multiple times without any hindrance. Air India did not respond to PTI's request for a statement on this matter.

This was the third time in the last five weeks when a flight to Dubai had just one passenger. On May 19, a 40-year-old man named Bhavesh Javeri was the lone passenger on Emirates' Mumbai-Dubai flight. Three days later, another man named Oswald Rodrigues was the lone passenger on Air India's Mumbai-Dubai flight.

Flights on India-Dubai routes were one of the most lucrative ones for carriers in the pre-pandemic times due to high demand. However, since the onset of the pandemic, traffic on India-Dubai routes have taken a major hit. India and its aviation sector had been especially reeling during April and May this year due to the pandemic's second wave, which is receding currently.

FIR against The Wire, 2 scribes over film on mosque demolition

BARABANKI



THE Uttar Pradesh Police has filed an FIR against news portal 'The Wire', its two journalists and two others over a documentary on the demolition of a mosque here which, the administration said, was built illegally.

The case has been registered against journalists Siraj Ali and Mukul S Chauhan, and two others -- Mohammad Anees and Mohammad Naeem -- who gave

"provocative" statements in the documentary that spread "prejudiced, misleading and untrue" information, police said on Friday.

The Barabanki administration had demolished the mosque on May 17, terming it an illegally constructed building and attributed its claim to an April 2 order of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court. The mosque was located adjacent to the tehsil premises and opposite the SDM's residence. A video related to the

Ramsanehi Ghat tehsil complex was shared by news portal 'The Wire' on its Twitter handle on June 23 in which "baseless" claims have been made, Superintendent of Police Yamuna Prasad said.

"A case has been registered against The Wire on Thursday night on charges of spreading enmity and religious frenzy by broadcasting sensational, prejudiced, misleading and untrue things and making a malicious at-

tempt to spoil communal amity. Instructions have been issued to initiate action," he said. In-charge of Kotwali police station Sachchidanand Rai said investigations are underway to find out who else was involved in "making provocative statements and spreading false information".

The news portal has termed the police's charges "baseless", and accused the Uttar Pradesh government of "criminalising the work of journalists who are re-

porting what is happening in the state". "This is the fourth FIR filed by the UP Police in the past 14 months against The Wire and/or its journalists and each of these cases is baseless.

The Adityanath government does not believe in media freedom and is criminalising the work of journalists who are reporting what is happening in the state," said The Wire's founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan in a statement on Thursday.

Resolving interstate water disputes a complex task

INTERSTATE (River) Water Disputes (ISWDs) are a continuing challenge to the nation. These disputes have a long history and the rulers of the regions or those who governed the areas pre and post independence contributed their mite to the contentious issues by pursuing their narrow interests. The disputes are constitutional, historico-geographical, and because of institutional ambiguities too. Nowadays, politics is adding to the controversies with politicians playing up 'people's demands' to suit their vote banks prolonging the conflicts further. The disputes between the two Telugu States fall into the pattern.

There is no reason why these could not be amicably resolved. AP's efforts to alleviate Rayalaseema water woes have again started fanning the political flames in the two States. It is clear that apart from the constitutional complexities, contentious political federalism and

identity-based electoral political dynamics are fueling the ISWDs.

We have 25 major river basins in the country, with most rivers flowing across states. As river basins are shared resources, a coordinated approach between the states, with adequate involvement of the Centre, is necessary for the preservation, equitable distribution and sustainable utilisation of river water. Researchers have always suggested that given India's federal political structure, inter-state disputes require the involvement of the Union government for a federal solution at two levels: between the states involved, and between the Centre and the states.

However, interstate rivers in India have become sites of contestations, fuelled by conflicting perceptions of property rights, flawed economic instruments for food security, the lack of an integrated ecosystems approach, and

the prevalence of reductionist hydrology for water resource development. Such conflicts over the possession and control of river water have persisted since the inception of the Indian Republic, with prolonged delays in resolution due to historical, institutional and political factors.

In recent years, increasing water scarcity, a rapid rise in urban and rural demands for freshwater, and contentious political dynamics have further exacerbated the problem. Where does Constitutional failure come in? The traditional justification for keeping interstate rivers under the Centre's purview is that since these rivers are not confined by any boundaries (political or administrative), no State can claim an exclusive right to utilise their waters by depriving another State located downstream.

Interestingly, however, while the

Union List mentions "interstate water," the State List simply uses the term "water" to signify what is essentially "surface water" confined within the boundaries of the State. This has allowed States to legislate on the entire extent of surface water available within its borders, regardless of whether the source of the river or its tributary is located outside its boundary or the river is draining into another State.

In this regard, a State only exercises its right to use water for various purposes as long as the Union government deems fit. The moment the Centre steps in the dispute only gets prolonged. Why don't the governments understand this simple matter? There is an urgent need to manage the multiple political challenges with institutional trust for facilitating a public discourse focused on dispute resolution and consensus-building. Will the governments do it at least now?



No parallels to mainstream cinema

VINOD MIRANI

THE Generation Now, the ones who love films, do know cinema as cinema, a source of entertainment and pastime. They love to talk and debate over films, and if you have got into one such debate, drop this term Parallel Cinema or, worse still, Art Film. You end up getting into a longer debate and spending a lot of time explaining what you mean!

Was there any other kind of cinema than what have been having since decades? After all, cinema is for fun. Even the generation that lived through this parallel phase never quite understood what was this cinema all about, one can't blame the generation for not knowing. You must be aware of the fashion shows held all over the world but also noticed what these shows exhibit in the name of fashion was something no sane person would be seen wearing in real life. Nothing identifiable in these dresses, let alone comfort to the wearer.

And, when it comes to cinema, whatever liberties a maker might take, the outcome has to be plausible and identifiable.

The parallel cinema or, what those indulged in making them liked to call it -- Art Film. Were these people being more creative, knew the medium better and thought the audience needed to be educated in better cinema? I have not been able to figure out the purpose of making such films. I don't think even the cine-goers did that either, for if they had, the art wave would have survived parallelly with the regular entertainers.

While many mass appealing entertainers were also called fantasy and aimed at regaling masses (some sequences even made audience laugh over how stupid the scene was and how they were being taken for granted). Take for example a scenes in Manmohan Desai's film "Amar Akbar Anthony, where three brothers separated since childhood are seen donating blood to Nirupa Roy, all at once with tubes hanging out of their arms. Imagine three streams of blood flowing into her body! This may have looked ridiculous but it was meant to show that the three men were actually the long-lost blood brothers while Nirupa Roy was the mother of all three. That all three had same blood flowing in their veins. It worked with the viewers.

Compare to this, an art film, "27 Down", where the whole film has the heroine, Rakhee, travelling on a train and dwelling on her past and so on! Let alone a normal traveller, even for the viewer of the film, this would be a sheer torture. Then there was another film where late in night, you see a car headlights far apart coming towards the camera. The scene goes on and on till eternity. Was this scene made to rouse your curiosity? This and many more such films were called art cinema.

Of course, there were some interesting films that were different and interesting from the commercial films, because even the biggest of filmmakers had this urge to be creative and show something truer and closer to life. Films like Raj Kapoor's "Jagte Raho" or "Boot Polish", Bimal Roy's "Do Bigha Zameen"; Chetan Anand's "Neecha Nagar"; Guru Dutt's "Pyasa"; Shashi Kapoor's "Kalyug"; Nasir Hussain's "Baharon Ke Sapne"; Ketran Mehta's "Mirch Masala" were piece-of-life cinema.

These films found no takers, really, nor were cinema halls interested in screening these, fearing empty halls. What was surprising was, the very taxpayers who did not care for such films, ended up financing their production, unwittingly though. The Government had set up an institution to promote them as what it described as Good Cinema! A

And, when it comes to cinema, whatever liberties a maker might take, the outcome has to be plausible and identifiable. The parallel cinema or, what those indulged in making them liked to call it -- Art Film. Were these people being more creative, knew the medium better and thought the audience needed to be educated in better cinema? I have not been able to figure out the purpose of making such films. I don't think even the cine-goers did that either, for if they had, the art wave would have survived parallelly with the regular entertainers.

special body was set up in the name of Film Finance Corporation or FFC (later renamed National Film Development Corporation or NFDC).

While the regular films ended up paying various taxes, Good Cinema was not only financed by the government, it gave them National Awards, which qualified them for the entertainment tax exemption in states. These films were also sent abroad to win some certificate of merit which had no value. What is sad is that, many of these art films, depicted and exploited poverty and depravity of a section of society that only ended up doing bad PR for the country.

It was a vicious circle and a case of taxpayer's money spent on things that neither provided employment nor brought back the monies spent, showing it in a bad light.

As if funding these films was not enough, the Government built a cinema exclusively to accommodate these films. It was aptly titled Akashwani, reeking of control. The idea was to promote Good Cinema. Who, responsible for running this charitable Government exercise, knew what was good or bad cinema? How was the cinema defined?

After all, cinema was a commercial enterprise and what mattered was whether it made profits by entertaining people what it was meant to do.

Besides the Government funding, what else worked in favour of these parallel filmmakers? Besides the funds, it was a lot of new and aspiring actors keen on making it into Hindi films. The actors who passed from Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, and others from National School of Drama (NSD), Delhi, were readily available for any kind of exposure on screen. Actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Amrish Puri, Shabana Azmi, Smrita Patil and directors Ketan Mehta, Kundan Shah, Sudhir Mishra, Vinod Chopra, among others, had to be satisfied with no rewarding work in parallel cinema with close to zero remuneration. They earned awards, may be, and laurels, but soon they realised that they were being exploited. Avoiding doing any more such films, they looked towards money-makers.

Their decision was right and rewarding. They got the recognition as well as moneys they deserved. The government-backed parallel cinema project died a natural death. However, like the old-time filmmakers who indulged in making such films at times to feed their creative urge, now some actors have taken to making the art kind of films. Their sole aim seems to be to win a National Award. The examples are "Chhapak", "Phillauri", "Pari", "The Sky Is Pink" and a few others.

What is good cinema, are the films being made for mass entertainment not good? In fact, most of the films made these days are inspiring, meaningful and entertaining at the same time. They may be fiction or reality based. They work well at the box office. Films like "Dangal", "Kahaani", "Pad Man", "Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty", "3 Idiots", "Kesari", "Mission Mangal", "Bajrangi Bhaijaan", "Super 30" and "Manikarnika" are just a few examples that come to mind.

(Vinod Mirani is a veteran film writer and box office analyst. The views expressed are personal)

Is Metro Rail's novelty wearing off?

IN MY OPINION

V RAMU SARMA

Is Hyderabad Metro Rail which was hailed as an outstanding infrastructure project, conceived for rapid connectivity in Hyderabad, a modern public transport system and a project which was at the forefront of pathbreaking Multimodal connectivity losing steam?

Is the HMRL also proving that the fear expressed by the metro man E Sreedharan in 2017 that PPP model cannot be successful in such projects when the Government of India came out with the Metro Rail policy is not misplaced? In fact if one digs into the various facts and official figures that have been appearing in media from time to time, it is clear that the PPP model in Metro rail projects which were tried out in Mumbai, Hyderabad, and the airport line of Delhi could not become as successful as it was expected. It gives a feeling that they have been launched without significant thought going into long term viability and sustainability.

As Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's Managing Director, the grand old man had said, "Metro projects are very expensive and social projects. Private players will come in only when there is profit." He always said they are not expected to make profits and wanted them to be a joint venture between central and state government on 50:50 participation. He was always reluctant in executing urban rail projects on PPP mode. His forecast now seems to be coming true.

India may boast about its two operational metro rail projects, Mumbai and Hyderabad. But it appears that Metro Rail is bleeding and is suffering huge losses. While the Mumbai Metro Rail is being partnered by Reliance infrastructure Ltd, L&T Metro Rail is in partnership with Hyderabad Metro Rail Ltd. Following

mounting losses, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) expressed its preparedness to take over the operation and maintenance of Mumbai Metro's.

Another glaring example of the failed PPP project is Delhi's Airport metro line handled by Reliance and the Rapid Metro Rail Gurgaon Ltd, a private consortium floated by IL&FS (Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd.

Now we have reports emanating that the Hyderabad Metro Rail project which is touted as India's largest metro network with 69.2 km operational stretch crisscrossing the entire city is also struggling for survival. A glance at the audited result of L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad shows loss close to Rs 45 crore (Rs 1.5 crore per day). It says that for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 losses have gone up by five times compared to financial year ending March 2020. The approximate loss incurred is said to be Rs 1766 crore for year ending March 2021 as against Rs 382 crore 1 FY 2020.

One of the reasons for this, is the double whammy of Covid-19. Between March 2020 to September, the revenue for Metro rail was zero due to lockdown. Post lifting of lockdown, the ridership picked up but at a very slow pace. In view of this, the L&T had sought financial support of the state government to deal with the "severe financial stress."

Apart from the impact of COVID-19, another major drawback for low occupancy levels of metro rail in Hyderabad is lack of last mile connectivity and a common ticket for different commuters. Initially, there was lot of enthusiasm among the citizens who used to travel by metro and enjoy the food at the food counters at different stations. The traffic had gone up to about three lakh mark per day. But this enthusiasm proved to be short lived.

Some IT firms operated shuttle services at Hi-Tech City and Durgam Cheruvu stations. L&T also operated such services from stations like Secunderabad East, Tarnaka, Mettuguda etc. But



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these services were insufficient and the frequency of 15-30 minutes did not work out well if the passenger response was any indication. The travel cost had increased manifold as the passengers have to hire an auto to reach the station to board the train and then again, another auto to reach their places from the alighting point which cost them double the metro fare. Even parking facilities are lacking at most of the metro stations. People cannot use their personal vehicle from their house to metro station, park it there and board the train. This facility is yet to be fully developed.

Employees who form majority of the train users found that shar-

ing a cab with colleagues or using personal vehicle was much cheaper and more convenient.

For those who are familiar with Mumbai or stayed there will vouch that they cannot think of being a Mumbaiair without its suburban rail system. This has proved to be a very reliable transportation system and made the city liveable. This suburban rail system has been able to survive despite running in deep losses only because it is 100 percent government investment.

If global studies are any indication, mass rapid transit system is high capital intensive system. Experts say that metro rail projects across the world have never yielded an investment return of

more than 2-3 per cent. Running public transport system hence cannot be a private business exercise. It is the government's which must take up the responsibility.

Apparently, this needs more strategic policy studies. Announcing welfare schemes after schemes during every election is not enough. A greater and more pragmatic policy should be evolved to see that rapid transport system is evolved and managed by government so that the wheels of economy can move at a faster pace.

Compared to other mass rapid transport system, the metro rail projects have been more capital intensive. From land acquisition to civil works, signalling, and rolling stock it is cost-intensive and cannot be a profitable business.

Public-private partnership (PPP) models work well only in projects such as airports, ports and highways and not metro rail as the latter offers low returns while being highly capital intensive and this view is endorsed by experts from infrastructure sector.

That is the reason why Sreedharan had always been saying, "Metro projects are very expensive and are social. They are not expected to make profits. Private players will come in only when there is profit and that is why only government should undertake such projects keeping public welfare in sight."

Devastating tragedy

THE recent dowry death case in Kerala has shaken the consciousness of the whole state as well as that of our nation because such an incident, so horrendous, happening in Kerala known for its tolerant, progressive and educated society is unexpected and incredible. It's also shocking that around two hundred women have lost their lives in the state owing to dowry harassment in the past twelve to thirteen years.

Unless the leaders, the governments at the State and Centre, policy makers, the concerned authorities and above all our society is ready to take dedicated, are committed to stop this and sincere steps taken to eradicate dowry the nation is sure to witness more dowry deaths. Gender equality and respect towards women must begin at home and schools. Youngsters should be made aware of the consequences of dowry and get them involved in anti dowry campaigns and lead the society to one that is free of this menace.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Unbecoming behaviour

THE short temper and arrogance of the Chairperson of the Kerala State Women's Commission, MC Josephine, when the state has been grieving by a series of suicides, apparently dowry-related, by young wives, is not only shocking but unbecoming of the posi-

tion she holds because no women would feel comfortable approaching her with their problems.

In a phone-in programme seen by many, her impatience was more than evident. When a woman spoke to her about domestic violence the Chairperson asked her whether she had complained to the police and on hearing a negative reply from the victim, she said, 'then suffer', which was highly inappropriate. The Women's Commission has sweeping powers to take action on its own and even bring errant policemen to book. But no such actions have come to light. Madam Josephine's body language while speaking to the press on camera also bespoke of an intolerant woman. How can such a person solve the problems of women, who may be coming out with them after a lot of self deliberation and reluctance?

No woman is happy complaining against her in-laws in public and ending her marriage. People who are in charge of such posts should have a patient and compassionate attitude towards the victims. This Chairperson has to be removed from her post immediately.

There is no dearth for laws to protect women but enforcing them and punishing culprits alone can solve the problem. Society, the judiciary, the government, which includes the law and order system, must be ever alert on this issue. Dowry deaths should be rooted out of society for good.

Elizabeth Koshy, Pathanamthitta

LETTERS

A ray of hope in J&K?

THE face-to-face meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Jammu and Kashmir leaders in a cordial atmosphere was an acknowledgement of the indispensability of the leaders of the regional parties for the restart of halted political activities in the Kashmir Valley.

The fact that the government considers the abrogation of Articles: 370 and 35A as a fait accompli and takes a firm stand against their restoration is highly significant. The constitutional validity of stripping the region of special or semi-autonomous status is now under challenge before the Supreme Court. But it does not tie the government's hand from undoing a wrong.

Meanwhile, the government appears to be not so rigid on restoration of statehood. The Congress is on the same page as BJP on the weighty matter of the revocation of the Article: 370 in the face of the strength of national sentiments whipped up by the Hindu Right and holds that 'special land rights' and 'job guarantees' for the local population, for which it seeks new laws, will have the 'same effect' as the restoration of the Article: 370.

The government has made the delimitation exercise prior to the con-

duct of Assembly election its priority and only interest. The ongoing exercise of redrawing the boundaries of assembly constituencies is keenly watched for how and to what end it is done. It is a paradox that on the one hand Narendra Modi speaks of fostering grassroots democracy and on the other hand he is comfortable with complete central control over the region.

The right to self-determination and regional autonomy give greater meaning and value to democracy and a sense of belonging to the nation and pose no threat to the country's territorial integrity. The geographical location of Kashmir and the subterranean religious fault-lines in the sub-continent lend the issue a geopolitical dimension. New Delhi is reportedly under pressure from Washington to restore the democratic process and civil rights in Jammu and Kashmir and in touch with Islamabad through backchannels to broker a peace plan. It is also reported to have weighed up the border crisis with China in Ladakh and the ascendance of Taliban in Afghanistan.

In any case, we wish that the 'out-reach meeting' becomes a shaft of hope for the people of Kashmir; every avenue is worth exploring for them to be able to fulfil their legitimate political aspirations, protect their culture and customs - Kashmiriyat - and have a say in their future.

G David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

thehansreader@gmail.com

Ensure WHO standard medicines in all govt hospitals: AP CM Jagan

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday directed officials to ensure that all medicines used in government hospitals, including ESI hospitals, meet GMP and WHO standards.

During a review meeting on Covid Control and Vaccination, the Chief Minister said special attention should be paid to sanitation in hospitals. There should be regular monitoring of food provided to patients, maintenance of hospitals and medical infrastructure. He instructed the authorities to prepare a SOP to ensure quality service. A special officer must be appointed to see that all hospitals have access to infrastructure, proper sanitation,



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviews Covid control measures at his camp office in Tadepalli on Friday

monitoring of attendance of doctors, nurses, and other staff.

Discussing on Nadu-Nedu in hospitals and Health Hubs, the Chief Minister said that maintenance should be prioritised in all the works that were taken under the Nadu-Nedu initiative and ensure that patients receive better quality services.

He said that all the Aarogyasri, 104 and 108 bills must be paid within 21 days. Regarding Health-Hubs, officials gave a report explaining that more people were going to other states for cancer, heart disease and paediatric surgeries. The Chief Minister directed the authorities to ensure that medical services for

these ailments are made available here. He asked them to prioritise establishment of specialty hospitals in the hubs.

The Chief Minister said that the construction of 16 new medical colleges, revamping the existing 11 medical colleges and bringing up Health Hubs will strengthen the health sector in the state. He directed the officials to expedite the works of construction of 16 new medical colleges and complete them on a war-footing. He told the authorities to identify sites for Health Hubs close to the habitats as it would attract investments.

Meanwhile, the officials informed that the number of active cases have come down below 50,000 with only 5.23 per cent of positivity rate, where in six districts it is even less than 5 per cent and with a recovery rate of 96.67 per

cent, higher than the national average. The officials informed that 76.51 per cent of beds in private hospitals are occupied by patients under Aarogyasri and the number of calls dropped significantly to 104, with just 1021 calls on June 25.

Referring to black fungus, the officials said that there are about 3,148 black fungus cases and surgeries were performed on 1,095 people and 1,398 were discharged. There are about 237 deaths due to black fungus. As far as oxygen plants are concerned, officials stated that the government is setting up 134 Oxygen Generation (PSA) plants across the state, focusing on establishment of generation plants in hospitals with more than 50 beds. Officials said that 97 plants will be set up by September and the remaining 37 plants are expected to be completed by next March.

Tirupati reports first case of Delta+ in AP

- Health Minister Alla Nani confirms that the sample sent to CCMB in April identified the new variant
- The results came on June 23 and the patient is normal and attending his regular duties
- Following this, 16 samples from his locality sent to CCMB

V PRADEEP KUMAR
TIRUPATI

IN a big jolt to the denizens of the pilgrim city, Deputy CM and Minister for Health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas alias Nani has stated the first case of Delta plus variant was reported in Tirupati. The patient was already discharged and is normal. This was even stated by the Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas in Vijayawada.

Amidst the fears of the pace with which the Delta plus variant of Covid infected the people, the minister's statement has created jitters among the people. After witnessing a sharp surge in Covid cases for the past three months during which the daily cases have even crossed 3,000, the district has been heaving a sigh of relief for the past one week as the cases have dropped to below 800. There was a view among various quarters that the second wave has been coming to an end and the daily activities have begun with the lifting of day curfew in the state. At this juncture, the Delta plus variant case in the city has created panic.

Already much hue and cry was made in the social media about the new mutant which is said to be the next generation

of SARS-COV-2 as it increased the transmissibility.

DM&HO Dr U Sreehari told The Hans India that the patient was having symptoms on April 3 following which his sample was collected on the next day. The result came on April 5 and was admitted to SVIMS for nine days and discharged on April 13. He was normal and not even under oxygen support during his hospital stay.

As part of genomic sequencing it was sent randomly to the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad where mutation sequencing was also done. The results came on June 23 stating that his sample was having Delta plus variant. Dr Sreehari made it clear that the patient was completely cured long back and has been attending his duties.

The samples of all his family members and 16 other samples of positive cases in his area in Mangalam of the city were sent to the CCMB. He said that there was no need for panic as there were no active cases with this variant now. At the same time as the possible third wave of the Covid is ahead, people should exercise all caution and duly follow the Covid appropriate behaviour so as to safeguard themselves from the deadly virus.

Govt taking care of mango farmers, asserts Kannababu

HANS NEWS SERVICE

- Agriculture Minister vehemently denies allegations of Oppn leader Chandrababu over fall in prices of mangos
- Says mango prices are being monitored closely

AMARAVATI

MINISTER for agriculture K Kannababu said that the state government has been initiating steps to protect the interests of mango farmers. He criticised opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu for making false allegations on fall in mango prices.

Speaking to media persons here on Friday, the minister said that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy was reviewing on mango prices regularly to protect the interests of mango farmers.

He said tahsildars, VROs and horticulture officers were appointed to monitor the mango prices at food processing units in Chittoor district. He said of the total 45 processing units, 27 units are functioning at present.

Kannababu said that the processing units purchased 1.5 lakh



Agriculture Minister K Kannababu along with Special CS, Agriculture, Poonam Malakondaiah addressing the media in Vijayawada on Friday

metric tonnes (MT) of mangoes so far and they have to purchase another 1.5 lakh MT. The state government has been taking steps to stabilise the price of mangoes, he said adding the present Covid situation also has adverse impact on mango prices.

Condemning the allegations of Naidu that minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy and his brother are responsible for fall in of mango prices at food processing units, the agriculture minister said majority of food processing units are owned by TDP leaders only. He said the farmers are getting Rs 9.50 per kg of mangoes at present and efforts are on to provide Rs 11 per kg. The minister said that the

state government called for expression of interest from various companies to set up food processing units in each parliamentary constituency as per the directions of the Chief Minister who announced a policy to increase the number of food processing units in the state to protect the interests of farmers. The minister said that during five years of TDP regime from 2014-19, only 11.29 lakh metric tonnes of agricultural produce was purchased as against 19.30 lakh tonnes purchased during two years of YSRCP government. He said that the state government allocated Rs 3,000 crore for price stabilisation of agricultural products.

SBI branch observes MSME Day

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

ON the eve of the International MSME day on June 27, MSME Day was observed in State Bank of India, SME branch here on Friday. A programme was organised to mark the occasion on the premises of the branch under the aegis of DGM, Rajamahendravaram module, Suresh S Prabhu. The meeting was presided over by N Sai Mohan AGM, SME branch and participated by Guru Raj, AGM (SME), Rajamahendravaram Administrative Office. Customers were educated about the change in banking scenario, digitisation of MSME customers, banking requirements, CLP loans, pre-approved business loans, GECL and various other MSME products of the bank.

- 91,849 tests turn out 4,458 cases, a positivity rate of 4.8%, lowest in more than two months
- Mortality rate stands at 0.67% with a total of 12,528 deaths in the State

AMARAVATI

STATE registered the lowest positivity rate of 4.8 per cent in daily coronavirus cases in more than two months as 91,849 tests turned out 4,458 fresh positives on Friday. The state completed 2.15 crore tests so far that turned out a total of 18,71,475 Covid-19 cases at an overall positivity rate of 5.23 per cent.

A health department bulletin said 6,313 patients had recovered from the infection and 38 more succumbed in the state in 24 hours ending 9 am on Friday.

The overall recovery rate climbed to 96.67 per cent after 18,11,157 patients got cured so far.

With a total of 12,528 deaths, the Covid-19 mortality rate stood at 0.67 per cent. Krishna became the 12th district in Andhra Pradesh to cross the one lakh total coronavirus cases mark on Friday.

With 79,676 cases, Vizianagaram is the only district that has not yet made it to the list.

In 24 hours, East Godavari reported 909, Chittoor 708 and West Godavari 591 fresh cases.

Three districts registered 300-plus cases each, three districts 200-plus each and three more 100-plus each.

Vizianagaram continued to report new cases in double digits, adding 64 to its count.

Chittoor again topped the toll chart with nine fresh fatalities, Krishna eight, Guntur five, East Godavari four, Kurnool, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram two each.

Anantapur, Kadapa, Nellore and West Godavari had one death each in a day. For the second consecutive day, Prakasam did not report any fresh fatality. (PTI)



Over 230 die of black fungus, Chittoor dist tops

AMARAVATI

ANDHRA Pradesh has so far reported 237 black fungus (mucormycosis) deaths, the health department data said on Friday. In all, 3,148 mucormycosis cases were reported in the state, it said. While 1,398 patients got cured, 1,513 are still undergoing treatment in various hospitals. Chittoor, which has the highest number of Covid-19 deaths in the state, also topped in black fungus fatalities, accounting for 41. Guntur district logged the highest number of 563 cases so far while West Godavari had the lowest 21. Nellore had only one mucormycosis fatality. The data said 1,095 surgeries were performed for treatment of black fungus.

TS to reach 1 crore jabs soon, says CS

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

CHIEF Secretary Somesh Kumar on Friday said that around 96 lakh vaccinations have been given so far in the State. "In a couple of days it is set to cross one crore vaccination mark". In order to optimally utilise the supplies provided by the Centre, the State government has taken up vaccination of high exposure groups on a priority basis, as per the directions of Chief Minister K Chandrababhu Naidu. Under the super spreaders vaccination 25 lakh persons have been vaccinated. The CS visited Monda Market and inspected the "Work Place" vaccination centre. He interacted with street vendors and motivated them to get vaccinated. The vendors appreciated the government for arranging vaccination at their work place. Kumar stated that vaccination was being done

- CS visits Monda Market and inspects 'work place' vaccination centre
- Interacts with street vendors and motivates them to get vaccinated; vendors appreciated govt for arranging vaccination at their work place

across all 100 centres and 30 mobile units within the GHMC limits. "A mop-up drive is being done in the GHMC areas. All those who missed the vaccination during the special drive are given jabs now".

He congratulated the Health department staff for their services. Health Secretary SAM Rizvi, Hyderabad Collector Sweta Mohanty and other officials were present.

Reliance withdraws Tirupati project

- The Reliance Industries proposed to set up an electronic industry in EMC at Renigunta
- APIIC allots 136 acres land for the Rs 15,000 cr project
- But some farmers approach court opposing the allotment
- The company now drops the project, returns the land to the govt and seeks refund of the money it paid to towards the land

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

RELIANCE Industries, a leading corporate, went back on its decision to set up an electronic industry in the Electronic Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) near Renigunta Airport, 25km from here.

Official sources said that the



industry also surrendered the land allotted to it by Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (APIIC) and applied to government for the refund of the amount paid towards land cost.

The estimated investment was Rs 15,000 crore and the project was proposed to manufacture set top boxes, dongles and other electronic appliances using for internet purpose.

The Reliance company came forward this project here in previous TDP government which allotted 136 acres land near airport.

The YSRCP government has handed over 75 acres land and the remaining land is in the court disputes as 15 farmers filed petition

against acquisition of their 50 acres.

Though the APIIC showed an alternative land at Padiredu forest area in Vadamalapeta mandal, the Reliance has not come forward to take up the offer due to various reasons and finally it has informed the government that they are going back on their decision of set up industry.

Meanwhile, TNSF district president Ravi Naidu in a statement that Reliance's withdrawal from setting up of industries in the state affects the employment opportunities to youth. He blamed the YSRCP government's 'hostile attitude' towards industries for the cancellation of project.

Dattatraya recalls Emergency days

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

HIMACHAL Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatraya on Friday recalled the emergency imposed during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's regime. He said he was arrested from Bellampalli, which is famous for coal mines and was lodged in Chanchalguda central Jail. While in jail he got news of his elder brother, Manik Prabh's, death on September 17, 1976. He was allowed escort parole to attend the last rites.

Dattatraya got a month's conditional parole from jail three days after death of his brother. Every morning he had to reach the Afzalganj police station to mark his attendance and to show his face to the station in-charge. He struggled during the Emergency days, as the police monitored his every movement.

The senior BJP senior leader said he visited a library after his daily ritual of police station visit. He read books in jail and developed deep love for books in the library, during his parole days. Dattatraya said he read about

the impact of repeated invasions and foreign rule on the Indian culture and traditions. These books toughened his resolve to fight for rights of the poor and to dedicate his life to nation-building.

When he was in jail his mother used to visit regularly. But an officer always sat near them listening to the conversation. The police and government officials used to approach relatives of those who were arrested during Emergency and put pressure on them to convince the activists to give statements in favour of the government.

Navneet on thanksgiving visit to Tirumala shrine

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

FILM star-turned politician MP Navneet Kaur Rana on Friday offered prayers to Lord Venkateswara here on Friday.

Speaking to media outside the shrine after darshan, Kaur said that she came to offer prayers to the Lord after she got the reprieve from the Supreme Court which stayed the Mumbai High Court squashing her caste certificate.

Affirming that her fight is with Shiv Sena party, she said that her rival candidate Shiva Sena leader who was a five-time MP and former Union minister unable to digest his defeat filed the case against her caste status (certificate) in the High Court. Expressing her support to the people of Andhra Pradesh, she said she was ready to lend any help required to them on any issue more so related to the farmers, women and youth as it was the Telugu people who



- Says she is ready to lend any help needed to AP on any issue, mainly related to farmers, women and youth as it was the Telugu people who made her popular
- Says her fight is with Shiv Sena

made her popular. "After Maharashtra, my love and concern is on Andhra People," she said adding that she would also take up any issue related to AP in Parliament. Though the Covid cases were declining, the pandemic was still remain far from removed, she said and added that she prayed Lord

Venkateswara to ward off the deadly virus and bless the people to regain their happy days. It may be noted here that Kaur was elected to Lok Sabha from Amaravathi (SC) in Maharashtra defeating veteran Shiv Sena leader Anand Rao Adusil in the 2019 general elections.

Kejriwal govt inflated O2 need; report false: Sisodia

BJP accuses Kejriwal of heinous crime and criminal negligence during the peak of second wave

NEW DELHI

In face of the BJP's accusation of "criminal negligence" citing a report that the Delhi government "exaggerated" oxygen requirement during COVID-19 second wave, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said his only "crime" was that he "fought for the breath of two crore people".

He also said that those who lost their loved ones due to the shortage of oxygen should not be called "liars". A sub-group constituted by the Supreme Court to audit oxygen consumption in the national capital's hospitals has said that the Delhi government "exaggerated" consumption of the life-saving gas.

The five-member panel, headed by AIIMS director Randeep Guleria, said that during the second wave of COVID-19 infections, the Delhi government had made claims for allocation of 700 MT of oxygen on April 30 using a "wrong formula".

After the report came to light, the BJP accused Kejriwal of "heinous crime" and "criminal negligence". In reply to the allegation, Kejriwal took to Twitter to say, "My crime -- I fought for the breath of my two crore people. When you were doing an election rally, I was awake all night arranging for oxygen. I fought, pleaded to get oxygen for people." "People have lost their loved ones due to lack of oxygen. Don't call them liars, they are feeling so bad," he said in a tweet in



Hindi. BJP leaders, including East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir and former Delhi minister Kapil Mishra have slammed the Delhi government over the issue and demanded an apology over what they call is "criminal negligence".

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra termed it a "heinous crime". "Imagine the amount of criminality. This is a heinous crime by Arvind Kejriwal. This is criminal negligence as the panel says he sought four times more oxygen than required. The report has exposed the politics he did to shift blame from his incompetence and failure to deal with Covid-19," Patra said.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia claimed there is no report approved by the Supreme Court-appointed Oxygen Audit Com-

mittee about Delhi exaggerating its oxygen requirement by four times during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At an online press briefing, he accused the BJP of lying and alleged that the "bogus" and "misleading" report has been "cooked up" at its office and submitted by the central government in the apex court. Sisodia's comments came after BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra, citing the Supreme Court-appointed audit panel's report, slammed the Delhi government over it, terming it to be a "heinous crime". "The real truth about this report is that it does not exist. This alleged report which is being used by BJP leaders to senselessly slam CM Arvind Kejriwal does not exist. "It is bogus and misleading."

WINDOWS

ED raids Deshmukh

NAGPUR/MUMBAI: For the second time in two months, former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has come under the scanner, this time of the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which raided three locations, including his residences in Nagpur and Mumbai, and two others belonging to his two associates in connection with an alleged corruption case filed against him, officials said here on Friday. The raids were carried out simultaneously at five locations as part of the probe into a money-laundering case filed against Deshmukh in May under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), even as the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi allies slammed the Centre and BJP for the actions. Soon after the ED launched the raids on Friday morning, the MVA allies -- Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress -- slammed the Centre and the BJP for "misusing central probe agencies" to harass opposition parties.

Kaskar in 7-day NCB custody

THANE: A court at Bhiwandi in Thane district of Maharashtra on Friday remanded Iqbal Kaskar, underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's brother, in the custody of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) for seven days to facilitate his questioning in a drugs case. Iqbal Kaskar was arrested by the NCB on Wednesday after his alleged involvement in the case surfaced following the recent seizure of 27 kg of hashish. In 2017, Kaskar was arrested by police in neighbouring Thane in an extortion case. He is currently lodged in a Thane jail for the offence committed under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). On Friday, he was produced before the magistrate, who sent him to the NCB custody for interrogation in the case pertaining to the seizure of hashish. "On perusal of the remand report and case diary, it appears that the case is of serious nature triable by special court. Hence, sufficient opportunity of investigation is required," the magistrate said.

'85-day gap for 2nd dose may cause problems'

776 docs died in Covid 2nd wave, maximum 115 doctors lost their lives in Bihar: IMA

NEW DELHI: Amid worries of a possible third wave of coronavirus, there are questions about whether the 85-day gap between the first and second vaccine dose could potentially cause problems.

Data shows there is also an urgent need to increase the number of people who have received both doses of the vaccine - two shots are the only effective ammunition against the virus and a possible third. Two doses are almost three times more effective than one dose.

The big concern in India now is that only a very small percentage (4%) of the population has had two doses while 18 per cent have received only one dose.

A single-day rise of 51,667 Covid-19 infections took India's case tally to 3,01,34,445 while the weekly positivity rate declined to 3 per cent, according to Union Health Ministry data on Friday. The death toll climbed to 3,93,310 with 1,329 more people succumbing to the viral disease in a day.

The number of active cases has further declined to 6,12,868 and now comprises 2.03 per cent of the total infections. A net decline of 14,189 active cases has been recorded in a day, the data updated at 8 am showed. Recoveries outnumbered daily new cases for the 43rd consecutive day with the number of people who have recuperated from the disease surging to 2,91,28,267.

The Indian Medical Association said 776 doctors have died during second wave of pandemic; maximum 115 doctors lost their lives in Bihar, followed by Delhi (109).

Health services were affected in Punjab on Friday as government doctors went on a day-long strike against the recommendations of the state's sixth pay commission related to non-practising allowance and pension benefits.

Outpatient department (OPD) services remained suspended in government hospitals, with doctors at many places holding demonstrations. However, all emergency services, Covid-19-related work including duty of doctors in isolation wards, and vaccination continued as usual, Dr Gagandeep Singh, president of the Punjab Civil Medical Services Association, told PTI over phone.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday asked the government why "large-scale testing is not being done" to check and prevent the spread of the Delta plus variant of coronavirus and how effective are the vaccines against it.



Health workers rest during a break from duty, at a cremation ground in Guwahati on Friday

India records 51,667 Covid-19 cases, 1,329 deaths

Health services hit as govt docs in Punjab go on strike

No mask: Bank guard shoots customer

BAREILLY : In a shocking incident, a security guard deployed at a bank in Bareilly on Friday opened fire at a customer who had come without wearing a mask.

The security guard deployed at the Bank of Baroda's Junction Road branch shot the customer, identified as Rajesh Kumar, a railway employee, in the leg. Initial reports say that he got into an argument with the security guard over not wearing a mask.

Rajesh Kumar was admitted to the district hospital in Bareilly while the guard, Keshav Prasad Mishra, has been taken into police custody. Mishra said that he shot at Rajesh Kumar in a fit of anger.

The SSP said the accused was a private security guard of the bank.

Lioness Sheena tests positive

COLOMBO: A lioness at a zoo in Sri Lanka has been tested positive for the coronavirus, days after a lion at the same facility contracted the virus, according to a media report on Friday.

The Lioness named Sheena' was confirmed to have contracted COVID-19, raising the number of COVID-19 infected animals in the zoo to two, the Dehiwala Zoological Gardens Department said on Wednesday. PCR tests were carried out on the 12-year old Lioness after an 11-year-old male lion named Thor' tested positive for COVID-19 last week. Both of them are now under medical care, Daily News reported. The virus-infected Lioness was isolated immediately along with few other animals.

Nurse injects empty syringe

PATNA: A nurse allegedly injected an empty syringe into the arms of a youth during Covid vaccination drive in Chapra town in Bihar's Saran, an official said on Friday. After a video of the purported incident, which occurred on June 21, went viral on social media on Friday, the official said that the nurse concerned was removed from the Covid centre and the Health Department has issued show cause notice to her. Azher Hussain went to Covid vaccination centre at Behrampur Imbarara Madarsa, along with his friend Aman Khan, to take the first dose. During vaccination, the nurse, without filling the vaccine into the syringe, had injected it into Hussain's arm, and the entire process was captured into the mobile phone by Aman Khan.

Covid messiah Sonu Sood launches rural vax initiative

MUMBAI

There's no stopping actor Sonu Sood! On Friday, he came up with one more initiative to extend his support to people amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

He has now launched COVREG, which aims to create a volunteer programme for Covid-19 vaccination registration in rural India. The particular initiative is powered by rural fintech leader Spice Money, which will provide the technological expertise for building the application, and will onboard volunteers through the website www.covreg.in.

Opening up about the initiative, Sonu said, "Vaccination is the need of the hour in India to win the battle against Covid-19. Rural India continues to struggle in coping with the pandemic and is now also struggling with vaccine registrations. So, COVREG is created based on a detailed understanding of rural India and its needs observed through months of on-ground work."

"COVREG addresses rural-specific issues of vaccine registration and provides much-needed assistance to hesitant rural citizens. The trust that a neighborhood volunteer warrants will be an additional push towards registration," he added.

Meanwhile, the alleged vaccine fraudster in Kolkata who held at least three vaccination camps where he may have given 'fake' vaccines to as many as 2,000 people was a university drop out who started making music albums - one of which is called 'Boiled Childhood'.

What is causing great consternation in political circles is photos on his Twitter handle with multiple Trinamool leaders -- and not just sneaky selfies that politicians are often subjected to.

Indian woman admits stabbing minor daughter to death in UK

LONDON: A 36-year-old Indian woman in the UK has pleaded guilty to manslaughter by diminished responsibility after she admitted killing her five-year-old daughter at their home because she was terrified of dying from COVID-19 and thought the little girl could not live without her, according to a media report. Sutha Sivanantham stabbed her daughter Sayagi in the bedroom of their south London flat 15 times before severely injuring herself on June 30 last year, the Metro.co.uk reported. Her husband said she had been 'petrified' about catching the virus and the lockdown restrictions may have 'pushed her over the edge,' the report added. Appearing at the Old Bailey on Thursday, Sivanantham denied murder but admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and will be kept in hospital indefinitely. Sivanantham, who had been living in the UK since 2006 after an arranged marriage, complained of mystery ailments for almost a year before the tragedy.



Special Cowin sessions for homeless

NEW DELHI

Without an identity proof or a mobile phone, 46-

year-old Sunil Thakur waited for four hours to get vaccinated at a special inoculation centre set up for homeless people at Yamuna Pushta Night Shelter here, while people who came from places like Baghpat and Ghaziabad and had IDs got jobs within minutes.

"Confusion marred the pace of the vaccination drive for homeless people. Nobody knew how to register such people without an identity card or mobile number," an officer at the vaccination centre said. The Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board organised the vaccination camp in association with the office of the district magistrate (Central Delhi) the Centre for Holistic Development.



One of the officers present at the camp said he got to know about the drive last night. "There were no preparations whatsoever. Someone, we got it started around 10:30 am," he said.

In the absence of a mechanism to register homeless people on the Cowin portal, those having an identity proof and a mobile number were vaccinated with Covishield first. "This drive was meant for homeless people; most of them do not have any identity proof or mobile number. So, they had to wait for hours while people from outside got themselves registered and took the jabs within minutes," a member of an NGO present at the night shelter said. Most of the first 50 people vaccinated at the centre till 2 pm on Friday belonged to nearby residential areas.

Raut: CBI, ED should probe Ram temple land purchase

MUMBAI: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Friday said the alleged financial irregularities in the purchase of land by the Ram temple trust in Ayodhya was a fit case for probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation as well as the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

He said the BJP's national executive should pass a resolution to demand investigation by these agencies in the land case. Raut was responding to reporters' query on the ED's searches at former state home minister Anil Deshmukh's premises in Nagpur and Mumbai on Friday as part of a money-laundering probe against him. The Rajya Sabha member accused the BJP of lowering the importance of the central investigating agencies - CBI and ED - by using them for targeting political rivals.



China launches first bullet train in Tibet, close to Arunachal

BEIJING

China on Friday operationalised its first fully electrified bullet train in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet, connecting the provincial capital Lhasa and Nyingchi, a strategically located Tibetan border town close to Arunachal Pradesh.

The 435.5-km Lhasa-Nyingchi section of the Sichuan-Tibet Railway has been inaugurated ahead of the centenary celebrations of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) on July 1.

The first electrified railway in Tibet Autonomous Region opened Friday morning, linking Lhasa with Nyingchi as "Fuxing" bullet trains enter official operation on the plateau



region, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway will be the second railway into Tibet after the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. It will go through the southeast of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, one of the world's most geologically active areas.

In November, Chinese President Xi Jinping had instructed officials to expedite construction of the new railway project, connecting Sichuan Province and Nyingchi in Tibet, saying the new rail line would play a key role in safeguarding the border stability.

The Sichuan-Tibet Railway starts from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, and travels through Ya'an and enters Tibet via Qamdo, shortening the journey from Chengdu

to Lhasa from 48 hours to 13 hours.

Nyingchi is prefecture-level city of Medog which is adjacent to the Arunachal Pradesh border.

China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet, which is firmly rejected by India. The India-China border dispute covers the 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Qian Feng, director of the research department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University, told the official daily Global Times earlier that "If a scenario of a crisis happens at the China-India border, the railway will provide a great convenience for China's delivery of strategic materials."

BIZ BRIEFS

Nothing forays into India

Nothing, London-based consumer tech company, on Friday announced its foray into India in partnership with Flipkart. With decades of customer experience and robust delivery capabilities, Flipkart will play an integral role in building Nothing's presence in India and launching its highly anticipated true wireless earbuds Ear (1). "At Nothing, we aim to create easy to use consumer tech products with iconic designs that will bring differentiated value to our users in India and around the world," said Manu Sharma, Vice President and General Manager, Nothing India. "For the upcoming launch of ear 1, we are excited to partner with Flipkart as we mark Nothing's entry in India. Ear (1) will combine notes of transparency, iconic form, and refined functionality. It is the starting point that will define the artistry, confidence and craftsmanship that will carry Nothing products and services for years to come.

Vivo launches vivo V21e

Smartphone brand Vivo on Friday announced the launch of its design and camera focused 5G smartphone under V series - vivo V21e, in India. The Vivo V21e comes with a 6.44 inch AMOLED FullView display. It is powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 700 processor. The phone comes with 8GB RAM and 128 GB of storage expandable up to 1 TB. Nipun Marya, Director Brand Strategy, vivo India, said: "We are delighted to further expand our V21 series line-up in India with the launch of vivo V21e. The smartphone is designed to make the latest technology accessible to customers as it truly offers something for varied smartphone users." The vivo V21e will be priced at Rs 24,990 (8GB+128GB), the device will go on sale starting Friday simultaneously on mainline retail partners, vivo India E-store, Flipkart, Amazon, Paytm, Tatacliq and Bajaj EMI Store.

Sensex soars to life-time high amid firm global cues

MUMBAI

THE BSE Sensex overcame a choppy start to finish at a fresh lifetime high on Friday, propelled by bank and metal stocks amid a bullish trend in overseas markets.

Global equities marched higher after US senators agreed on a bipartisan infrastructure deal, with investors wagering on more stimulus measures in the coming months. Extending gains for the second session, the 30-share BSE benchmark closed 226.04 points or 0.43 per cent higher at record 52,925.04.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 69.90 points or 0.44 per cent to 15,860.35, less than 10 points shy of its all-time closing peak. Tata Steel was the top performer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.65 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, SBI, ICICI Bank, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv and L&T. Index heavyweight Reliance Industries was the biggest loser for the second straight day, tumbling 2.28 per cent. NTPC, HUL, Titan, Asian Paints and Bajaj Auto were among the other laggards, dropping up to 1.69 per cent.

During the week, the Sensex advanced 580.59 points or 1.10 per cent, while the Nifty surged 177

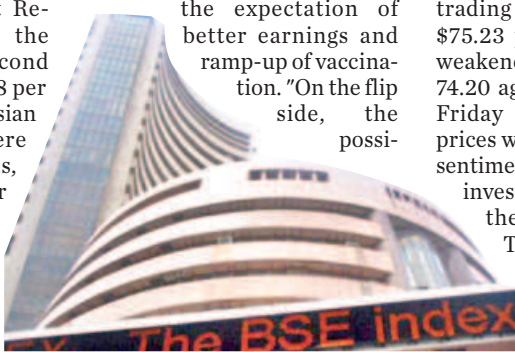
The BSE index gained 226 pts to close at record 52,925 pts propelled by bank and metal stocks

points or 1.12 per cent. "Domestic equities rose in today's session mirroring an upbeat mood in the global markets after US President Joe Biden embraced Senate infrastructure deal to help stimulate the economy. The overall mood in Wall Street was lifted since the US jobless claims ticked down as the economy heals. "On the domestic front, recovery was seen in banks and metal stocks following its consolidation during the past few days," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said benchmarks are hovering near record highs largely led by a gradual pickup in economic activities as states start unlocking, the expectation of better earnings and ramp-up of vaccination. "On the flip side, the possibility

of the third wave of Covid can impact market sentiments. We remain cautiously optimistic on the markets and suggest aligning the positions accordingly," he added. Sector-wise, BSE metal, bankex, telecom, finance, capital goods, healthcare and industrials indices climbed as much as 2.79 per cent, while energy, oil and gas, utilities and FMCG closed with losses.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices rallied up to 1.03 per cent. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with gains. Equities in Europe were trading on a mixed note in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.44 per cent lower at \$75.23 per barrel. The rupee weakened by 2 paise to end at 74.20 against the US dollar on Friday as elevated crude oil prices weighed on forex market sentiment. Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Thursday as they off-loaded shares worth Rs 2,890.94 crore, as per exchange data.



Govt extends I-T compliance deadlines

NEW DELHI

THE government on Friday extended deadlines for various income tax compliances and said the amount paid by an employer to employees for Covid-19 treatment would be tax exempt.

Also, ex-gratia payment received from employer by family members in case of death of an employee due to Covid-19 would be exempt from income tax.

The income tax department, in a statement, said the payment deadline for Vivad Se Vishwas direct tax dispute resolution scheme has been extended by two months till August 31. Taxpayers can make payments till October 31 with additional amount of interest. The last date for PAN-Aadhaar linking too has been extended by three months to September 30, 2021. The deadline for employers to furnish Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) certificate in Form 16 to employees too has been extended till July 31, from July 15, 2021.

SBI can handle any Covid crisis:Khara

MUMBAI

THE country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has adjusted to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and is well poised to deal with any further pandemic-induced disruptions, its Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said. He said the bank is comfortably placed in terms of growth capital and it will explore opportunities for lending in promising sectors to diversify the portfolio and to contain the risks. "The bank has adjusted to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and is better positioned to tackle any subsequent wave," Khara said while addressing the bank's shareholders at the 66th annual general meeting held virtually.

"I am cautiously optimistic that the performance trajectory for the FY2021 will continue in FY2022 as well," he said. During the financial year ended March 31, 2021, the bank reported the highest-ever standalone net profit of Rs 20,410 crore against a net profit of Rs 14,488 crore in the previous year. The gross NPAs ratio declined to 4.98 per cent in FY21 from 6.15 per cent in the last year. The PCR (provisioning coverage ratio) also improved to 87.75 per cent. Khara said the business continuity plans that were chalked out have worked well for the bank, and it was reflected in various parameters of the consolidated financial statements as of March 2021.



The bank is comfortably placed in terms of growth capital and it will explore opportunities for lending in promising sectors to diversify the portfolio and to contain the risks, says SBI chief

MALLYA LOANS SBI-led consortium gets ₹5,800-cr

NEW DELHI: A State Bank of India (SBI)-led consortium that lent loans to fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya on Friday received Rs 5,824.5 crore in its accounts after shares of UBL, earlier attached under the anti-money laundering law, were sold recently, the ED said. Mallya is accused in a multiple banks loan default case of about Rs 9,000 crore. The disputes resolution tribunal (DRT) had sold these shares on June 23 after the Enforcement Directorate had transferred shares worth about Rs 6,624 crore of UBL to the SBI-led consortium on the directions of a special PMLA court that is hearing the case involving Mallya in Mumbai.

'SATAT will reduce reliance on fossil fuels

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

MAVCOMM Consulting, an arm of Mavcomm Group, has announced that India's reliance on the import of fossil fuels will be reduced with the 'Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)' initiative by the central government.

The consulting firm in collaboration with Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC) released the findings of their joint study on the SATAT ini-

tiative. The consulting firm reached out to representatives of all the four primary SATAT stakeholder categories, comprising OMCs, OEMs, Consultants, and Investors/Entrepreneurs. The extensive research exercised on the provisions of the SATAT initiative, and its significance, opportunities and challenges as perceived by various stakeholder groups. Membrane technologies emerged as top choice on environmental sustainability and total cost of ownership aspects, amongst the new and progressive technologies for biogas purification.

Pharmeasy buys Thyrocare stake for ₹4,546 cr

MUMBAI

DIGITAL healthcare company Pharmeasy announced that it will acquire a controlling stake in diagnostic chain Thyrocare for Rs 4,546 crore. API Holdings, the parent of the unicorn Pharmeasy, and A Velumani, Chairman and Managing Di-

rector of Thyrocare Technologies, have signed a definitive agreement for the deal. Under the transaction, the Delhi-based company will buy 66.1 per cent stake in Thyrocare from Velumani and his affiliates at Rs 1,300 per share, according to a statement.

The transaction, which is significant because an en-

trenched player is getting acquired by a startup, will also see a subsidiary of API making an open offer to acquire an additional 26 per cent stake in the listed Thyrocare, the statement said.

Velumani will be separately acquiring a minority non-controlling stake of less than 5 per cent in API as part of a series of equity investments by existing and new investors of API. Shares of Thyrocare closed 6.23 per cent up at Rs 1,448.05 apiece on BSE on Friday.

ONGC REPORTS ₹6,734 CR NET

NEW DELHI: State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) reported a net profit of Rs 6,734 crore in the March quarter on the back of higher oil prices and exceptional income.

The firm had reported a net loss of Rs 3,214.41 crore in the January-March 2020 period, according to a company press statement. In an investor call, ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Subhash Kumar said the company realised \$58.05 for every barrel of crude oil produced and sold in January-March as compared to \$49.01 a barrel realisation a year back.

REAL CORNER

Housing sales in Hyd set for steep rise in Apr-Jun

Sales in Q1FY21 are expected to be around 3,240 units, a jump of 491% from a year ago

Housing sales in Hyderabad are expected to rise 491 per cent in Apr-Jun as residential sales in the city are likely to jump to 3,240 units in second quarter of 2021 as compared to 660 units a year ago. However, the demand is seen lower by 26 per cent from 4,400 units sold in March quarter 2021.

Housing sales are estimated to rise 93 per cent year-on-year during April-June across seven major cities, but may fall 58 per cent compared to the previous quarter due to the adverse impact of the second wave of Covid-19, according to property consultant Anarock.

Sales are likely to be around 24,570 units across seven major cities - Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune, Anarock said.

Sales of residential properties stood at 12,740 units in April-June 2020 and 58,290 units in March quarter 2021. Anarock released the data of housing sales and launches a week before the end of the current quarter. When asked about the reason for release of data in advance, Anarock did not reply.

PropTiger, Knight Frank India, PropEquity release their data after the end of every quarter. JLL India, of late, is also releasing the



data before quarter ends.

"The second Covid-19 wave definitely impacted overall residential property market activity in the second quarter this year when juxtaposed against the preceding quarter. However, compared to the corresponding period of 2020, the sector displayed remarkable resilience," Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said. Importantly, the localized lockdowns and restrictions did not dent activity as much as the complete nationwide lockdown last year, he added.

"Restrictions are now easing across cities and the vaccination drive is gathering momentum. We, therefore, anticipate residential demand to see steady growth in the upcoming quarter," Puri said. The structural shift in housing demand continues - many current

homeowners seek to upgrade to larger homes and the previously purchase-averse millennials remain very active property buyers, he said.

According to the data, housing sales in MMR are likely to jump over two-fold at 7,400 units in April-June against 3,620 units in the year-ago period. However, sales may drop by 64 per cent from 20,350 units in March quarter of 2021 calendar year.

Pune is likely to witness housing sales of around 3,790 units in April-June 2021 against 2,160 units in the corresponding quarter last year. Demand is likely to fall 64 per cent from 10,550 units sold in January-March 2021. Sales of residential properties in Delhi-NCR may rise by 65 per cent to 3,470 units in June quarter 2021

Residential sales are estimated to rise 93%YoY during April-June across seven major cities, but may fall 58% compared to the previous quarter due to the adverse impact of 2nd Covid wave

against 2,100 units in the corresponding period last year. On sequential basis, sales may drop by 61 per cent from 8,790 units in first quarter.

In Bengaluru, housing sales are likely to rise 19 per cent to about 3,560 units in April-June 2021 as compared to 2,990 units a year ago. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, sales in the city may decline 59 per cent from 8,670 units in January-March 2021. In Chennai, about 1,590 units are likely to be sold in April-June 2021 as against 480 units in the corresponding period last year. Sales may fall 44 per cent from 2,850 units in January-March 2021.

Housing sales in Kolkata are expected to jump more than two-fold at 1,520 units in April-June 2021 from 730 units in the year-ago period. On sequential basis, demand may fall by 43 per cent from 2,680 units in the previous quarter.

Realty biz picks up after easing of curfew in Vizag

SANTOSH PATNAIK VISAKHAPATNAM

REALTY businessmen are in a cheerful mood in the city, the proposed executive capital of Andhra Pradesh after relaxation of curfew timing.

Though there has always been demand for land in the city even before bifurcation of State and announcement of executive capital, the construction of activity came to a halt due to enforcement of Covid-19-induced curfew for 18 hours. With relaxation from 6 am to 6 pm, construction has resumed with renewed vigour due to availability of workers. Credai Vizag chapter chairman B Srinivas Rao told Bizz Buzz that the demand for affordable housing has gone up manifold after executive capital decision by the YSRCP Government.

He said the Stamps and Registration Department records clearly showed that the registration of apartments is very high in all the areas of the city. He said the demand for vacant sites has remained unchanged due to robust industrial base and cosmopolitan outlook of the city.

Though there is delay in shifting of capital due to court cases and outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in March, 2020, enquiries for large parcel of land on the city outskirts and for



The construction of activity came to a halt due to enforcement of Covid-19-induced curfew for 18 hours

buying high-end apartments/villas in gated communities are on the rise.

A glaring instance was the recent auction of a few vacant plots on the city suburb at Dakanari. While upset price per square yard was fixed for four plots by Visakhapatnam Metro Region Development Authority (VMRDA) was Rs 17,000, they were sold at Rs 25,100. Interestingly, before the auction private layout developers were selling plots at Rs 10,000 to Rs 13,000 per square yard. "This clearly shows the future of realty in the city," an IT employee remarked.

With the city turning into a concrete jungle, the land prices are appreciating fast. In a record of sorts, the government fixed the bidding price for 13.59 acres in posh Harbour Park area sometime ago at Rs106.80 crore per acre.

Aparna to develop ₹450-cr housing project

APARNA Constructions and Estates on Friday said it will invest Rs 450 crore to develop a residential project in Hyderabad. The project 'Aparna Kanopy Yellow Bells' is spread over 10.5 acres and comprises 1,050 apartments. Aparna Construction and Estates said in a statement that the company is investing Rs 450 crore in this project, located in Kompally, an emerging residential belt in Hyderabad. This is the 59th residential project of the company.

The company is planning to launch six more residential projects across Hyderabad and Bengaluru in the current fiscal year. In addition to high rise apartments, the company undertook two plotted development projects and three commercial projects this year. The project is expected to be completed by March 2025. Rakesh Reddy, Director, Aparna Constructions & Estates, said, "In the next five years, we are looking to build approximately 60 million square feet of projects. Our residential portfolio stands strong at 59 projects and we want to strengthen it further. We also want to fortify our presence in the commercial segment in the coming years, especially in Tier II and Tier III locations in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka," he added.

Aparna Constructions has completed 62 projects, of which 59 are residential properties and 3 are commercial spaces across the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Bharatsinh wins gold in 10,000 metres

PATIALA

VIKRAM Bharatsinh of Madhya Pradesh won gold in men's 10,000 metres on the opening day of the National Inter State Athletics Championships here on Friday.

Bharatsinh clocked 30 minutes 16.44 seconds to win the gruelling 25-lap race in the morning session. Bharatsinh's winning time of 30 minutes 16.44 seconds was slower than the Tokyo Olympic qualification time of 27 minutes 28 seconds.

Kartik Kumar of Uttar Pradesh won silver with a time of 30 minutes 25.79 secs while Dinesh of Maharashtra clocked 30 minutes 50.74 secs to take home the bronze medal.

In a field of nine athletes, Bharatsinh shot into the lead half-way through the 10,000m race. With five laps to go, Bharatsinh became a clear winner as his nearest rival Kumar from Uttar Pradesh started to slow down.

The gap between Bharatsinh and Kumar widened in the last two laps, with the former comfortably winning the gold in 30 mins 16.44 secs.

The women's 5,000m race was the second event of the morning session, but Uttar Pradesh runner Parul Chaudhary's gold winning performance of 16 minutes 04.7 seconds fell short of the Olympic qualification time of 15 minutes 10 seconds.

Komal Chandrakant Jagdale of Maharashtra, who battled with Parul in the initial stages of the 5,000m, faded away in the last 1000m to finish second with a time of 16 mins 26.89 secs.

Ankita of Uttarakhand was third with a time of 16 mins 58.07 secs.

The participation in the women's 5,000m was thin. Only six runners took the field while Jyoti dropped out in the first 1000 metres. (IANS)

Almiron guides Paraguay into Copa America last 8

CAVANI SECURES URUGUAY'S PASSAGE INTO QUARTERFINALS

BRASILIA

MIGUEL Almiron scored one goal and set up another as Paraguay secured a berth in the Copa America knockout phase with a 2-0 win over Chile here.

Paraguay went ahead just after the half-hour mark when Braian Samudio powered in a header at the far post following Almiron's in-

swinging corner on Thursday, reports Xinhua.

The Newcastle United midfielder then converted a penalty after Gary Medel was deemed to have brought down Carlos Gonzalez.

Paraguay are now second in the five-team Group A standings, having taken six points from three games. Chile, who were already guaranteed a spot in the last eight before the match, are third with five points.

Meanwhile in another match held at Cuiaba in Brazil, Edinson Cavani scored his first international goal since

November as Uruguay booked a place in the Copa America quarterfinals with a 2-0 victory over Bolivia here.

Uruguay took the lead just before halftime when Bolivia goalkeeper Carlos Lampe turned the ball into his own net after Giorgian De Arrascaeta's cross got deflected off Jairo Quinteros on Thursday, reports Xinhua.

Uruguay peppered Lampe's net but were unable to put the result beyond doubt with a second goal.

That changed in the 79th minute when substitute Facundo Torres crossed for Cavani, who side-footed past Lampe from 12 yards.

The result at Arena Pantanal leaves Uruguay with four points from three outings while Bolivia have lost each of their three games in the tournament.

Uruguay will meet Paraguay in their final



Almiron guides

Edinson Cavani

Nomaan to lead Hyderabad in national Test c'ship



Mirza Nomaan



Abhinav

HYDERABAD

THE SSGF Hyderabad junior team will be lead by all-rounder Nomaan Mirza in the inaugural edition of 'Bharat Ratna Shri Gulzarilal Nanda National Test Cricket Championship (FINALS)-2021' to be held from June 28 to July 2 at GNR Cricket Grounds, Hayathnagar, Hyderabad.

The Test championship is being organised by School Sports and Games Federation (SSGF) in collaboration with Emerging Cricketers Development Group (ECDG) to commemorate the 123rd birth anniversary of former Prime Minister of India & freedom fighter Gulzarilal Nanda which falls on July 4.

The following players will represent the SSGF Hyderabad team

Nomaan Mirza (Captain), Ambarish B (Vice-Captain & WK), AN Chaathurya (Wicket Keeper), Vasant Bung, Rahul Reddy, Dharmik S, Rishi Kanishka, Aryan Saiyed, Dhruva Sai K, Asim Mohammed, MA Adnan, Ansh Nayan Gupta and G Sravan. Sandeep Mishra (Coach).

SSGF Rest of India includes Abhinav Kumar (Captain), Adarsh Deshmukh (Vice-Captain), S Akash (Wicket Keeper), Ameer Shailk, Bhanu Prasad, Sumit Tiwari, Raju Nayak, Ayaz Ahmed, Unnat Sai, Videeth Anand, Meeth Srivastava, Samridh S and Asad Hussain. Faiyaz uddin Ghazi (Coach).

England thrash Sri Lanka, take 2-0 lead in T20I series

CARDIFF

SRI Lanka's batting woes continued as they suffered another humiliating five-wicket loss as England took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match T20 International series here.

The visitors' batting was exposed again in seaming conditions with the Kusal Perera-led side only managing 111/7 in the allotted 20 overs. Kusal Mendis was the highest scorer with 39 runs. Six Sri Lankan batsmen couldn't cross the single-digit mark.

In reply, England scored the winning revised target of 103 (D/L Method) in 16.1 overs with 11 balls to spare. England managed 108/5 in 16.1 overs.

England lost the wickets of Jonny



Bairstow (0) and Dawid Malan (4) early but they regrouped, with Sam Billings (24), Liam Livingstone 29 (not out) and Sam Curran (16 not out) helping the hosts reach the target with ease.

Earlier, England wicketkeeper-batsman Jos Buttler had to miss the second T20I due to a calf strain he suffered in Wednesday's first T20 match.

Buttler had smashed an unbeaten 55-ball 68 in England's eight-wicket win over Sri Lanka in the first T20I.

Earlier, Sri Lanka won the toss and elected to bat, but the irresponsible batting let them down. Opener Dhanushka Gunathilaka (3) was run out when Avishka Fernando tried to take a quick single even as Sam Curran appeared to be coming in. (IANS)

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 111/7 in 20 overs (K. Perera 21, Kusal Mendis 39; Mark Wood 2/18, A. Rashid 2/24) lost to England 108/5 in 16.1 overs (S. Billings 24, Liam Livingstone 29) by 5 wickets (D/L method).

Sushil Kumar was nabbed on May 23, along with co-accused Ajay Kumar Sehrawat. (Express photo)

Off-form Kohli's Test century drought continues

NEW DELHI

INDIA captain Virat Kohli's batting form in Test matches and One-day Internationals has dipped over one-and-a-half years. His last Test century, which was also his last international ton, came way back in November 2019, against Bangladesh, and since then he has averaged an abysmal 24.64 in Test matches. He has, however, fared better in ODIs at 43.26.

Kohli, who is well-placed to end his career as the player with most Test centuries - he is just six short of Sachin Tendulkar's 49 ODI tons - endured the year 2020 as the first calendar year of his international career since 2008 without a triple figure mark.

Since his November 2019 Test ton against Bangladesh,

he has managed just three half-centuries in eight Test matches. The 24.64 Test average in this phase in 14 innings is well below his career average of 52.04.

Kohli hasn't looked out of sorts. His two half-centuries (72 and 62) in the first two Test matches against England in Chennai this year came in difficult situations and on pitches that were tough to bat on. His other half-century, in the first Test in Adelaide, helped India gain a first innings lead before India caved in for 36 in the second innings.

In the 15 One-day Internationals he has played since November 2019 Test century against Bangladesh, Kohli has scored 649 runs averaging 43.26 (as against a career average of 59.07). Unlike in Tests, he has been more con-

sistent, scoring eight half-centuries, but he has failed to get a Test century.

Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar, who was with the team as recently as the 2019 World Cup, has said that a century drought could be playing on his mind but said that he could overcome it.

"He has already scored close to 7,500 Test runs, and this is a format, where he just simply gives it his all," said Bangar on a channel.

"To get over the century drought -- which may have been playing on his mind -- is something that he would look ahead to, I think. The way he has batted in the first innings was a clear indication of the kind of touch and the kind of rhythm that he was in. So, I think it augurs well for the Indian team," added

Bangar. However, T20 is the only format at international level in which Kohli has improved over his career average in the period. He has aggregated 709 runs at an average of over 64.45 in the period since his last Test ton. His career average in T20Is is 52.65. (IANS)



Liverpool co-owners buy 15% stake in Rajasthan Royals

NEW DELHI: Redbird Capital Partners, a private investment firm which has invested in the company that owns Liverpool football club and Boston Red Sox baseball team, has acquired a 15 per cent stake in the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Rajasthan Royals. The amount of transaction signed with the Royals is valued between US\$250 million and US\$300 million.

London-based venture capitalist Manoj Badale's investment firm Emerging Media owns the majority stake. "Such an investment is testament to the global standing of the IPL and India as an attractive investment destination," Badale said. In an official release posted by Rajasthan Royals, Gerry Cardinale, founder and managing partner of Red-Bird, said, "The IPL is a dynamic league with a global audience and forward-thinking mindset regarding fan and player engagement." (IANS)

Australia's 3-time Oly gold medallist to compete in 8th Games

SYDNEY: Australia's three-time Olympic gold medallist Andrew Hoy will represent his country at an unprecedented eighth Olympic Games in Tokyo next month. The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) announced the selection of 62-year-old Hoy and Mary Hanna, who became the first woman to make six Australian Olympic teams, on Friday, reports Xinhua.

Hoy with his team members, Chris Burton and Shane Rose, will compete in equestrian eventing. Hanna, Simone Pearce and Kelly Layne will compete in equestrian dressage. After making his Olympic debut in Los Angeles in 1984, Hoy became the 13th athlete in Olympic history to make eight Games, joining only nine eight-time Olympians and three athletes who have competed at more.

The AOC also announced the selection of Tsuneari Yahiro, Australia's first-ever Olympic karateka on the same day. (IANS)

Djokovic, Federer could meet in Wimbledon final; Halep out

WIMBLEDON

NOVAK Djokovic and Roger Federer were placed on opposite sides of the Wimbledon bracket in Friday's draw, meaning they only could meet in the final -- which would be a rematch of their epic 2019 title showdown. The top-seeded Djokovic will have a lot at stake when play begins at the All England Club on Monday, a year after the grass-court tournament was canceled because of the pandemic.

He seeks a 20th major title, which would tie the men's record shared by Federer and Rafael Nadal; he can move closer to a calendar-year Grand Slam after winning the Australian Open in February and the French Open this month; he will be trying to win his third consecutive trophy, and sixth overall, at Wimbledon.

Two years ago, Djokovic edged Federer in a fifth-set tiebreaker after saving two championship points in the final.

The 2019 women's champion, Simona Halep, pulled out of Wimbledon just before the draw, citing an injured left calf that also forced her to sit out Roland Garros.

That means two of the top three players in the WTA rankings are missing from the field; No. 2 Naomi Osaka withdrew last week. Two of the top five men are out, too: No. 3 Nadal and No. 5 Dominic Thiem.

The potential women's quarterfinals based on seedings are No. 1 Ash Barty vs. No. 5 Bianca Andreescu, and No. 3 Elina Svitolina vs. No. 6 Serena Williams in the top half; No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka vs. No. 7 Iga Swiatek, and No. 4 Sofia Kenin vs. No.



8 Karolina Pliskova in the bottom half.

The possible men's quarterfinals are Djokovic vs No. 5 Andrey Rublev, and No. 3 Stefanos Tsitsipas vs. No. 8 Roberto Bautista Agut in the top half; No. 2 Daniil Medvedev vs. No. 6 Federer, and No. 4 Alexander Zverev vs. No. 7 Matteo Berrettini in the bottom half. Among the noteworthy first-round men's matchups are Djokovic against wild-card entry Jack Draper, a 19-year-old from England who was the Wimbledon boys' runner-up in 2018; two-time champion Andy Murray against No. 24 seed Nikoloz Basilashvili; and No. 21 Ugo Humbert against Nick Kyrgios.

Women's first-rounders of particular interest include Barty against Carla Suárez Navarro, a 32-year-old Spaniard who recently returned to competition after being treated for cancer; 23-time Grand Slam champion Williams against 100th-ranked Aliaksandra Sasnovich, who reached Wimbledon's fourth round in 2018; French Open champion Barbora Krejickova against 18-year-old Clara Tauson; and two-time Wimbledon champ Petra Kvitova against 2017 US Open champ Sloane Stephens. (AP)

Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar shifted to Tihar Jail

NEW DELHI

TWO-TIME Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar was on Friday shifted from the Mandoli jail to Tihar. Kumar was arrested in connection with the murder of wrestler Sagar Dhankar, who was beaten to death in a clash involving two groups inside the Chhatrasal stadium premises.

DG (Tihar) Sandeep Goel said, "Sushil has been shifted from Mandoli jail to Tihar jail no



Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar being shifted from the Mandoli jail to Tihar, in New Delhi on Friday

2." Sources have told The Indian Express that special security arrange-

ments have been made and police personnel have been deployed near his barrack round the clock.

Earlier, a Delhi court had dismissed a plea by Kumar for special food in prison including health supplements containing protein, Omega-3 capsules, jointment capsules, Pre-workout C4, Hyde, Multivitamin GNC and exercise bands as he wanted to continue his career in wrestling.





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