

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 4 JULY 2021



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Aamir Khan & Kiran Rao announce divorce after 15 years of marriage

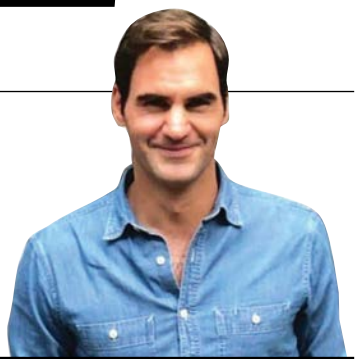


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India's Deepti Sharma during the One Day International cricket match at New Road One, Worcester, England, on Saturday. — AP

Mudslide wipes out houses in Japan city, 20 missing

Tokyo: Twenty people are missing in central Japan after a huge landslide hit Atami city following heavy rainfall. Video on social media showed a torrent of black mud plummeting down from a mountain top and on through the city towards the sea. Several houses were destroyed or buried. Two bodies have been found by the coast guard, the local governor said. A resident said he heard a "horrible sound" and fled as the landslide engulfed everything in its path. — Agencies Full report on Page 6

US adds Pak to child soldier recruiter list

Washington/Islamabad: The US has added Pakistan along with 14 other countries in a list of Child Soldiers Prevention Act which identifies foreign govts having government-supported armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers, a designation that could result in restrictions on certain security assistance and commercial licensing of military equipment. — PTI

Dilip Kumar is stable, still in ICU, says wife

Mumbai: Dilip Kumar's wife Saira Banu shared an update on actor's health on Saturday and said that he is "still in the ICU" but "stable." — PTI Full report on Page 4

COUNTERPOINT



Now I can travel to any country... I took all companies' vaccines!

WEATHER

Max: 39°C
Min: 29°C
RH: 45%
Rain: 10%

Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Titthi: Jyeshtha Bahula Dasami till 7.56 pm
Star: Ashwini till 9.05 am
Variyam: 4.36 am to 6.24 am; 7.55 pm to 9.44 pm
Durmuhurtam: 5.07 pm to 5.59 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.28 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 2.30 AM
MOONSET TODAY 3.56 PM

C'garh: 150 Maoists attack iron ore mine, kill 1 worker

Maoists also opened indiscriminate fire on a police camp

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
RAIPUR, JULY 3

Around 150 armed Maoists on Saturday stormed an iron ore site allotted to a private firm in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Narayanpur where they attacked and took workers hostage, leaving one of them dead, police said.

The Maoists also launched a grenade attack and opened indiscriminate fire on a police camp, about 1.5 km from the iron ore mine site. Though the attack lasted almost four hours, no one was reportedly injured.

Officials said Naxals attacked the Aamdei iron ore mine site under Chhote Dangar police station at around 10 in the morning, beating the workers engaged in the development of a road in the area and torching the vehicles used for construction works.

They later held a dozen labourers' hostage but released all but two with a warning not to work in the mines allotted to Jayaswal Neco Industries Limited



Officials said Naxals attacked the Aamdei iron ore mine site under Chhote Dangar police station at around 10 in the morning, beating the workers engaged in the development of a road in the area and torching the vehicles used for construction work

(JNIL).

The Naxals abducted two workers, including a supervisor, identified as Pradep Sheel of Bhilai in Chhattisgarh. While they released one worker, they beat the supervisor to death.

Later, the Maoists launched a grenade attack and opened indiscriminate fire on the Dangar Hills police camp, nearly 1.5 km from the iron ore mine site, damaging the security camp extensively.

"There was no injury or casualty among the security personnel," Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P told this newspaper.

"The Naxals attacked the iron ore mine site and

torched six vehicles used for construction works. Fourteen construction workers were at the site when the attack took place. Thirteen of them returned to Chhote Dangar police station. But the Naxals beat the supervisor Pradip Sheel to death. His body has been recovered," the police officer said.

He said Maoists used under barrel grenade launchers (UBGL) and other sophisticated weapons in the attack on the police camp.

Police sources said the attack lasted nearly four hours. A reinforcement of the district reserve group (DRG) was rushed to the spot

Delhi HC shocked over govt officers' false claims, asks for litigation policy

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

The Delhi high court has expressed shock over the government raising false claims and defences with impunity as there is no accountability of officers for doing so and called for framing rules by the Centre and Delhi government to hold officers accountable for lapses in handling court cases.

The high court, which termed it as a matter of grave concern, said it was of the prima facie view that whenever a false claim is raised by the government, it causes immense injustice to the litigant seeking justice

and also puts unnecessary burden on the court.

"In all these cases, the government raised false claims/defences before this court which is a matter of grave concern. All these cases shocked the conscience of this court. It appears that the false claims are raised with impunity because there is no accountability of any government officer for raising the false claims and courts seldom take any action against the person concerned for raising false claims/defences," Justice J.R. Midha said in a 31-page judgement.

The court said with these false claims, even

■ Turn to Page 4



Police use water cannons to disperse AAP workers staging a gherao at CM Capt Amarinder Singh's Siswan farmhouse in protest against the long power-cuts in Mohali on Saturday. Police booked 23 AAP leaders, including AAP MP Bhagwant Mann, MLA Cheema, Meet Hayer, for violation of Covid protocols.

■ Report on Page 4

— PTI

Outrage as Ukraine women troops march in heels

Kiev, July 3: Ukrainian authorities found themselves buried in controversy Friday after official pictures showed women soldiers practicing for a parade in heels.

Ukraine is preparing to stage a military parade next month to mark 30 years of independence following the Soviet Union's breakup, and the defense ministry released photographs of fatigue-clad women soldiers marching in mid-heel black pumps.

"Today, for the first time, training takes place in heeled shoes," cadet Ivanna Medvid was quoted as saying by the defense ministry's information site Armiainform. "It is slightly harder



A handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian defence ministry showing the Ukrainian female soldiers wearing heels while taking part in the military parade rehearsal in Kiev.

— AFP

than in army boots, but we are trying," Medvid added in comments released on Thursday.

The choice of footwear sparked a torrent of criticism on social media and in parliament, and led to

- Dassault Aviation paid Euro 1m to an Indian middleman: French media
- Congress asks PM Narendra Modi to order a JPC probe into deal

France begins judicial probe into Rafale deal with India

New Delhi, July 3: A French judge has been appointed to lead a "highly sensitive" judicial investigation into alleged "corruption and favouritism" in the ₹59,000 crore Rafale fighter jet deal with India, French investigative website Mediapart reported.

Following the development, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to come forward and order a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Rafale deal.

"Corruption in the Rafale deal has come out clearly now. The stand of the Congress Party and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government has ordered a probe," he told reporters at a press conference.



Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala on Saturday urged PM Narendra Modi to come forward and order a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Rafale deal

ference.

The Mediapart said the probe into the inter-governmental deal signed in 2016 was formally opened on June 14.

"A judicial probe into suspected corruption has been opened in France over the 7.8-billion Euro sale to India in 2016 of 36 Dassault-built Rafale fighter aircraft," the Mediapart reported on the latest development on the controversial deal.

The investigation has been initiated by the national financial prosecutors' office (PNF) following Mediapart's fresh reports in April of alleged wrongdoings in the deal as well as a complaint filed by French NGO Sherpa that specialises in financial crime.

Mediapart journalist Yann Philippin, who filed a series of reports on the deal, said a first complaint was "buried" in

2019 by a former PNF chief.

"The judicial investigation was finally opened following the revelations of the investigation #RafalePapers of @mediapart and a new complaint from @Asso_Sherpa. A 1st complaint was buried in 2019 by the former PNF boss, Eliane Houlette," he tweeted.

In April, Mediapart, citing an investigation by the country's anti-corruption agency, reported that Dassault Aviation had paid about one million Euros to an Indian middleman.

Dassault Aviation has rejected the allegations of corruption, saying no violations were reported in the frame of the contract.

The National Democratic Alliance

■ Turn to Page 4

Hill state is set to go to polls early next year BJP makes Pushkar Singh Dhami U'khand CM, its 3rd in 4 months

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

Uttarakhand on Saturday got its third chief minister in less than four months after ruling the BJP's legislature party elected Pushkar Singh Dhami as its leader. He is likely to take oath of office on Sunday in the state where Assembly polls are scheduled early next year.

Mr Dhami succeeded Tirath Singh Rawat, who resigned late Friday night due to a "constitutional crisis."

A two-time MLA from Udhham Singh Nagar's Khatima, Mr Dhami, 45, was associated with the RSS' youth wing, ABVP, during his college days.



Newly appointed Uttarakhand Legislative party leader Pushkar Singh Dhami with party leaders in Dehradun on Saturday.

— PTI

Incidentally, Udhham Singh Nagar is the only district in the poll-bound state which witnessed protests by farmers against the Central gov-

ernment's three land laws. The Terai district shares its border with Uttar Pradesh and has a significant Sikh population and

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1st compliance report by Google, says IT minister

New Delhi: IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday lauded major Google, Facebook, Instagram for publishing their first compliance report on voluntary removal of offensive posts as per new IT rules, terming it a big step towards transparency. "Nice to see significant social media platforms like Google, Facebook and Instagram following the new IT Rules," Mr Prasad tweeted. — PTI

■ More on Page 3

'Major attack' feared in Punjab, security forces on high alert

Shoot-at-sight orders issued for drones

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

The Intelligence Bureau (IB) in an advisory sent to security agencies in Punjab has cautioned that a "major attack" involving drones could take place in border areas of Punjab. Following the intelligence alert, Punjab police chief Dinkar Gupta chaired a high-level security review meeting two days ago and border districts like Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Gurdaspur have been put on high alert and patrolling has been intensified by the Border Security Force along with Punjab police personnel in the entire 550-km long Indo-Pak border in Punjab.

Specific instructions have been given that any drone that is spotted should be immediately shot down without any prior warning. As the warning comes close on the heels of the twin drone attacks on defence installations in Jammu region last week, all security forces like Army, BSF and Air Force

are closely monitoring security at their installations along the Indo-Pakistan border.

Last week, in the Jammu region, an Air Force station was attacked when drones dropped some explosives and in the second incident a similar attempt was made at a military camp in Kaluchak but the drone returned after security personnel fired at it. Even in the past there have been instances when drones coming in from Pakistan were used to drop weapons like AK-47, grenades and narcotics in villages close to the border. Sources said a close watch was also being kept in the Rajasthan sector also but admitted that the threat perception was much higher in Punjab and Kashmir region. The home ministry has already handed over investigations into the drone attack to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Initial investigations, sources say, point to the involvement of terror outfit Lashkar-e-Tayyaba.

SHORT TAKES

4 rescued from fire in house at Rohini area

New Delhi: A fire broke out at a house in Rohini area on Saturday morning, following which four people were rescued, Delhi Fire Service officials said. "A call about the fire in the Budh Vihar area in Rohini was received around 6.00 am and four fire tenders were pressed into service. Fire was brought under control very quickly. Four people were rescued and shifted to a hospital," said Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Service. The blaze was brought under control but during the fire-fighting operations, a fireman also got injured, the officials said. The cause of the fire is not known yet, Garg said.

Bail granted to man in Red Fort violence case

New Delhi: Another accused in connection with the violence at the Red Fort on Republic Day was granted bail by a Delhi court on Saturday. Tis Hazari court's additional sessions judge Kamini Lau granted bail to Khempreet Singh and asked him to furnish a personal bond of ₹50,000 with one local surety of like amount each. Delhi police had already filed a charge sheet in this matter. During the hearing, the court directed Khempreet Singh to appear before the concerned SHO on the last Saturday of the next four months and in case he leaves the city, he shall intimate the same to SHO and the court too.

1.60 lakh challans in Delhi for Covid norm violations

New Delhi: In order to ensure strict enforcement of the Covid-19 protocol, the Delhi police has issued 1.37 lakh challans for not wearing masks and 22,000 for violations of social distancing norms between April 19 and July 2 this year, according to official data. Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had last month announced various relaxations in the ongoing lockdown that was imposed on April 19, saying the Covid situation was improving and the economy of the city needed to be revived. Out of 1,62,526 challans issued during the period, 1,37,872 challans were issued for mask violation, 22,874 for violation of social distancing, 1,552 for holding large public gatherings or congregations, 72 for spitting and 156 for consumption of liquor, pan, gutkha, tobacco etc, the data cited.

Stadiums, sports complexes may reopen tomorrow

New Delhi: In view of the significant improvement in the Covid-19 situation in the national capital, the Delhi government is likely to allow further relaxations such as reopening of stadiums and sports complexes from July 5, sources claimed on Saturday. The relaxations which have been announced so far are set to continue till 5 am on Monday. "Although the government is likely to allow reopening of stadiums and sports complexes, operation of public transport, including Delhi Metro trains, with full capacity is unlikely due to concerns of overcrowding," a source said. Metro trains and public buses are running with half their seating capacity.

City's 1st pedestrian-friendly 'X' crossing at Red Fort may be operational by July 15

New Delhi, July 3: Delhi's Red Fort-Chandni Chowk intersection, which has been under redevelopment, is likely to open from July 15 and it will have a scramble crossing at which traffic lights completely stop vehicles to allow pedestrians to cross in any direction, including diagonally, officials said. This is Delhi's first scramble or 'X' crossing and it makes it safer for pedestrians and cyclists, they said.

Besides this, the redeveloped intersection will also have raised crossovers for cyclists, traffic refuge islands, and tabletop crossings for pedestrians.

Tabletop crossings as pavements work as speed breakers

Heatwave abates, IMD forecasts drop in temp

New Delhi, July 3: The oppressive heatwave that swept through the north Indian plains and hills has abated and no such conditions are likely during the next five days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday.

Mercury is likely to drop by 3-4 degrees Celsius over the next five days, it added. The IMD had issued a heatwave alert for July 1-2. As predicted, heatwave conditions have abated from the plains of Northwest India with occurrence of only isolated heat waves over Haryana yesterday (Friday), it said.

On Saturday, fairly widespread rainfall occurred over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and adjoining parts of West Uttar Pradesh due to a western disturbance bringing respite from the prevailing heatwave conditions.

Maximum temperatures over the plains of Northwest India are likely to fall by 3-4 degrees Celsius today and no significant change is likely thereafter. Subsequently, no heatwave conditions are likely over the region during the next five days, the IMD said. It said the abatement of the heatwave is due to southwesterly winds from the Arabian Sea.

Due to an increase in humidity in association with these winds, the discomfort will continue during the next five days, the IMD said. Over the last two days, many places including Delhi breached the 40 degrees Celsius mark.

—PTI



Passengers wait in a queue outside Rajiv Chowk Metro station during rain in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

82 lakh vaccinated in Delhi so far: Govt

City records 86 Covid cases, 5 deaths in past 24 hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

More than 1.6 lakh Covid vaccines were administered in the national capital on Friday, taking the total number of people who have been inoculated to over 82 lakh, the Delhi government's vaccination bulletin said.

The bulletin, issued on Saturday, said a total of 82,12,158 vaccines have been administered in the national capital so far. Of them, 63,45,239 are first doses and 18,66,919 second doses, it said.

According to the city's daily vaccination bulletin, 1,60,738 people were vaccinated on Friday, out of which 1,30,487 beneficiaries received their first dose and 30,251 were given

their second dose, it said. Of the total people vaccinated on Friday, 44,512 were in the 45-60 age group and 1,14,462 were in the 18-44 age group, it said.

Delhi, which received 50,000 doses of Covaxin on Friday, has 4,78,000 vaccines in its balance stock, it said. This includes 2,68,000 shots of Covaxin and 2,10,000 of Covishield, it said. According to the bulletin, the present Covid vaccine stock will last for two days.

The vaccination programme is running at 1,374 centres with a capacity of administering 2,26,552 vaccine doses daily, it added.

The national capital recorded 86 new cases of Covid-19 on Saturday,

taking the cumulative tally to 14,34,460, informed a health bulletin by the Delhi government. The city reported five deaths due to the virus, with the cumulative death to 24,988. The number of new cases saw a decline from 93 cases recorded yesterday. Number of fatalities, however, increased from two on Friday.

The case positivity rate for the last 24 hours stood at 0.11 per cent, lower than 0.13 per cent seen a day ago. A total of 76,619 Covid-19 tests were conducted in the city, the health bulletin stated. On Saturday, 106 patients recovered from novel coronavirus, taking the number of total recoveries in the city to 14,08,456.

Covid will be reduced to an endemic, zero figure in Delhi unlikely: Experts

New Delhi, July 3: Cases of Covid-19 might be declining steadily but as the virus is mutating, attaining that magical zero figure in Delhi is unlikely, experts have said, and predicted that coronavirus will be reduced to an endemic in the future.

The Centre, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his cabinet colleague Satyendar Jain had said last year that one will have to learn with coronavirus and make its prevention norms a part of our lives.

Dr Suresh Kumar, medical director of Delhi government-run LNJP

Hospital said there will always be a few cases of the virus. "Zero is an unlikely figure. The virus is mutating and it is difficult to predict its future behaviour," he said.

Explaining why the virus has posed such a challenge, Dr Sanjeev K. Singh, resident medical director, Amrita Hospitals in Faridabad said it is an mRNA virus which keeps changing its structure. "This virus is smart and just for the sake of living, it will keep mutating. Covid will be there and may not be affecting all 193 countries but it will be there. Coming down to zero

won't be achievable. In hospitals for getting surgeries, one has to get tested for Hepatitis and HIV. Eventually, you will be tested for Covid too," he said.

Dr Gauri Agarwal, IVF expert and founder of Seeds of Innocence said keeping the 1918 pandemic as a yardstick, we know that eradicating the virus is an unrealistic possibility. "As Covid-19 gradually becomes an endemic, likely in 12-24 months, it will probably stop being a statistic that is being watched on a daily basis. Hence, while we may see zero reportable cases, there may never be a time

with actual zero cases ever."

Amid concerns over the possibility of a third wave and emergence of the Delta Plus variant, experts assuaged fears of that possible wave being more lethal since a majority of the population has been infected.

"In my view, if a new strain doesn't come up against which the vaccines are not effective, I don't think the third wave will be as lethal as the second wave," said Dr Rajesh Chawla, senior pulmonologist, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi.

—PTI

Youth arrested for stabbing neighbour in Nizamuddin

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

A 21-year-old man has been arrested by the Delhi Police for allegedly stabbing his neighbour multiple times in Nizamuddin area.

The accused has been identified as Abid, a resident of Sunder Nursery, Hazrat Nizamuddin, the police said.

According to the police, a PCR call was received on July 1 around 9 pm at Hazrat Nizamuddin police station regarding quarrel between two parties at Sunder nursery, Sarai Kale Khan.

Following this a team

■ 'Some deaf students, poor people converted to Islam in UP'

ED raids in Delhi, UP in PMLA case linked to alleged conversion

New Delhi, July 3: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday conducted searches at six locations in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in a money laundering case linked to alleged conversion of some deaf students and poor people to Islam in UP with purported funding from abroad, official sources said.

The raids are being conducted at the office of Islamic Dawah Centre (IDC), house of main accused in the case Mohd Umar Gautam and his associate Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi, in south Delhi's Jamia Nagar area.

In UP, the raids are being conducted at the offices of Al Hassan education and welfare foundation and guidance education and welfare society located in state capital Lucknow.

ED officials said these organisations are run by

▶ **THE RAIDS** are being conducted at the office of Islamic Dawah Centre (IDC), house of main accused in the case Mohd Umar Gautam and his associate Mufti Qazi Jahangir Alam Qasmi, in south Delhi's Jamia Nagar area.

▶ In UP, the raids are being conducted at the offices of Al Hassan education and welfare foundation and guidance education and welfare society located in state capital Lucknow.

Umar Gautam and have been playing an "instrumental role in carrying out the alleged illegal conversions."

The central probe agency had late last month filed a criminal case under the provisions of the Prevention of Money

Laundrying Act (PMLA) to probe this case unearthed by the Uttar Pradesh Police Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS).

The officials said several "incriminating" documents have been seized during the searches, which reveal the "large-scale conversion" allegedly carried out by Umar Gautam and his organisations across India.

The documents also reveal several crores of rupees of foreign funding received by the accused organisations for the purpose of illegal conversions, they claimed.

The ATS had arrested Umar Gautam and Qasmi and claimed that they ran Islamic Dawah Center, which purportedly had access to funds from Pakistan's inter-services intelligence (ISI) and other foreign agencies to carry out their alleged illegal activities.

—PTI

3 juveniles among 4 held for stabbing minor boy to death

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

An 18-year-old man was arrested and three juveniles apprehended for allegedly stabbing another juvenile to death in Outer Delhi's Mangolpuri area, the police said on Friday.

Accused Sachin alias Raja, a resident of Mangolpuri, works at a shoe factory here, it said.

The victim, who is also a resident of his locality, used filthy language against Sachin's cousin sister. So, to teach him a lesson, he called his three juvenile friends and stabbed him to death, the police said.

On June 30, when constable Sunil of Mangolpuri police station was on patrolling duty, he found a boy lying in an unconscious state near a park in J Block area. With the help of a person, he immediately lifted the boy and shifted him to a nearby hospital where the injured, who had sustained multiple stab injuries, was declared brought dead, according to the police.

Sons, and identified the accused and his three juvenile associates in the case."

Accused Sachin was arrested and his three juvenile associates were apprehended, he added.

"When Sachin was interrogated, he disclosed that the victim had used filthy language for his cousin sister. Therefore, to teach him a lesson, he called his three juvenile friends and committed murder by stabbing him," Mr Singh said.

Two blood stained knives were recovered from them, the police said, adding that further investigation is underway to recover the clothes and the source of the weapons used in the commission of the crime.

▶ **ON JUNE 30**, when constable Sunil of Mangolpuri police station was on patrolling duty, he found a boy lying in an unconscious state near a park in J Block area. With the help of a person, he immediately lifted the boy and shifted him to a nearby hospital where the injured, who had sustained multiple stab injuries, was declared brought dead, according to the police.

The court granted the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seven days' custody of Sharma, the central probe agency said in a statement.

The agency said its probe found that 62-year-old Sharma "had supplied confidential and sensitive information to Chinese intelligence officers, in exchange for remuneration thereby compromising the security and national interests of India".

"It was further revealed that cash for remuneration of Sharma and other unknown persons was being generated through a 'hawala' by Mahipalpur-based (an area in Delhi) shell companies that were run by Chinese nationals namely Zhang Cheng alias Suraj, Zhang Lixia alias Usha and Quing Shi, along with a Nepalese national, Sher Singh alias Raj Bohara," it alleged.

—PTI



Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress activists stage a protest against LPG and fuel price hike outside Shastri Bhawan in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

Youth Congress protests against LPG price rise

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress on Saturday staged a protest outside the Union Petroleum Ministry here against the rising prices of gas cylinders.

National president of Youth Congress Srinivas BV said people were "crying tears of inflation" while buying LPG.

"The people of the country are saying - take back such 'good days' and give us back our 'bad days'. The countrymen are compulsorily paying the price of so called 'acche din' by buying expensive items. The countrymen want freedom from such so-called 'acche din'," a statement quoting the youth Congress leader said.

He added that the people of the country were facing "extreme unemployment, economic helplessness and high inflation". "In such a situation, instead of giving relief to the people, the government is grinding the people by trapping them in the wheel of inflation," he said.

On Thursday, the price of domestic cooking gas (LPG) was hiked by ₹25.50 per 14.2-kg cylinder. A subsidised and non-subsidised cylinder now costs ₹834.50 in Delhi.

Top cop asks officials to focus on anti-terrorism measures

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 3

Delhi police commissioner Balaji Srivastava, in his first 'Covid and Crime' review meeting, directed the officials to focus on anti-terrorism measures in view of upcoming Independence Day.

The CP also asked its officials to reactivate the 'eyes and ears' scheme for information gathering and vigil over suspicious and nefarious activities in the National Capital. Srivastava directed all Deputy Commissioners



Delhi police commissioner Balaji Srivastava at a review meeting on Saturday.

of Police (DCsP) to focus on anti-terrorism measures that include checking of hotels, guesthouses, tenants and domestic help verifications, checking

of second-hand car-dealers and cyber cafes.

In view of possible third wave, the CP also asked the DCsP not to let their Covid guard down and ensure that steps are taken to implement Covid Appropriate Behavior in all public places.

"Jan Sunwai" camps were held at various police stations on Saturday, where public came up with grievances ranging from vehicle parking dispute to monetary and family disputes, cases of cheating and quarrels with neighbours, officials said.



SHORT TAKES

Stan Swamy's stay at hospital extended

Mumbai: The Bombay high court on Saturday extended the stay of Jesuit priest and activist Stan Swamy, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoists links case, at a private hospital in Mumbai till July 6. Senior counsel Mihir Desai told a bench of Justices SS Shinde and NJ Jamadar that the 84-year-old was still undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit of the Holy Family Hospital, where he was shifted from the Talaja prison in Navi Mumbai following the HC's order on May 28 this year. Swamy, 84, who claims to be suffering from several ailments, including the Parkinson's disease, had moved the high court earlier this year through advocate Desai, seeking medical treatment and interim bail on health grounds. He had tested positive for coronavirus at a private hospital last month and was subsequently shifted to the ICU.

Cong MLA's house burgled in Gujarat

Ahmedabad: Unidentified men burgled the bungalow of Gujarat Congress MLA Baldevji Thakor in Kalol city in Gandhinagar district and decamped with valuables worth over ₹8.51 lakh, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred on Friday night when nobody was present in the bungalow, a police officer said. "Some thieves broke into MLA Baldevji Thakor's bungalow last night and decamped with ₹2 lakh cash, two gold chains, two watches, three LED TV sets, and a digital video recorder (DVR) of CCTV, collectively worth ₹8,51,500," said Kalol city police inspector Osman Majgul. Meanwhile, Mr Thakor, who represents Kalol Assembly seat, claimed this was the second time that valuables were stolen from his bungalow. He alleged the police didn't seem interested in tracing thieves. — PTI

GRSE wins \$1.82m order from Dhaka

Kolkata: Defence PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE) has bagged an export order worth \$1.82 million from the Bangladesh government to build six patrol boats. "The order has been awarded to GRSE through an international competitive bidding where other international players from Europe and Asia were in the fray," the company said. The 13-metre-long surveillance patrol boats for marine fisheries surveillance check post of the Bangladesh government will be used in surveillance activities, shallow water operation and patrolling fishing grounds day and night for illegal fishing gears and retrieval of survivors, according to the GRSE.

GOVT TO UNVEIL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY SOON

New Delhi: The government will release a new cybersecurity strategy this year, National Cyber Security Coordinator Rajesh Pant said at an event organised by Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI). He said the strategy would holistically cover the entire ecosystem of cyber space in India. The government is expected to release a new cybersecurity strategy this year, he said speaking at the PAFI event on Friday. "The vision of this strategy is to ensure safe, secure, resilient, vibrant, and trusted cyber space," Pant said. The new strategy would serve as a guideline to tackle various aspects, be it data as a national resource, building indigenous capabilities or cyber audit. "There are about 80 odd deliverables coming out of this new strategy," the PAFI statement quoted Pant as saying. The theme of the PAFI Dialogue was 'Cyber Security in the New Normal.' On the national security narrative for the telecom sector, Pant said, "While other nations have created a black-list of companies that cannot operate in the country, India is the only nation to create a white-list of telecom companies that are allowed to operate in India". The companies allowed must be a 'trusted source', he said adding, "We were able to create and launch the trusted telecom portal during the pandemic and within six months. — PTI

Cong urges PM to order JPC probe into Rafale deal

Fair, independent JPC probe is the only option to find truth: Surjewala

New Delhi, July 3: (PTI) The Congress on Saturday demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into the Rafale deal, saying it is the only way forward to find the truth about "corruption" in the purchase of the fighter jets.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi should come forward and order the investigation, the party said.

The Congress' demand came after French investigative website Mediapart reported that a French judge has been appointed to lead a "highly sensitive" judicial investigation into alleged 'corruption' and 'favouritism' in the ₹59,000 crore Rafale fighter jet deal with India.

"Corruption in the Rafale deal has come out clearly now. The stand of the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government ordered a



Corruption in the Rafale deal has come out clearly now. The stand of the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi has been vindicated today after the French government has ordered a probe.

— Randeep Surjewala, Congress chief spokesperson

probe," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala told reporters at a press conference.

The French public prosecution agency has ordered an investigation into the alleged corruption in the defence deal, he said and urged Prime Minister Modi to come forward and order the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe.

Mr Surjewala said since the matter deals with national security and identity, a fair and independent JPC probe is the only way out and not the Supreme Court.

"When the French government has accepted that

there is corruption in the deal, should a JPC probe be not held in the country where the corruption took place," he asked.

Mr Surjewala said this issue is not about Congress versus BJP, but this is an issue that concerns the security of the country and "corruption" in the biggest defence deal. "The facts now clearly tell and call for a thorough JPC probe into the Rafale scam. Will the Prime Minister, like the French, now answer to the nation and tell when the prime minister will submit his government to a JPC probe into the Rafale scam," the Congress leader asked.

He said this is an issue of national interest and against those who are filling their pockets by indulging in corruption in defence deals.

Mr Surjewala said a JPC probe will be able to call witnesses and will be able to have access to all government files which the Supreme Court (SC) or the Central Vigilance Commission could never see.

It will be able to ask probing questions, will be able to punish somebody for lying and will be able to summon the Prime Minister, defence minister or defence ministry officials and anybody else, he said. "The JPC is the only way forward," he claimed.

The Prime Minister should order the JPC probe and the issue concerns national security and India's identity both inside and outside Parliament, he said when asked if the party would raise the issue in Parliament. — PTI

New IT rules: Prasad lauds FB, Google for compliance report

A big step towards transparency, says Union minister

New Delhi, July 3: IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday lauded major social media platforms such as Google, Facebook and Instagram for publishing their first compliance report on voluntary removal of offensive posts as per new IT rules, terming it a big step towards transparency.

Under the new IT rules, large digital platforms that have over 5 million users are required to publish periodic compliance reports every month, mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken thereon.

"Nice to see significant social media platforms like Google, Facebook and Instagram following the new IT Rules. First compliance report on voluntary removal of offensive posts published by them as per IT Rules is a big step towards transparency," Mr Prasad tweeted. The publishing of compliance reports by Google, Facebook and Instagram is bound to turn up the heat on Twitter, which has been engaged in a tussle with the government over the new rules.

Facebook on Friday said it "actioned" over 30 million content pieces across 10 violation categories dur-

In final stages of hiring grievance officer: Twitter

New Delhi, July 3: Twitter has told the Delhi high court that it is in the "final stages" of appointing an interim chief compliance officer and an interim resident grievance officer under the new Information Technology (IT) Rules.

In the meantime, grievances raised by Indian users are being looked into by a grievance officer, it said in an affidavit submitted in response to a plea by lawyer Amit Acharya, in which he

claimed non-compliance of the Centre's new IT Rules by the platform.

The micro-blogging site has also said it may fall within the definition of a "significant social media intermediary" under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. Twitter said in "substantial compliance" with Rule 3(2) and Rule 4(1)(c) of the new IT Rules, it did appoint an interim resident grievance officer. — PTI

ing May 15-June 15 in the country, as the social media giant brought out its maiden monthly compliance report as mandated by the IT rules. It actioned content related to spam (25 million), violent and graphic content (2.5 million), adult nudity and sexual activity (1.8 million), and hate speech (311,000). Other categories under which content was actioned include bullying and harassment (118,000), suicide and self-injury (589,000), dangerous organisations and individ-

uals: terrorist propaganda (106,000) and dangerous organisations and individuals: organised hate (75,000). Instagram took action against about two million pieces across nine categories during the same period.

Google had stated that 27,762 complaints were received by Google and YouTube in April this year from individual users in India over alleged violation of local laws or personal rights, which resulted in removal of 59,350 pieces of content. — PTI

J'khand: 5 of a family die in lightning strike

Khunti, July 3: Five members of a family were killed in a lightning strike in Jharkhand's Khunti district on Saturday evening, officials said.

The incident happened at Dahutoli village in the Larta area in the Karra block of the district, they said.

The family members were working on the field when the rain started and they took shelter under a nearby tree, which was struck by lightning, Khunti's deputy commissioner Shashi Ranjan said.

The deceased were identified as Manga Munda (55), his wife Jivanti (45), their son Puna (32) and his wife

Jayma (30). Puna and Jayma's five-year-old son Ayush also died, while their two-year-old son Arpan received severe burn injuries, the official said.

The incident triggered tension in the area with a huge number of people gathering at the spot.

The police later took the body to the hospital for post-mortem.

Manga's daughter, the only surviving member of the family, was given ₹10,000 as immediate relief, the official said.

As per rules, an amount of ₹4 lakh will be given to her for each of the family members killed in the lightning strike, the officers added. — PTI

POWER CRISIS Police uses water cannon, books over 200 for Covid violations

AAP workers try to gherao Punjab CM's house

Mohali (Punjab), July 3: The police used a water cannon to disperse AAP workers forcing their way to "gherao" the residence of Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh at Siswan here in protest against frequent power-cuts, and later booked 23 party leaders for violation of Covid-19 protocols.

The police named 23 people, including AAP MP Bhagwant Mann and MLAs Harpal Singh Cheema, Meet Hayer, Manjit Singh Bilaspur, Kulwant Singh Pandori and Baldev Singh, in the FIR registered under IPC

Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and the Disaster Management Act, an officer said.

Two hundred unidentified persons have been booked for violation of Covid-19 protocols in the case registered at Mullanpur police station in Mohali.

The police also briefly detained several AAP leaders, including Mann, Cheema and Meet Hayer.

The protesting Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers, led by its Punjab unit chief Mann, shouted slogans against the Congress

▶ **THE POLICE** named 23 people, including AAP MP Bhagwant Mann and MLAs Harpal Singh Cheema, Meet Hayer, Manjit Singh Bilaspur and Kulwant Singh Pandori in the FIR registered under IPC Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and the Disaster Management Act

government over the power shortage.

Police personnel were deployed in strength and multi-layered barricades were put up on the road

leading to the chief minister's farmhouse.

As scores of AAP workers carrying party flags forced their way through the first layer of barricades and reached the second, police used a water cannon to disperse them. Punjab has been reeling under an unprecedented power shortage with urban and rural areas facing long hours of load shedding amid scorching heat.

The Punjab government had already ordered reduction in timings of state government offices and reduced power supply to high energy consuming

industries. The Amarinder Singh-led government has been under fire from the opposition for not being able to provide sufficient electricity to consumers, especially to paddy growers for sowing crop.

Earlier, the AAP leaders slammed the Congress government for having "failed" to provide 24-hour power at cheaper rates.

Addressing the protesters, Mr Mann said they had gathered to express the grief of 2.75 crore people of Punjab to the chief minister who he alleged was sleeping in his farmhouse. — PTI



Members of Disha Volunteer Organisation during an awareness campaign on plastic waste management and to encourage the general public and shopkeepers in Jammu to use cloth/jute bags on the occasion of International Plastic Bag Free Day on Saturday. — PTI

Black fungus infection recurs in patients in MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPLAL, JULY 3

In a disturbing development, black fungus infections are seen recurring in patients who have recovered from the disease in Madhya Pradesh.

At least 20 such cases have been dealt with by doctors in the government-run Hamidia hospital here.

"Black fungus infections are coming back to the patients who have recovered from the infection. We have come across 20 such cases in our hospital," ENT specialist in the hospital J K Jasveer told this newspaper on Saturday.

"It is a worrisome development", he added.

According to him, it is seen that mucormycosis, colloquially known as black fungus infection, is developing in the side close to the earlier infected area of the patient.

The patients who have recovered from black fungus infection and whose immunity is very weak are seen developing recur-



MP CM Shivraj Chouhan meets former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan in Indore on Saturday. — PTI

rence of mucormycosis. The infection is recurring in the area which suffered a loss of blood in such patients.

Madhya Pradesh has so far reported over 700 black fungus infection cases. Of them, 350 cases have come to Hamidia hospital. Some Covid patients, who have recovered, have contracted black fungus infections.

Doctors have blamed the misconception about the side effects of plain amphotericin-B used to treat black fungus- being circulated in social media

for the recurrence of infection in the recovered patients.

"The recurrence of the infection is mainly due to the negligence of the patient. The recovered patients need to remain in touch with attending doctors for three months and even post-surgery. However, it is seen that patients do not keep in touch with the doctors once they are discharged from the hospital", ENT specialist and member of task force committee set up by MP government Dr S.P. Dubey said.

TMC plans to meet Prez, seek removal of S-G Mehta

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 3

A day after writing a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking removal of solicitor-general Tushar Mehta, West Bengal's ruling Trinamul Congress is now planning to knock the doors of President Ram Nath Kovind next week demanding removal of Mr Mehta on account of his meeting with BJP leader and

Narada sting bribery accused and Saradha chit fund scam suspect Suwendu Adhikari.

A delegation of TMC MPs, according to party insiders, is expected to visit the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday and submit a petition to Mr Kovind for Mr Mehta's removal as the S-G over his "direct conflict of interest." Mr Mehta has been representing the CBI and ED in both the high-profile cases in which Mr Adhikari also is allegedly linked to.

The TMC appears to be confident that Mr Mehta met when the Nandigram BJP MLA visited his New Delhi residence on July 1 though Mr Mehta on Friday termed Mr Adhikari's visit "unannounced" and denied of meeting him due to his preoccupation.

Dissatisfied with Mr Mehta's reply, chief minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee sought proof from him. He tweeted, "Mr Mehta's efforts to dismiss speculations regarding his clandestine meeting with @SuwenduWB can only be valuable if he makes all CCTV footage public until Mr Adhikari was in his residence. Moreover, was Mr Adhikari present in the SG's residence without a prior appointment?"

SHORT TAKES

'Grass-eating' tiger spotted in MP forest

Bhopal: A tiger never eats grass even when it grows old. The adage has, however, been defied, at least in appearance, by a tiger in the famed Satpura wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh a couple of days ago. Field director of Satpura Tiger Reserve (STR) L. Krishna Murthi spotted a full grown tiger "eating" green grass on July 1 and shot the video of the sight in his cellphone. "I have posted the video showing the tiger in STR feasting on the green grass in our FB site", Mr Murthi told this newspaper on Saturday. He however said that a tiger consuming green grass was not an unusual phenomenon. "There is a difference between eating for survival and consuming something as medicine. The tigers usually chew grass to suck its juice for digestion purpose and to heal various stomach ailments. It is not that they eat grass for survival," he added.

Fresh ED summons to Anil Deshmukh

Mumbai: After former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh skipped two summons, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) issued a third summons to him for his appearance at 11 am on July 5 in connection with a money laundering case against him and others. Officials said that Mr Deshmukh has been asked to record his statement at the ED's office in south Mumbai on Monday. Senior NCP leader has failed to visit the ED's office for questioning despite two summons. The first summons followed raids conducted by the ED at his premises in Mumbai and Nagpur. The NCP leader through his lawyers had sought documents pertaining to the ED's complaint against him and also requested the agency to record his statement through online mediums. Both his requests were turned down by the agency.

Man kills daughter, badly injures wife

Bhubaneswar: A man in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district allegedly killed his daughter and seriously injured his wife after launching a murderous attack late on Friday night before killing himself. The incident took place at Jota Chandpatna village, sending a shockwave across the district. The local police on Saturday morning visited the village and launched a probe into the case. According to sources, Loknath Pal, who was in his early fifties, hacked his wife Kalpana and daughter Madhusmita with a sharp-edged weapon last night. He then hanged himself in the house. The mother-daughter duo was rushed to the Jagatsinghpur district headquarters hospital in a critical condition.

Monsoon deluge



A view of a flooded village in East Champaran district Saturday. The flood situation has worsened in Champaran, Sitamarhi and Muzaffarpur in north Bihar due to the surge in the Gandak, Budhi Gandak and Bagmati as well as rivers originating from Nepal. Many villages in six blocks of East Champaran are affected by the floods. In West Champaran, floods have knocked again in the areas adjoining Gandak. — PTI

Committed to empower our traders, says Modi

New Delhi, July 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday described as "landmark" the decision to include retail and wholesale trade as MSMEs, which will allow traders the benefits of priority sector lending, and said his government is committed to empowering the community. Union minister Nitin Gadkari had on Friday announced the inclusion of retail and wholesale trade under MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) as per which the traders will now get the benefit of priority sector lending under RBI guidelines. In a tweet, the Prime Minister said, "Our government has taken a landmark step of including retail and wholesale trade as MSME. This will help crores of our traders get easier finance, various other benefits and also help boost their business. We are committed to empowering our traders." Official sources said the move will have an immediate impact on smaller retailers and wholesalers with businesses up to ₹250 crore of turnover in availing immediate-term finance as part of various schemes announced under "Atmanirbhar Bharat" programme. This landmark decision will have a structural impact for the sector, helping it get formalised by giving better finance options for businesses that want to get structured, they said, adding it will give retail MSMEs the support they need to "survive, revive and thrive". — PTI

3D laser scan to check structural damage to Jagannath singhasan

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, JULY 3 The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will carry out 3D laser scanning of the 'Ratna Singhasan' at Srimandir in Puri during the upcoming Rath Yatra to check for structural damages, if any. Ratna Singhasan is the sanctum sanctorum of Srimandir which is more famously known as the Jagannath Temple. According to Sri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) sources, the structural damage of the sanctum sanctorum and Jagamohana (the assembly hall) will also be checked by 3D laser scanning so that necessary repairs can be carried out. "The proposed laser imaging will help in getting a clear picture of the structural damage, if any, of the temple. The technology will also help the ASI to properly document the structural and architectural design of the temple for future use and reference," said a SJTA official. ASI official Chitta Ranjan Das said laser scanning is safe and it will cause no harm to the ancient structures of the temple. "The technology is effective enough to collect data for the conservation of the monument," said Das. "The 3D technology is effective enough to collect data on the damage and extent of for the conservation of the monument. Once the damage assessment is done, we will be in a position to estimate the cost of the required repair work," said Mr Das. Besides, a private firm has been given the contract of around ₹1.5 crore for the illumination of Srimandir. "We have conducted a primary survey of Srimandir for the illumination work and identified various places for faced illumination," said Santosh Kumar, an employee with the firm.

BJP claims win in dist panchayat chief polls

Lucknow, July 3: The BJP on Saturday claimed to have swept the elections to the posts of the district panchayat chief even as the SP alleged that the ruling party "kidnapped" voters and used "force" to stop them from voting. Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav accused the BJP of making a mockery of the elections, saying it is strange that while most results in the polls for the district panchayat members were in favour of its outfit, the BJP gained in the contest for the district panchayat chief. Though the panchayat polls in UP are not held on the party symbol and the state Election Commission did not announce the party affiliation of the winning candidates, the BJP claimed that the candidate backed by it won on 67 of 75 posts, the elections for which were held on Saturday. Claiming victory, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said in a tweet that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity and welfare policies initiated by his government and the Centre are responsible for the party's good show. "This is the manifestation of public confidence in

Assam cops using rarely used law in its war against drugs

Under the 1988 law, habitual drug crime offender can be detained without trial

Guwahati, July 3: The Assam police has invoked a rarely used legal provision for preventive custody of habitual drug crime offenders in its intensified war on drugs, a senior officer said on Saturday. At least 15 people have been detained under the provision since the second half of 2020, while six of them were taken into custody together on May 29 this year. Under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act, a repeat or habitual drug crime offender can be put into detention without trial. "The provisions of this Act is being put into implementation since the second part of last year, though it was in the form of the law for many years now," the officer told PTI. Under this 1988 law, a repeat or habitual drug crime offender can be detained without trial and the accused has to be produced before an advisory panel that comprises high court judges within 45 days. If the advisory board approves the detention, the accused can be kept in preventive detention for up to a year to ensure that he does not indulge in narcotics crime. Else, the person has to be released. All the cases of detention by Assam police taken up by the advisory board have been cleared so far, the officer said. The first such detention was made under a case of the CID, while the latest, in which six people were detained together on May 29, was on basis of an investigation by the Dhemaji district police. Besides using the earlier little-used provision in the law, the Assam police is also engaging with all

▶ **AT LEAST 15 people** have been detained under the provision since the second half of 2020, while six of them were taken into custody together on May 29 this year

▶ **Under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, a repeat or habitual drug crime offender can be put into detention without trial**

stakeholders to ensure maximum penetration into drug syndicates. "We have been holding day-long training sessions for our officers to sensitise them on all legal provisions. We are also regularly meeting other stakeholders, like domain experts and civil society members, to know their perspective while tackling this menace," the official said. Comprehensive guide-

lines have also been issued by the CID to the field-level officers, that are helping them in dealing with drug crime-related cases more efficiently and swiftly. Drugs, including tablets and cough syrup bottles, worth over Rs 131 crore have been seized between May 10 and June 29, as per the information shared by GP Singh, Special DGP of the state police. Among these, tablets and capsules were worth ₹47.44 crore, followed by ganja (₹34.30 crore) and heroin (₹33.46 crore) was recovered. Mr Singh said that over 6800 kg ganja, 3300 kg poppy straw, 16 kg heroin and 10 kg opium, 3 kg crystal methamphetamine and 2 kg morphine were seized during the period. Nearly 9.50 lakh tablets/capsules and over 58,000 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup have also been seized. — PTI

Farmers' body urges Maha not to rush with farm laws

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, JULY 3

The farmers' union, All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSSCC) of Maharashtra, on Saturday demanded the state government to take an unequivocal stand to repeal the three central farm laws. In a statement, the AIKSSCC said that a law ensuring a minimum support price (MSP) that is at least 1.5 times the cost of production should be enacted. Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra has from time to time expressed support for the farmers' movement. "Now, the farmers' fight against these laws has come to a decisive turn, the MVA government needs to take a firm and clear stand by passing a resolution in the state legislature against the central farm Acts," it said. Since November 2020, the farmers have been agitating against controversial three farm laws, which had been enacted by the central government, at the border of Delhi. They have been demanding that the anti-farmer farm laws should be repealed. The statement also said that the state is trying to bring a new farm bill by

making some changes in the controversial farm laws. "Making amendments to the draft of the Central laws will not change the purpose behind the enactment of the laws nor will it change the character of the laws," it asked. Farmers' leaders and activists Ashok Dhawale, Medha Patkar, Raju Shetti, Ajit Nawale, Subash Kakuste and Subash Lomte among others have held a discussion on the controversial farm laws. The farmer leaders said that the state government should not rush into enacting farm laws in the state on the lines of the Centre.

Dilip Kumar still in ICU but stable: Saira Banu

Mumbai, July 3: Legendary actor Dilip Kumar, who has been admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of a city hospital here, continues to remain stable and under observation, his wife Saira Banu said on Saturday. The 98-year-old screen icon was admitted in suburban Khar-based Hinduja Hospital, a non-Covid-19 facility, on Tuesday to address age-related "medical issues". Sahab is much better. We are still in the ICU. He is very stable and very well today. (Need) Prayers to get him out of here hale and hearty. Let us get out of the woods, we are still in the woods, Banu said. The 76-year-old veteran also thanked fans and well-wishers for their unending care and support for Kumar. According to a hospital source, Kumar's breathlessness is also under control. However, he will continue to remain in the hospital for a day or two. "His breathlessness seems to be under control. He is still being kept under observation (in ICU) that is what the family wants. Looking at his age and all they want to make sure he is problem free before he leaves from here, a hospital source said. — PTI

Pushkar Singh Dhami is new U'khand CM

■ **Continued from Page 1** is part of Nainital-Udhampur Singh Nagar parliamentary seat, which has 14 Assembly seats. A constitutional crisis was cited as the reason for replacing Tirath Singh Rawat, who is an MP and had to be elected to the state Assembly by September 10 but the Election Commission was yet to decide on the bypoll schedule apparently due to corona. Plagued with factionalism in Uttarakhand, it will be a challenge for the BJP to retain power in the hill state where it is also facing corruption allegations and non-fulfilment of poll promises. Its decision to drop Trivendra Singh Rawat and then change his successor a few months ahead of polls will impact the party's poll prospects. "My party has appointed a common worker, son of an ex-serviceman, who was born in the border district of

Pithoragarh to serve the people... We will work on people's issues with the cooperation of all. I will carry forward the work done by my predecessor." Mr Dhami said. The 11th chief minister of Uttarakhand, he is said to be close to former CM and Maharashtra governor B.S. Koshiyari and Union minister Rajnath Singh. The chief minister-elect thanked the party leadership for reposing faith in him and assured that he will work with everyone's cooperation. Mr Dhami's name was proposed by outgoing chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat and BJP state president Madan Kaushik and seconded by a number of MLAs, including former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat, Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar who was present at the meeting, a Central observer told reporters outside the state BJP headquarters.

Soon after his unanimous election as the BJP legislative party leader, Mr Dhami headed for the Raj Bhawan along with a number of MLAs and Central observers to stake his claim to form the government. The legislature party of the ruling BJP met in Dehradun, a day after Tirath Singh Rawat, who had replaced Trivendra Singh Rawat in March this year, submitted his resignation to the governor. Interacting with reporters at his official residence after returning from Raj Bhawan, Tirath Singh Rawat said, "I thought it was appropriate to resign as the state was facing a constitutional crisis under the provisions of Section 151 A and 164 of the Representation of People Act." Hitting out at the BJP, the Opposition Congress said instead of ushering in development, the ruling party has

thrown Uttarakhand into the throes of political instability and betrayed people by repeatedly changing chief ministers. Former CM and senior Congress leader Harish Rawat said, "The BJP's high drama in Dehradun is an insult to the people of Uttarakhand. The Prime Minister had promised to give a double-engine government, but the state only received different chief ministers and no development." Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said, "This is BJP's example of lust for power, political instability, sharing fruits of power and failure of leadership. Instead of serving the people of Uttarakhand, they tried to distribute power and PM Modi and J.P. Nadra are responsible for this. The BJP has brought Uttarakhand to such a turn where power means only sharing its fruits and nothing else."

Delhi high court shocked...

■ **Continued from Page 1** the government suffers but the concerned officer, who has raised the false claim, does not suffer any action. "If the facts given by the officers are found to be false/incorrect by the court, the government shall consider taking action and the copy of the judgment be kept in the ACR file of the officer. This will ensure that the officer is held accountable for the actions taken by him in the court case," the court said. Referring to the rules framed by Sikkim for holding its officers accountable for the lapses in handling of court cases, the high court said there is a need to incorporate similar rules by the Central government as well as by the Delhi government. Haryana has framed State of Haryana Litigation Policy, 2010, to bring visible, enduring

qualitative and quantitative improvements in the manner in which litigation is perceived, managed and conducted in the state, it said, adding that the national concern of pendency and delays in courts needs to be reduced proactively. The court was informed by the Central government's standing counsel Kirtiman Singh that there is no litigation policy of the government at present and that the National Litigation Policy, 2010 was never implemented. He further said a writ petition for implementation of National Litigation Policy was rejected by this court earlier. To this, Justice Midha said, "This court is of the view that the directions with respect to accountability in government litigation are in the nature of PIL (public interest litigation) and therefore, it would be appropriate to list this matter before the

PIL bench. Subject to the orders of the Chief Justice, list this matter before the division bench on July 15." The court appreciated the valuable assistance and comprehensive research done by senior advocate A.S. Chandhiok, who was appointed as amicus curiae to assist the court, and Akshay Chowdhary, Law Researcher attached to Justice Midha. The high court noted that as per Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS) which is a web-based portal developed by Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice for monitoring and handling of various court cases of government departments and ministries, 4,79,236 cases of government, 2,055 cases for compliance and 975 cases of contempt were pending as on June 8, 2021.

11 arrested for beating woman for resisting molestation bid

Thane, July 3: At least 11 persons were arrested on Saturday for beating up a woman and her two male friends allegedly at the behest of an autorickshaw driver who tried to molest her, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday when the woman was travelling alone in an autorickshaw in the Kolsewadi area. "Taking advantage, the autorickshaw driver tried to molest the woman passenger, who raised an alarm and called up her two friends for help. As soon as the two men from Ulhasnagar reached the spot, the autorickshaw driver called up some local villagers, who thrashed the woman and her friends despite their plea to spare them. They were beaten up with belts and other objects. The woman was also molested by some members of the mob," police said quoting the FIR. A senior officer said eleven people were arrested and a search is on for others. The incident triggered outrage in various quarters after a video of the beating went viral on social media. — PTI

France begins judicial probe into Rafale deal

■ **Continued from Page 1** (NDA) government had inked a ₹59,000-crore deal on September 23, 2016, to procure 36 Rafale jets from French aerospace major Dassault Aviation after a nearly seven-year exercise to procure 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) for the Indian Air Force did not fructify during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime.

The Congress accused the government of massive irregularities in the deal, alleging that it was procuring each aircraft at a cost of over ₹1,670 crore as against ₹526 crore finalised by the UPA government during the negotiations for the MMRCA. Prior to the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, the Congress raised several questions about the deal and alleged

corruption but the government rejected all the charges. The BJP alleged that Rahul Gandhi is acting as an agent of rival defence companies and being used as a "pawn", and also claimed he and the Congress keep raking up allegations of corruption in the Rafale deal in an attempt to "weaken" India. At a press conference, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra

also played down the appointment of a judge in France to lead a judicial investigation into the alleged corruption and favouritism in the deal. Mr Patra cited a CAG report and a Supreme Court (SC) verdict, both of which had found nothing wrong in the defence deal between the Indian and French governments, to reject allegations of the Congress. — PTI

Ukraine women troops march in heels

■ **Continued from Page 1** minister to wear high heels to the parade. "It is hard to imagine a more idiotic, harmful idea," said Inna Sovsun, a member of the Golos party, pointing to health risks. She also said that Ukraine's women soldiers — like men — were risking their lives and "do not

deserve to be mocked". Ukraine has been battling Russian-backed separatists in the country's industrial east, in a conflict that has killed more than 13,000 people since 2014. Olena Kondratyuk, deputy speaker of the legislature said authorities should publicly apologise

for "humiliating" women and conduct an enquiry. Kondratyuk said that more than 13,500 women had fought in the current conflict. More than 31,000 women now serve in the Ukrainian armed forces, including more than 4,000 of whom are officers. — AFP

THE ASIAN AGE

4 JULY 2021



Shailaja Khanna

Off the beaten track

What kept the maestros going during pandemic

Four regions, four musicians, four questions, four perspectives — yet a common thread of positivity and introspection running through them all. Regardless of their ages (Abhishek Raghuram is in his 30s, while Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty is touching 70), all the musicians have made the best of the pandemic, taken the restrictions imposed on them in their stride, dealing with the huge changes in their world with grace. One is left struck and impressed by their spirit of philosophical acceptance.

BIGGEST TAKEAWAY FROM THE PANDEMIC

It is not to take life for granted. That was the message that this writer walked away with after interacting with the four musicians. But for each individual, the lens through which they viewed their experience and reached this conclusion was different. If it was friendship for one, it was the body and its changing dynamics for another, and nature's wisdom and the spirit of humanity that binds us for the remaining interviewees. As Pt Ajoy Chakrabarty, vocal maestro from Kolkata, reflected: "For me, foremost, is the realisation of how ephemeral life is. So many great musicians have been snatched before their time. I have to admit, the amount of time I spent at home has been a huge blessing; it's something I have never done before. Also, there is increased awareness of the need to help others, preserve Nature, respect others."

"Foremost, the pandemic has taught [me]", Ustad Wasifuddin Dagar, dhrupad maestro from Delhi, "about how precious good health, hygiene and, indeed, life is". "My first reaction to the pandemic was that it's a very useful and wonderful time to spend with your Art. But, gradually I realised how important it is to have interaction with others, to have that human touch. Not through the screen but from a body reaction," Wasifuddin said. "In one way, it is absolutely right that you do your art for yourself, but it is very important to get the audience feedback spontaneously, rather than only reading the applause on the screen," he explained.

Pt Yogesh Samsi, the famous tabla maestro from Mumbai, warned: "It's high time we realise we have to respect Nature, respect what we have got in terms of resources on this planet and learn to look after it, to respect and value it. The amount of abuse Mother Earth has gone through due to the onslaught by humanity — be it social, economic, political or through technology. It has led to such an imbalance that probably it has led to a situation where Mother Earth is trying to heal itself. Across the globe, we have all been taught a huge lesson."

Vidwan Abhishek Raghuram, the Carnatic vocalist who happens to be based out of Chennai, offered, "The pandemic has brought in all of us a strong reassertion of the faith that humanity comes together in support of each other, for the larger cause, when the need arises. I also feel the pandemic has taught us to pick our real needs from what we have assumed them to be so far, almost irrationally!"

MOST PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

Riyaz and retrospection emerged as common themes. "My music. I spent 10-12 hours on my music, something I have never been able to do," was Chakrabarty's reply. It coincided with Wasifuddin Dagar's view and he said: "Definitely, doing my own riyaz, and what I had never done before, teaching online. Also learning to handle these modern gadgets of communication, like laptops and mobiles; I am still learning." For Samsi, "it was having all the time in the world to think of my music — almost like a rewind of my life. All the aspects I had difficulty in doing earlier, reviewing all I had learnt from *abbaji* (Ustad Alla Rakha Khan) these last few decades. Then pondering on it — *chintan*, *mannan karna*, *aur riyaz karna*. *Apne khud ki sadhana*, be it yoga or meditation... I got to give a lot of time to myself, something that I had never done in the last 25 years, due to my professional travels". Abhishek Raghuram, too, spent a lot of time introspecting into his art and his career trajectory. "With the changed routines, I have a lot more opportunity to retrospect clearly and deeply to my journey so far and my course ahead. This, I feel, has been very beneficial to me as an artiste," Raghuram said.

THINGS MOST MISSED DURING THE PANDEMIC

This time, the answers were very varied. Ajoy Chakrabarty "really felt bereft at the loss of so many good friends from the world of the arts". "Great musicians from the Hindustani and Carnatic music world have left us," he lamented. Wasifuddin Dagar was more situated in the present. He missed "live concerts, panel discussions, normal human interaction other than with my family, travelling and, most of all, driving!" "It's therapy for me," he added, referring to his hobby. Yogesh Samsi longed for "getting together with my students, teaching sessions, and meeting with intellectuals; *satsang* with like-minded people". Abhishek Raghuram rued the loss of "the ability to meet and interact with co-artists, friends and the larger family".

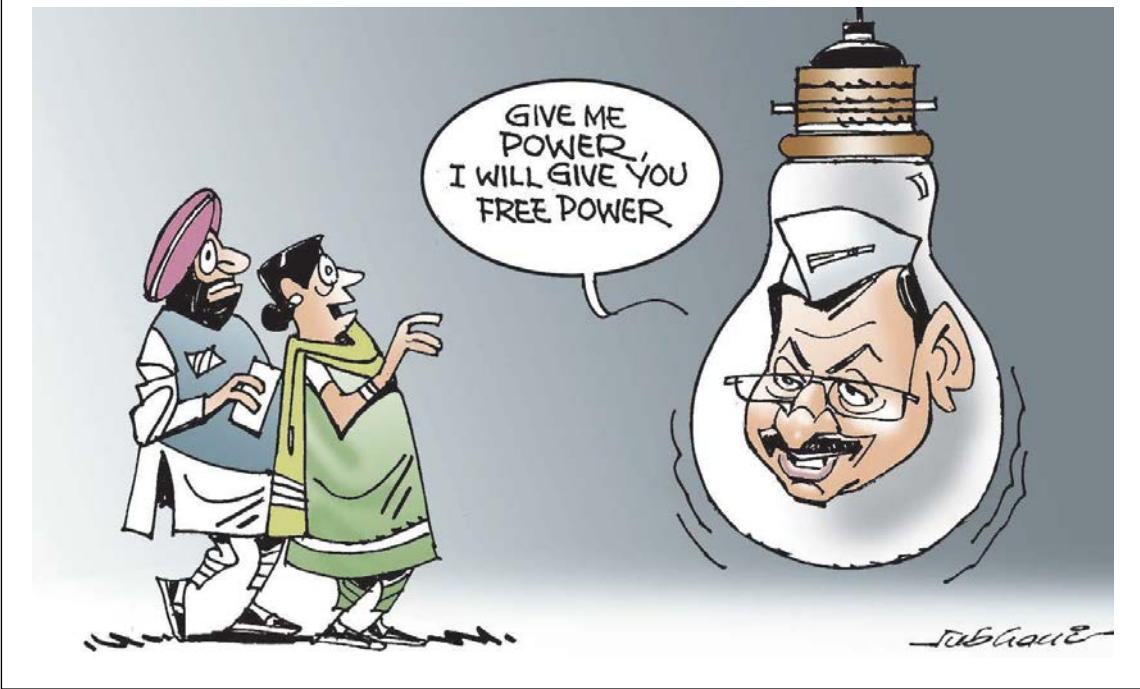
DO YOU BELIEVE THE MUSIC WORLD WILL RETURN TO WHAT IT WAS?

No investment in the new normal, for these musicians, who were almost unanimous in rejecting the much-tooted idea. All four artists replied to this question in the affirmative, although Ajoy Chakrabarty qualified his response with conditions. He said, "Yes, though there will be changes; for one, I think the online stage will remain for good. Teaching online will remain too, though as far as I am concerned, I had always taught online, in fact have been doing so for the last 11 years, so that's not been new for me." Wasifuddin Dagar sounded more emphatic. He said, "I am an optimist, what has become the 'new normal' will again be replaced by the old 'normal', *Insha'allah*, but don't quite know when. I pray, soon!" Yogesh Samsi felt "the process will be slower, but eventually concerts will happen". "We need to be patient, and not try to hurry things up," he said. "In fact, my faith is that it will resume in a fashion larger and stronger than before. The world is as anxious as we are about the gap the pandemic has brought upon us," was Raghuram's confident observation.

Bonus responses: Lockdown or no, did the masters stoop to perform domestic chores? Wasifuddin shared candidly that the chore he has most hated doing was tidying his room! Abhishek endearingly said every chore he has had to do has been a pleasure, which he will miss once he again has less time!

Shailaja Khanna writes on music, musicians and matters of music

Subhani



Break the Chinese puzzle by studying CPC's game



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

This July, I complete a four-decade-long association with the Indian National Congress (INC) founded in 1885. An involvement that commenced when I joined the National Students Union of India (NSUI) way back in 1981.

As a grassroots political activist, the philosophy, structure and organisation of other political parties has always been an area of academic interest for me. A curiosity that got further buoyed when I was elected president of the International Students Union (IUS) in the early 1990s. The IUS was then a Prague-based syndical organisation of 155 student organisations across 112 countries and territories. One political party that I have continuously studied and observed is the Communist Party of China (CPC).

The current commentary is about this distinctive organisation that lies at the heart of an emerging system of global dominance. The Communist Party of China (CPC) celebrated a hundred years of its existence on the 1st of July. Ironically, all empirical evidence puts its foundation date as July 23, 1921. July 1 was arbitrarily chosen by party apparatchiks when they were hunkering down in the grottoes of Yan'an in 1941.

The CPC was born during what the Chinese call the century of humiliation 1839-1949. China was back then an impoverished and a pastoral society dominated by imperialist powers through ignominious treaty arrangements.

A clandestine get-together of a handful of people took place in the French concession of Shanghai at 106 Rue Wantz. One of the attendees was Mao Zedong who remained a leading light of this fledgling party for over 54 years. In addition to him,

triggered by the pronouncement of Western powers to transfer Chinese colonial territory in the possession of Germany to Japan post World War I. That effort stimulated both anti-Western nationalism as well as a Chinese desire to reclaim the glory of its yesteryears — a la Middle Kingdom syndrome. It also established a distinctive ideological basis that fused Chinese nationalism with Marxism.

The skill of the CPC and the reason for its longevity has been its ability to navigate the winds of change with nimbleness, without giving up on its core ideological values. Over a century, it has morphed from being a revolutionary army to a party of governance surviving the vicissitudes of not only domestic turmoil but also international intrigue coupled with the idiosyncratic impulses of its own leadership.

Two of those whims were the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962 and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. The former resulted in the deaths of over 20 million people mainly due to starvation. The latter was a vicious socio-political housecleaning predicated upon the purging the vestiges of capitalist and traditional elements from the mainstream of China's thought leadership. Mobs of pupils and Red Guards assaulted people wearing "bourgeois clothes" on the thoroughfares, "imperialist" signage were desecrated, and intellectuals and party officials were either murdered or driven to suicide. Over two million lost their lives as a consequence of these depredations.

Mao Zedong's ruinous tenure ended with his demise in 1976 leaving China in a state of economic morass and social stratification. However, despite the misery and pain Mao had heaped on the Chinese people, the hold of the CPC on the country remained intact. It did not get undermined even after the Tiananmen Square massacre of protesting students in 1989 that convulsed Chinese society to its very being. The point being that it is not only fear, terror and intimidation that binds the Chinese society to the CPC. The impulses are much more profound and include rigorous ideological indoctrination coupled with a village to national capital structure that functions like a well-oiled machine.

The beauty of these transitions does not lie in the abrupt U-turns that the CPC took but the fact that they were able to carry the Chinese nation along with them during all these transfigurations. That is wherein lies the challenge for Indian policymakers as they seek to understand Chinese motivations and behaviour in the 21st century. Till the time they do not understand the functioning of the CPC they will never be able to discern the minds and methods of the Chinese leadership. For, unlike India and other democracies around the world, where political parties and governance systems are distinct, in the case of China, it is a merged mass of dissimulating narratives.

It is not only fear that binds the Chinese society to the CPC. The impulses include rigorous ideological indoctrination coupled with a village to national capital structure that runs smoothly.

The CPC moved seamlessly from Mao's tyranny to the model of totalitarian capitalism institutionalised by Deng Xiaoping and his successors that held the field for close to three-and-a-half decades from 1979 to 2012. One of the essential attributes of those years was the cultivated reticence of both the Chinese state and the CPC as it put its shoulder to the wheel of internal consolidation. It once again morphed into an aggressive wolf warrior mode as Xi Jinping took centre stage in 2012.

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The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

THE HEAT IS ON

In British Columbia, Canada, almost 500 people have died due to a heatwave, with temperatures touching 49 degrees Celsius. This is a natural calamity and the authorities are dealing with it as such. Imagine such a situation in India, under the current Prime Minister. We will have news flashes, the PM and the government conspicuously absent and people dying on the streets. And talking heads, in various channels, will spout wisdom. Incidentally, parts of Rajasthan have seen temperatures in excess of 50 degrees Celsius without a death toll and IMD is predicting a prolonged heat wave in north India.

Gundu K. Mani Ramani
Mumbai

BRACE FOR TERROR

APPROPOS "DRONES" as weapons: India is facing a new challenge" (July 3), since the first attack by drones at the IAF, the sighting of several drones, especially the one at the Indian high commission office in Islamabad, is a cause for concern. Terror has taken a new form. Furthermore, Pakistan is an advanced nuclear state. It has the backing of China. China is eager in enlarging its territory besides creating trouble in the region. So terror in any form may be expected especially during the pandemic time. Our security and intelligence should be more vigilant and any lapse will prove disastrous.

Sravana Ramachandran
Chennai

IMPLICIT SEX BIAS

IT IS INTERESTING to read that the BCCI will recommend both the ace Indian cricketers, Mithali Raj and Ravichandran Ashwin, for the prestigious Khel Ratna award. However, in the contracts announced in May, the highest grade for women cricketers has a retainer of ₹50 lakh while the lowest grade for male players is worth ₹1 crore. Mere gestures of equality, such as recommending Raj and Ashwin for the same sports award, do nothing to hide this immanent discrimination.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

GHOST STORY

POLICE HAVE registered a case against two ghosts for harassing a person in the Panchmahal district of Gujarat. A man filed a case against two ghosts for not allowing him to work in his field and threatening to kill him. The scared victim came running to the police station and started pleading with the policemen to save his life. Seeing the delicate state of his mind, the police filed a case and handed him over to his family. The man reportedly told the police that he was confident that the ghosts won't follow him to the police station, as only law abiding citizens enter it.

C.K.R. Nathan
Ghaziabad

HOUSEBOAT MODEL

KERALA'S HOUSEBOATS are ready to sail. With the waning of the pandemic and vaccination, reboot of houseboats will rejuvenate Kerala's tourism industry. Moreover, houseboats are per se secluded and serves as bubble and minimises the risk of spreading the virus. However, the Kerala government should not go overboard and Covid protocols ought to be stringently complied with.

Deepak Singhal
Noida

SHORT TAKES

38 KILLED, 51 HURT IN RAIN-TRIGGERED NEPAL LANDSLIDES

Kathmandu, July 3: Flash floods and landslides triggered by torrential rains across Nepal have left at least 38 people dead, including seven children, and wounded over 50 others in the last 20 days, the Home Ministry said on Saturday.

The ministry said 51 people sustained injuries and 24 people, including three children, have gone missing in the incidents of floods and landslides in different parts of the country. Similarly, 1,250 people have been evacuated from different parts of the country that were hit by the natural disaster, it said.

A total of 790 houses have been inundated, 519 homes, 90 cowsheds and 19 bridges were destroyed due to the floods and landslides, it said.

MIGRATION FROM BELARUS LEADS TO CRISIS IN LITHUANIA

Helsinki (Finland): Lithuania has declared a state of emergency due to an influx of migrants in the last few days from neighbouring Belarus, as tensions between the European Union and Belarus escalate.

Lithuania's Interior Minister Agle Bilotaite said late Friday that the decision, proposed by the State Border Guard Service, was necessary not because of an increased threat to the country of 2.8 million people but to put a more robust system into place to handle migrants coming in.

It's very important to have a legal system and instruments ... to be able to swiftly make decisions in response to arising challenges, Bilotaite said during a government meeting Friday evening, according to the Baltic News Service.

SYRIAN GOVT SHELLING KILLS 8, MOSTLY CHILDREN

Beirut: Artillery fire from government-controlled territory and airstrikes on Saturday killed at least eight civilians in Syria's last rebel enclave, most of them children, and destroyed a civil defence center and a water station, rescue workers and a war monitor said.

The shelling in Idlib province, hit the home of Subhi al-Assi, killing him, his wife and three of his children in their sleep, according to the rescue service known as the White Helmets and Idlib's health directorate. Al-Assi was an administrator in a local health center.

Shelling also struck the home of a volunteer for the White Helmets, also known as the Syria Civil Defence, killing his two children.

The volunteer, Omar al-Omar, and his wife were wounded, according to the White Helmets. In a nearby village, another child was killed and four others from the same family were wounded, according to the White Helmets.

MAJOR SWEDISH SUPERMARKET HIT BY CYBERATTACK

Stockholm: One of Sweden's biggest supermarket chains said on Saturday it had to temporarily close around 800 stores nationwide after a cyber attack blocked access to its checkouts.

"One of our subcontractors was hit by a digital attack, and that's why our checkouts aren't working any more," Coop Sweden, which accounts for around 20 per cent of the sector, said in a statement.

"We regret the situation and will do all we can to reopen swiftly," the cooperative added.

Coop Sweden did not name the subcontractor or reveal the hacking method used against it beginning on Friday evening.

But the Swedish subsidiary of the Visma software group said the problem was linked to a major cyber attack on US IT company Kaseya on Friday.

Kaseya has urged customers to shut down servers running its VSA platform after dozens were hit with ransomware attacks.

A wave of ransomware attacks has struck worldwide recently, especially in the United States.

Ransomware attacks typically involve locking away data in systems using encryption, making companies pay to regain access.

Over 300 Taliban fighters killed**Afghan forces intensify predawn air strikes, Taliban reject claims**

Kabul, July 3: Hundreds of Taliban fighters were killed in fierce battles with government forces across several provinces of Afghanistan, officials said Saturday, as Washington announced it would finish withdrawing its troops from the country by the end of August.

Washington's announcement came after all US and Nato troops vacated their main Bagram Air Base, from where the coalition forces led operations for two decades against the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda allies.

Over the past 24 hours, more than 300 Taliban fighters were killed in fighting with government forces, the Ministry of Defence said on Saturday.

Scores were killed in air strikes, including a pre-dawn assault on Saturday, in the southern province of Helmand, where the insurgents and government troops have regularly clashed. There have been fears that Afghan forces would struggle without the air support that the United States has provided.

"In recent days, the Afghan air force has intensified its air strikes against the Taliban hide-outs and the insurgents have suffered casualties," Attaullah Afghan, a member of Helmand provincial council, said.

The Taliban rejected the government's claims.

Both sides often exaggerate each other's casualties and their claims are difficult to independently verify.

But since May 1 when the US military began its final withdrawal of about 2,500 troops, the two warring sides have clashed fiercely across the rugged countryside as peace talks between them have faltered.

As a result, the Taliban have seized dozens of districts in blistering assaults targeting government forces. The insurgents have encircled almost all major cities across the country, and on Saturday claimed seizing seven more districts in the northeastern province of Badakhshan.

Top US envoy to Kabul, Ross Wilson, lashed out at the insurgents. "The Taliban is using violent

propaganda and hate speech to intimidate, threaten & attack Afghans on social media," Wilson said on Twitter on Saturday. "Violence and terror cannot create peace." The Pentagon pressed on with its withdrawal to end America's longest war.

On Friday, all US and Nato troops left Bagram Air Base, signalling that the military involvement for coalition forces was finally nearing its end.

Over the years, the minority north of Kabul has been visited by hundreds of thousands of US and Nato service members and contractors.

It has great military and symbolic significance.

"For many Afghans, Bagram is remembered as

the hub for more than one foreign intervention, as it was the main air base for the Soviets throughout their occupation of the country as well," said Andrew Watkins, an Afghanistan expert at the International Crisis Group.

"Not only has it been the entry point of most foreign troops that have passed through the country since 2001, it has been home to many of the in-country air assets that have lent the Afghan security forces such a vital advantage on the battlefield." The exit of foreign troops from Bagram has further fuelled concerns the country might slide into new civil war, as in the 1990s after the Soviets left.

— AFP

Unvaccinated vulnerable to Delta: Biden**DELTA VARIANT IS DANGEROUS: W.H.O. CHIEF**

Washington, July 2: Joe Biden has warned that although America has Covid-19 "on the run" the latest variant is of particular concern among those who remain unvaccinated — as the president's goal of 70 per cent of US adults receiving at least one shot of vaccine by the Fourth of July holiday was set to fall short.

New US cases of Coronavirus jumped by 10 per cent in the past week as the highly contagious Delta variant spreads, especially where vaccination rates are low. "I am concerned that people who have not gotten vaccinated have the capacity to catch the variant and spread the variant to other people who haven't been vaccinated," Biden said on Friday.

"I'm not concerned there's going to be a major outbreak ... another epidemic nationwide. But I am concerned lives will be lost," he added.

Celebrating strong data on jobs on Friday, Biden said at a press briefing on July 2. "But no country is out of the woods yet. The Delta variant is dangerous and is continuing to evolve and mutate, which requires constant evaluation and careful adjustment of the public health response," he said.

— PTI

Geneva, July 3: The world is in a very "dangerous period" of the Covid-19 pandemic compounded by more transmissible variants like Delta, which is continuing to evolve and mutate, World Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned.

He said in countries with low vaccination coverage, terrible scenes of hospitals overflowing are again becoming the norm.

"Compounded by more transmissible variants, like Delta, which is quickly becoming the dominant strain in many countries, we are in a very dangerous period of this pandemic," Mr. Ghebreyesus said at a press briefing on July 2. "But no country is out of the woods yet. The Delta variant is dangerous and is continuing to evolve and mutate, which requires constant evaluation and careful adjustment of the public health response," he said.

— PTI

IRAN FEARS 'FIFTH WAVE' OF DELTA VARIANT

Tehran, July 3: President Hassan Rouhani expressed fears on Saturday that Iran will be hit by a new wave of Covid-19 due to an outbreak of the Delta variant in the Middle East's hardest-hit country.

"It is feared that we are on the way to a fifth wave throughout the country," Rouhani told a meeting of Iran's anti-virus taskforce, warning the public to be careful as "the Delta variant" had entered the country from the south and southeast.

— AFP

based on their pure convictions or how they understand the evidence and science." — Agencies

Italian health staff dare vax obligation

Rome, July 3: Three hundred healthcare workers in Italy have lodged a legal challenge against the requirement that they get vaccinated against coronavirus, according to media reports on Saturday. The case, brought by professionals throughout northern Italy, will be heard on July 14.

"This isn't a battle by anti-vaxxers but a democratic battle," constitutional lawyer Daniele Granara, who helped build up the case, was cited as saying in the *Giornale di Brescia* newspaper.

"We force people to take a risk under threat of no longer being allowed to

exercise their profession," he added.

Granara is also defending dozens of caregivers who have been suspended from work for refusing to be vaccinated.

Italy passed a law in April obliging anyone working in public or private social health positions, including in pharmacies and doctors' offices, to get vaccinated against Covid-19 or be suspended without pay, unless their employer can reassign them to a less sensitive position.

After the elderly and vulnerable, caregivers including teachers were the first to be vaccinated in Italy.

— AFP



A general view shows mud and debris at the scene of a landslide following days of heavy rain in Atami in Shizuoka Prefecture on Saturday.

— AFP

2 dead, 20 missing after homes swept away in Japan landslide

Tokyo, July 3: Two people died and around 20 others remained missing on Saturday after a huge landslide at a resort town in central Japan swept away homes following days of heavy rain, officials said.

Television footage showed a torrent of mud obliterating buildings as it crashed down a hillside in Atami, southwest of Tokyo, sending people fleeing as it buried part of a road.

"I heard a horrible sound and saw a mudslide flowing downwards as rescuers were urging people to evacuate. So I ran to higher ground," the head

of a temple near the disaster told public broadcaster NHK.

"When I returned, houses and cars that were in front of the temple were gone."

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said emergency services and the military had launched rescue and evacuation missions, warning that more downpours were forecast.

"There is a possibility of heavy rain due to the rain front, so we still need to be alert at the maximum level," he said at an emergency disaster meeting.

Atami saw rainfall of 313 millimetres in just 48 hours to Saturday— higher

than the average monthly total for July of 242.5 millimetres, according to NHK.

Two women discovered by the coastguard at a port without showing vital signs were later confirmed dead, the municipal government of Atami said.

"Because of the heavy rain, the ground loosened and the mudslide occurred ... it picked up speed and swept away houses together with people," Shizuoka Governor Heita Kawakatsu told reporters.

He said "around 20" people were still missing after being swept away by the

landslide.

The disaster began at around 10.30am at a river near the city, which is around 90km from Tokyo and is famous as a hot spring resort.

A video posted on TikTok from the scene showed a huge slurry of mud and debris sliding slowly down a steep road and nearly engulfing a white car, which drove away before a faster and more violent torrent arrived.

In other clips on social media, the landslide was seen toppling electricity poles, with large areas left inundated by several waves of earth.

— AFP

Nepal gears for polls despite uncertainty

sKathmandu, July 3: Nepal's election commission is preparing for the mid-term elections in November despite the uncertainty over polls due to the pending petitions in the Supreme Court against the dissolution of the House of Representatives, according to reports.

At the recommendation of Prime Minister K. P.

Sharma Oli, President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the lower house for the second time in five months on May 22 and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19.

Prime Minister Oli is currently heading a minority government after losing a trust vote in the 275-member House.

The constitutionality of the President's move is being heard at the Supreme Court, raising the question if the elections would be held on set dates. But the Election Commission of Nepal said that it would start to procure materials required for holding the polls next week after the Finance Ministry approved 7.72

Nepalese Rupees billion for holding the elections, The Kathmandu Post reported.

The ministry said it approved the budget for the commission to procure election materials and election management. This budget, however, does not cover the expenses for security arrangements for the polls.

— PTI

TAKEOVER | SAGA**Bid for UK's fourth largest supermarket would be biggest private equity deal****UK's Morrisons agrees £6.3bn takeover bid**

London, July 3: British supermarket giant Morrisons has accepted a takeover offer from a consortium of investment groups following its rejection of a private equity bid last month, the chain announced on Saturday.

Under the 6.3 billion (\$8.7 billion) deal, the group of investors comprising Softbank-owned Fortress, Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and Koch Real Estate Investments (KREI) will pay 252 pence per share plus a 2p special dividend.

The takeover of the supermarket based in northern England follows the rejection of a 5.5 billion offer in June from Clayton Dubilier & Rice

that sent the chain's share prices soaring but which Morrisons ultimately said was too low.

Andrew Higginson, the chairman of the chain which employs 110,000 people at 500 outlets, said directors believed the offer represented "a fair and recommendable price for shareholders which recognises Morrisons' future prospects".

"Fortress, CPP

Investments and KREI all have strong track records and a long-term approach to investing. They are backing our strategy, our management and our people," he added.

Fortress, which led the offer, would offer Morrisons "long-term support," Higginson said. In Europe, the investment management firm has holdings in food retail and the UK-based wine

retailer majestic Wine.

In the United States, as well as groceries, Fortress has invested in petrol station forecourts, retail and restaurants.

Richard Lim, CEO of consultancy Retail Economics, said the announcement "signals the biggest shakeup in the UK grocery sector for over a decade".

"Success will hinge on the new owners gaining the support of experienced key members of the leadership team to execute on the future strategy," he added, emphasising the impact of the shift towards online grocery shopping and the growth of rapid delivery on the market.

— AFP



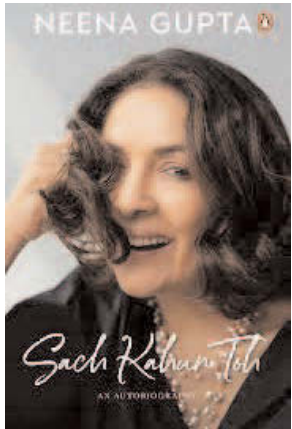
File photo taken on June 21, 2021 a view of a Morrisons supermarket is pictured in Stratford, east London. - British supermarket giant Morrisons has accepted a takeover offer from a consortium of investment groups following its rejection of a private equity bid last month, the chain announced on Saturday.

— AFP

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

- SACH KAHUN TOH**
Neena Gupta
Penguin, ₹599
- INDIA AND ASIAN
GEOPOLITICS: THE
PAST, PRESENT**
Shiv Shankar Menon
Penguin, ₹699
- NEHRU, TIBET AND
CHINA**
A.S. Bhasin
Penguin, ₹699
- THE POWER OF
GEOGRAPHY**
Tim Marshal
Simon & Schuster, ₹699
- INDIA'S POWER ELITE**
Sanjaya Baru
Penguin, ₹699
- INDIA VERSUS CHINA**
Kanti Bajpai
Juggernaut, ₹599
- RUMOURS OF SPRING**
Farah Bashir
HarperCollins, ₹499
- REMNANTS OF A
SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- HOSTILITY: A
DIPLOMAT'S DIARY ON
PAKISTAN INDIA
RELATIONS**
Abdul Basit
HarperCollins, ₹799
- THE LIGHT OF ASIA**
Jairam Ramesh
Penguin Viking, ₹799



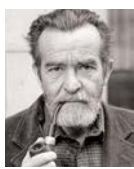
FICTION

- AT NIGHT ALL BLOOD
IS BLACK**
David Dipo
Pushkin Press, ₹399
- WHEREABOUTS**
Jhumpa Lahiri
Penguin, ₹499
- A GAMBLING MAN**
David Baldacci
Pan Macmillan, ₹699
- SOOLEY**
John Grisham
Hachette, ₹699
- A GAMBLING MAN**
David Baldacci
Pan Macmillan, ₹699
- HOMELAND ELEGIES**
Ayad Akhtar
Hachette, ₹1,050
- TURN A BLIND EYE**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- THE BEGUM AND
THE DASTAN**
Tarana Husein Khan
Tranquebar, ₹499
- THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee
Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹599
- THE DANGERS OF
SMOKING IN BED**
Mariana Enriquez
Granta, ₹599

Bahrison's, New Delhi

FAST FACT

Widely regarded as South Africa's greatest playwright, **Athol Fugard** (89) celebrated his birthday last month. His plays are highly political. They



are known for their authentic and revealing dialogue. *Blood Knot* (1961), his most famous play, deals with the secret animosity between two half-brothers of different skin tones springing from race, while *Tsotsi*, which was adapted in 2005 into an Oscar-winner by the same name, is his best read novel.

'Many of us drift into friendships, but Ram takes his very seriously'



David Gilmour

excerpt

My first impression of Ram Guha was that he was like an intellectual of about sixty or seventy years ago. With his rough tweed jacket and baggy trousers, his tousled hair, his round-lensed spectacles and his rather shambling gait, he looked like a figure of the 1930s; underneath his jacket he wore a patterned jersey that might have been knitted for George Orwell. Furthermore, he talked in the way that bhadralok scholars used to talk, rapidly and excitedly on a very wide range of subjects.

Yet, I soon realised, he was not really garrulous — an adjective much used by British rulers to denigrate Bengali intellectuals — he was simply more interested and better informed than almost anyone else. About twenty years ago we went to Trent Bridge to watch a cricket match, I in my stripy blazer, he in his tweed jacket and Orwell's jersey. We travelled to the ground with Sunil Khilnani and my son in a motor car, a rather ropey old vehicle that Sunil had recently bought from a friend. It was a day-night match, an one-day international (ODI) between Australia and Pakistan, and as we returned to the car park shortly before midnight, Sunil suggested that, as he had only recently passed his driving test and had never driven in the dark, it might be better if I drove

home. Reluctantly, I agreed, and, while I navigated the outskirts of Nottingham and set off on the long dreary journey down the M1 to London, Ram in the back seat kept up an inquisition that lasted two hours. Had I read the current issue of the *New York Review*? Did I agree with so and so's piece in the latest *Times Literary Supplement*? What did I think of a denunciatory article in the *London Review of Books*? He is sometimes a difficult chap to keep up with.

Over the last twenty years I have known Ram in various guises, but there are earlier incarnations that I could not know. I never knew Ram the anthropologist, Ram the trainee sociologist or Ram the nearly-Marxist, the Calcutta student who gave away his cricket books in order to find room on his shelves for a Marxist library that included the ninety volumes of Lenin's collected works. Nor, more regrettably, have I seen much of Ram the ecologist, although we have similar views on the environment — we have been on expeditions into the Nilgiris, and we have enjoyed good country walks in Britain, in the hills of lowland Scotland and southern England.

The first Rams I was acquainted with were Ram the fledgling biographer, then struggling through several drafts of his biography of Verrier Elwin, and Ram the historian of Indian cricket, a subject he found easier

to write about and which resulted in what I consider his most enjoyable book, *A Corner of a Foreign Field*. Yet, whatever difficulties he had with Elwin — with an Indian editor (helpful though he happened to be), with Western publishers (unhelpful though they were) and with his own problems in making the transition from anthropology to biography — *Savaging the Civilized* is a wonderful book. Not the least of the book's charm is the way that it is amiably sprinkled with cricketing metaphors, with how Elwin might be 'stumped' or forced 'onto the back foot', and how some Indian minister would go 'out to bat' on his behalf.

The next Rams I knew were the Rams that everyone knows, Ram the biographer of Gandhi and Ram the chronicler of modern India. These are great books, which I read in draft form, but I do not think there is much point in my talking about them to an

audience, which knows so much more about these subjects than I do. Instead, I would like to say something about Ram the essayist and political journalist because his articles reveal more about his mind and his character than anything else he writes.

An English journalist once said of my father, Ian Gilmour, a left-wing Tory who was a minister in Ted Heath's government and briefly (until he criticised her) in Margaret Thatcher's, that he was a man of 'liberal views, illiberally held'. Much the same could be said of Ram, who liked — and was liked by — my father, and who once described himself as a moderate who sometimes expressed his views in 'an extreme fashion'. I think that one of the best decisions he ever made was to refuse a professorship in Delhi, which would have made him part of the 'academy'. I am someone who rejected academic life because I wanted to write about different subjects and different countries, but Ram had more serious reasons. He wanted to be independent, not to be part of any 'school', not to have to defer to colleagues or to the prevailing fads of a particular department. He is not an intellectual of the seminar or the café table but a scholar of the archives and his own desk. He rejected the academic fervour of Delhi for what, in intellectual terms, is the backwater of Bangalore.

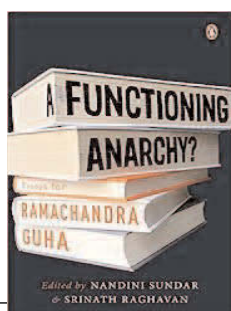
Ram's independence has allowed him to attack, at some personal risk, targets in all areas of the particular spectrum. He will assail with equal vehemence both the enthusiasts of Hindutva and the communists of West Bengal. Yet he will also criticise those parties and their representatives that might be closer to him in ideological terms but have failed to perform

their duties, whether because they are corrupt, stupid or merely incompetent. If I were Rahul Gandhi and I had read Ram's articles, I would long ago have disappeared from public life.

I will end on that most personal note, that of friendship. Ram is someone who takes friends seriously. Many of our generation seem to regard friendship as a rather fluid phenomenon, something that prospers with the help of proximity and occasion and which tends to fade when faced by distance or unavailability. Ram will have none of this. Friendship is friendship, whatever distant continents the friends might live in.

Many of us drift into friendships, after rather liking someone at a dinner or a cocktail party; it is often a casual, take-it-or-leave-it affair, something that doesn't really matter whether it works out or not. Ram is different, in this respect as in so many others. If he wants someone as a friend, he will travel hundreds of miles to ensure that the friendship is kept flourishing. I will never forget how twenty years ago he came to do some research in Edinburgh, where I then lived, and, following an introduction from a mutual friend, turned up at my doorstep in tweed jacket, baggy trousers and Orwell's jersey. He was at his wildest and most irrepressible, perhaps even 'garrulous'. Afterwards, he summed up the encounter in a sentence that may not have been his most stylish but which perfectly described the episode, 'I felt that we hit it off first ball.'

Excerpted with permission from A Functioning Anarchy? Essays for Ramachandra Guha, chapter titled The Many Rams of Ramachandra Guha



**A FUNCTIONING
ANARCHY? ESSAYS FOR
RAMACHANDRA GUHA**
Edited by SRINATH
RAGHAVAN and
NANDINI SUNDAR
Penguin Random
House, ₹699, pp. 370

RESURRECTING, IN MIND'S EYE, A LIVING RED FORT



Indranil Banerjee

review

The Red Fort which broods over the older parts of India's capital, New Delhi, is today considered a symbol of the country's magnificent past. It is from the ramparts here that successive Prime Ministers address the nation every Independence Day. Each year thousands of curious Indians come to admire its red sandstone walls towering over the old city and the remains of the Mughal courts inside. This monument is viewed as an enduring achievement of India's once powerful rulers, whose fame had spread to all corners of the earth.

Yet, not all of the Fort's history is exemplary or admirable. Much of it is sordid. A lot fascinating. And most of it, tragic. Author and amateur historian, Debasish Das, has painstakingly researched and resurrected the fort's many-faceted histories and produced a book rich in anecdotes, facts, trivia and stories.

"The Red Fort, where resided the Mughal rulers till the very end is now an empty shell," Das observes. "Its Hayat Baksh garden, where emperors strolled in the perfumed air and where moonlight functions were held, is all but a soulless grassed land." "Today, as we join hundreds of others pouring into the skeletal remains of the monument to

gawk at its beauty, all we can find are shards of fragile memories of an age long forgotten — an age of grandeur and opulence that we can only witness in our mind's eye," the author writes.

The book, therefore, seeks to resurrect the past, tell us how the Red Fort came to be and how the fortunes of successive Mughals, their courtiers, numerous wives, children and supplicants were inextricably tied to it. One focus is on the extravagance, opulence and sheer wastefulness of Mughal lifestyles.

We are told that Inayat Khan in the *Shah-Jahan-Nama* wrote of how the emperor conceived of the idea of the Red Fort on the banks of the Yamuna much further upstream from Agra, the original Mughal capital. Shah Jahan wanted "a pleasant site, distinguished by its genial climate, where he might found a splendid fort and delightful edifices, agreeable to the promptings of his generous heart, through which streams of water should be made to flow, and the terraces of which should overlook the river".

And so the fort was built: "From 1648, the Qila-Mubarak, Qila-i-Surkh, Qila-i-Shahjahanabad, or Qila-i-Mualla, as it has been variously known over the ages, saw not only the golden age of the Mughal Empire flourish under its founder but also the very decline and decimation of the same great Empire."

The book follows the vicissitudes of the Mughal lineage and adds numerous little sections on the habits, customs, and delights of the Mughals. Apart from the architectural influences that defined the monument and descriptions of its principal components like the Diwan-e-Aam, Diwan-e-Khaas, its gates and gardens, the book makes sudden forays into matters such as the eating habits of the Mughals, their intoxicants, costumes, jewellery, pastimes and pleasures.

The book at times seems eclectic and unstructured. Here, one is tempted to heed the warning of professional historians against the amateur: Dilettantes, historians aver, with little understanding of nuances and limited academic discipline can do more harm than good. So, it is with a little trepidation that one

must approach a work such as this one, put together not by a historian but by a telecom professional.

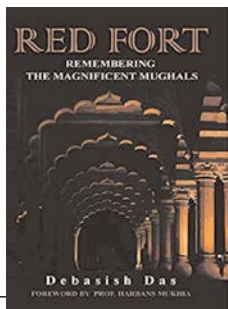
However, where the professional historian would fuss about sources, ponder long on academic debates and stress a point over lengthy pages, amateur historian Das is fresh, energetic and overflowing with stories about the strange days and ways of the Mughals of the Red Fort. His book will serve as a fascinating guide for the lay reader and visitors to the Fort, for if nothing else, its exuberance.

While much of the book and its many short sections tend to be somewhat disjointed and faltering, as we approach the end, things change. The narration of the battle in 1858 between the Indian rebels holding Delhi and the British forces is recounted masterfully. The thrill of battle, the tragic mayhem that followed and the pitiful end of a magnificent empire are well conveyed.

Here the amateur excels. Where a formal historian would have been conservative and measured, this book's author is flamboyant and truly captures the mood at the time of the momentous defeat of the Indian force and the fall of the Fort: "In the Red Fort, British troopers with their hands soiled black with gunpowder, threw open drawers containing Mughal trinkets, tore down illuminated Persian manuscripts, and in the zenana still heady with fragrances of rose ittar, they tore down curtains, turned and flung away rich fabrics and carpets. Even General Wilson could not resist the temptation to sit on the Mughal throne for a while."

The end was the complete and abject defeat of the once magnificent Mughals. The last emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar and his wife were exiled in Rangoon while all their children were systematically murdered by the British so that no Mughal heir remained. The Red Fort itself was saved though most of its buildings were razed to the ground. The book, in the ultimate analysis, is a refreshing compendium and a story well told.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues



**RED FORT: REMEMBERING
THE MAGNIFICENT MUGHALS**
By DEBASISH DAS
Become Shakespeare,
₹499, pp. 406

Free speech, fake news & Indian press' part in the conversation



Sucheta Dasgupta

review

Incarcerations, FIRs, dismissals, spiking of stories, sensationalism, fake "breaking news" and the compulsion to not miss a trick in the rat race against the Joneses. Lack of resources or intent to devote time to newsgathering from the heartlands. Selling the narrative before finding the story.

These form a brief glimpse of the challenges facing the media, the freedom of which has come under a question mark since the 1990s, the author posits, rather than in the past septennial, but which looms larger, if it were possible, during the pandemic. Hence this overdue analysis of the Indian media business' shortcomings. For the sake of authenticity, the

author, a newspaper industry veteran, restricts his scrutiny to the print media.

There are two critical differences between the first amendment of the Indian Constitution and its opposite number: The American law distinguishes between freedom of speech and freedom of press but, in India, both freedoms are encapsulated in Article 19(1)(a). More importantly, while the US first amendment makes these freedoms an absolute condition for all lawmaking, the first amendment of the Indian Constitution restricts the scope of this freedom.

The question then arises, what influenced Prime Minister Nehru to pass this amendment? The answer — the spectre of Hindu-Muslim riots and a court case involving a little-known Bengali pamphlet called *Sangram*. Borrowing from works of published poets heavily and out of context, its ambitious writer issued through it an unsophisticated call to arms against "injustice, oppression or wrong". The

Bihar government found it objectionable under Section 4(1) of the colonial-era Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931, which cited public order and foreign relations as reasonable curbs on press freedom. The printers moved court in 1949; the law was declared ultra vires (*The State of Bihar v. Shailabala Devi*, Patna high court, October 1950). This judgment was later (May 1952) struck down by the Supreme Court but by then it was too late. The first amendment passed in 1951 had already brought back these curbs — in the form of Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution.

It is the courts in our country that have been the great champions of press freedom. The evidence? Romesh Thapar (1950), Brijbhushan (1950) (each from

opposite ends of the Left/Right political spectrum), Sakal Papers (1962), The Indian Express Newspapers (1985). The crowning moment came during Emergency (1975-77) in the *Freedom First* (Minoo Masani) and *Bhoomiputra* cases (each representing a side of the libertarian/authoritarian divide). Unfortunately, both these papers had been non-mainstream publications. With the honourable exception of the *Indian Express* and the *Statesman*, all other national dailies surrendered to the Establishment.

The Shah Commission report of 1978, a valuable resource for researchers, categorises these papers as "friendly", "neutral" and "hostile" in a list prepared at the behest of then information and broadcasting minister V.C. Shukla for use in the framing of the Indira government's advertisement policy. Those considered friendly were rewarded and those deemed hostile punished. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was paid far more than the prevailing rates for advertisements.

The impulse to cater to the lowest common denominator rather than nurture, or even create, at the very least a discerning niche is what dumbs down the media, but more critically, cancels original commentary and important coverage. Typically, in deciding the content, the editor/proprietor adduces this denominator in the form of a presumption of their putatively "middle-class" audience's tastes to hide the reality that their own vested interest is aligned with the guilty party's. The presumptions usually take the form of deterministic interpolation of their own biases into populations without a voice (in some contexts, this is referred to as "colonial consciousness"). All this is couched in the language of glib neoliberalism to get the employee on board.

The author cites the excessive coverage of the 1990 Mandal Commission protests in comparison to the scant attention devoted to L.K. Advani's rathayatra to make his point. In so doing, he calls out a well-known newspaper for achieving a 9:1 ratio in terms of dividing

that space. He also flags the arrival of fellowships in 1992 in order to relegate reportage on social issues to notified corners of the paper. But the most insidious development of that decade, he observes, is the appearance of contracts and individual bargains to replace the Wage Boards.

The other shoe has fallen. The Working Journalists Act of 1955, unlike the contract system, did not allow barons to close down editions and send journalists out of a job, as was seen in the wake of Covid-19, the author writes. The contract system has also promoted editorial frailty even though the law does not give the business owner the right to dictate what news should be printed and what should not be, nor the manner it should be presented. Most of all, it has led to a preference for the young and the passionless, over the seasoned and the committed reporter, analyst and editor.

The reader is left looking for a closer interrogation of the state of the media industry in today's times.

A global Indian's view of the best world has to offer...



Usha Uthup

review

In September 2016, I was invited to Vatican City for the canonisation of Mother Teresa. It was there that I probably had my most memorable time with Sundeeep Bhutoria. We were staying in the same hotel, and to meet someone from my country — that too someone that I knew so well — so far away from home, was wonderfully reassuring. Sundeeep, as usual, had organised a sumptuous dinner with the who's who of Rome and Vatican City in attendance. It was another example of how whatever Sundeeep does, he does it *shaan se*!

I have known Sundeeep for 25 years now, during which time we have developed a seamless professional relationship as well as a deep personal bond. Sundeeep is one of those friends with whom you can pick up from where you left off. Impeccably dressed, incurably passionate about his projects, and possessing that unteachable touch of class, he is a thorough gentleman. He keeps a beautiful home, loves his food and travel, and is always keen to do something or the other that enhances culture for the benefit of his native Kolkata.

Sundeeep's writings encapsulate his best qualities — cultural consciousness, curiosity for and acceptance of diversity and, above all, an unbreakable connection to his roots. These are also the qualities that make him a quintessential "global desi".

Having made Kolkata my *karma bhoomi*, I have seen how the city has grown and evolved over the decades. For me, Kolkata is, and will forever remain, magical — a mesmerising city that knows how to share and get the best out of its inhabitants. The presence of people like Sundeeep has ensured that Kolkata carries on with its rich legacy of cultural cosmopolitanism, as a place that never fails to open its heart for those eager to experience its charms.

At the same time, it devastates me when I see the levels of poverty and deprivation on the streets of Kolkata. I am glad that as a cultural commentator, these sordid aspects of our civilisation do not escape the notice of Sundeeep, who has never shied away from addressing issues of social relevance in his work.

During my travels around the world, I have seen the architecture of Kolkata reflected in several corners of London; I have seen Italians live life with the same verve and enthusiasm as so many Calcuttans do; I have seen people of Indian origin in Kenya and South Africa celebrate our cultural norms with as much dedication as the people back home. My journeys across the globe have reiterated my faith and my love for Indianness, and it gives me great pleasure to encounter that same faith and love in this beautifully crafted book by Sundeeep.

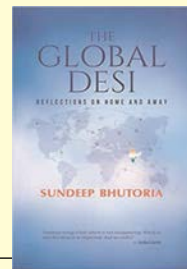
The past year has been extremely tough on all of us. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that every industry is vulnerable, not least mine, of entertainment. It is my sincere hope that, alongside the stellar endeavours he is engaged in, Sundeeep also spearheads the integration of technology and culture in the times to come, so that more virtual events can be organised, unaffected by the problems posed by Covid-19.

The sky is the limit for Sundeeep, and given his vision, adaptability, and perseverance, I am certain that he has a whole lot more left to achieve.

The Global Desi: Reflections on Home and Away is not just a compelling account of what Sundeeep stands for; it is also a celebration of the values that make our culture one of the oldest and most glorious known to humankind.

I am sure you will thoroughly enjoy this book, just as I have, and dwell on the multifarious insights that underline the very best that the world has to offer through a uniquely Indian lens.

Usha Uthup is a well-known Indi-pop, filmi, jazz and playback singer



**THE GLOBAL DESI:
REFLECTIONS ON HOME
AND AWAY**
By SUNDEEEP
BHUTORIA
Macmillan, ₹599,
pp. 361

SHORT TAKES

Smith may skip T20 World Cup

Melbourne: Recuperating from an elbow injury, star Australia batsman Steve Smith says Test cricket remains his top priority and he is ready to skip the T20 World Cup to be in the best shape for the Ashes series against England. The 32-year-old had withdrawn from the ongoing white-ball tour of the West Indies due to the elbow injury. "There's still a bit of time between now and (the World Cup), and I'm tracking okay at the moment — it's slow, but I'm going okay," Smith told *crick-et.com.au* on Friday. The T20 World Cup was shifted from India due to the Covid-19 pandemic and will be held in the United Arab Emirates and Oman from October 17 to November 14, while the Ashes is schedule to begin on December 8 in Brisbane. — *PTI*

Spinners keep India in the hunt

Worcester: India spinners took wickets at regular intervals to nullify a promising start by England as the tourists bundled out the hosts for 219 in the rain-curtailed third and final Women's ODI on Saturday. Looking for a consolation win, India invited England to bat under overcast conditions after the contest became a 47-overs per side affair but as has been the case in the series, the hosts largely remained untroubled. They were placed comfortably at 110 for two but their strategy to attack Indian spinners resulted in wickets falling in clutches with a middle-order collapse. Indian enjoyed early success when Shikha Pandey trapped opener Tammy Beaumont. **Brief scores:** England Women 219 in 47 overs (Nat Sciver 49, Heather Knight 46; Deepti Sharma 3/43) vs India.

2 Windies women collapse on field

Antigua: Two West Indies women cricketers — Chinelle Henry and Chedean Nation — collapsed briefly on the field in two separate incidents during the second T20 International against Pakistan here and taken to hospital where they were "stable", according to reports. Both the incidents happened during Pakistan's run chase, which also saw rain interruptions on Friday. "(Seam bowler) Chinelle Henry and (batter) Chedean Nation were taken to hospital for medical attention. Both Henry and Nation are conscious and stable at hospital and are being assessed," CWI said in a statement. West Indies brought on two substitutes and the game continued, with the home side eventually declared winners by seven runs on Duckworth-Lewis-Stern after another interruption. — *PTI*

Ollie cleared, will play India series

London: England pacer Ollie Robinson was on Saturday cleared to play cricket again immediately after being deemed to have served his suspension following an investigation into his discriminatory tweets, thus making him eligible for selection for the five-Test series against India. "As regards the three matches which are the subject of immediate suspension, the Panel has taken into account the suspension imposed by the England Team from the second Test against New Zealand, together with two of the Vitality Blast T20 matches from which Robinson voluntarily withdrew himself from selection for Sussex CCC due to the impact of these proceedings. Robinson is therefore free to play cricket immediately," the ECB said in a statement. — *AFP*

Verstappen takes pole in Austria

Spilberg: Max Verstappen clinched his third straight pole position with a commanding drive for Red Bull at the Austrian Grand Prix on Saturday, while title rival Lewis Hamilton could only manage fourth place for flagging Mercedes. Hamilton was under pressure in his final lap and went too wide on the last two turns. Verstappen leads Hamilton 5-2 in poles this season. — *AP*

ITALIAN MARBLE

Rock-solid Azzurri prove too hard to crack for World No.1 Belgium

Italy	2
(Nicolo Barella 31, Lorenzo Insigne 44)	
Belgium	1
(Romelu Lukaku 45+2-p)	

Munich, July 3: A stunning strike by Lorenzo Insigne fired Italy into the semi-finals of Euro 2020 on Friday as a 2-1 win over Belgium sent them through to a last-four meeting with Spain.

Nicolo Barella struck the opening goal of the quarter-final in Munich before Insigne curled in Italy's second in an action-packed first half.

Belgium grabbed a lifeline just before the break when Romelu Lukaku converted a penalty, but Roberto Martinez's side ultimately fell short against a disciplined Italian defence.

"We scored two and we could have scored more," said Italy coach Roberto Mancini.

"I think the victory is fully deserved. Spain are next but the more you go forward the most difficult it becomes."

While Italy face Spain at Wembley on Tuesday, defeat means more European Championship quarter-final heartbreak for Belgium, who exited at the same stage in 2016 after defeat by Wales.

Belgium sorely missed their captain Eden Hazard, ruled out by a hamstring injury, even as Kevin De Bruyne won his race to shake off an ankle injury.

The Manchester City playmaker showed why the medical staff worked around the clock to get him fit by regularly causing Italy problems, but Romelu Lukaku twice was denied by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

"It was a miracle that I played, because there was definitely damage to my ankle," said De Bruyne.

"We tried everything to win that match."

"Getting eliminated is always a disappointment. Too bad I couldn't do more."



Italian players celebrate after defeating Belgium 2-1 in the Euro quarterfinal on Friday.

— Twitter

SPINAZZOLA INJURED

Italy's win came at a cost, with left-back Leonardo Spinazzola out of the tournament with a leg injury.

"Leonardo had a great European championship. Now whoever replaces him will do the same," said Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci.

Italy had the ball in the net on 13 minutes when Bonucci chested it past Thibaut Courtois from a free-kick, but the goal was disallowed by VAR for an offside against captain Giorgio Chiellini.

Marco Verratti and Youri Tielemans both earned yellow cards for midfield tussles involving the pair. Verratti was booked for holding Tielemans in a tackle, while the Belgian picked up a yellow card moments later. — *AFP*

Danish the menace as minnows stun Czechs

Baku, July 3: Denmark's fairytale run at Euro 2020 will continue into the semi-finals after they beat the Czech Republic 2-1 in Baku on Saturday to move into a last-four meeting with England or Ukraine at Wembley.

First-half goals from Thomas Delaney and Kasper Dolberg were enough to see Kasper Hjulmand's men through despite a second-half rally from the Czechs inspired by Patrik Schick's fifth goal of the tournament.

The Danes have now scored 10 goals in winning

Denmark	2
(Thomas Delaney 5, Kasper Dolberg 42)	
Czech	1
(Patrik Schick 49)	

their last three matches after starting the tournament with two defeats, the first amid shocking circumstances when Christian Eriksen suffered a cardiac arrest on the pitch.

Three weeks on, they are dreaming of a repeat of 1992 when Denmark won

the European Championship despite not even qualifying.

Celebrations started within five minutes as Delaney was left completely unmarked to head home Jens Stryger Larsen's corner. Tomas Vaclik then had to deny Mikkel Damsgaard to prevent the Danes doubling their lead in a blistering start.

Denmark were always a threat on the break, though, and Vaclik had to stand up to parry another powerful drive by Damsgaard. — *AFP*

SHAW SHOULD TAKE PLACE OF PUJARA: HOGG

Sydney, July 3: Former Australia spinner Brad Hogg feels young Prithvi Shaw is more suited for the number three spot in Test cricket and is the top candidate to step in place of Cheteshwar Pujara if India think of replacing the veteran India batsman in the series against England. "If anyone was going to replace Pujara it would be Prithvi Shaw. Feel he is more suited there than opening. Has a lot of talent and long future. He is not in the tour group but a wild card choice," Hogg tweeted.

Shaw is part of the national squad for the limited-overs series against Sri Lanka. — *PTI*

COPA | AMERICA

10-man Brazil ward off Chile

Rio De Janeiro, July 3: Lucas Paqueta's second-half strike was enough for defending champions Brazil to hold off determined Chile 1-0 on Friday and book a Copa America semi-final showdown with Peru.

Second-half substitute Paqueta made an instant impact, finding a gap in Chile's defense and firing into the back of the net in the 47th minute to put Brazil up 1-0.

Less than two minutes later, however, Brazil were reduced to 10 men when Gabriel Jesus's reckless high kick caught Eugenio Mena in the face and drew a straight red card.

Chile couldn't capitalise on the man advantage, no matter they how hard they tried.

Eduardo Vargas thought he'd grabbed the equalizer in the 62nd with a close-range shot, but VAR confirmed the offside call was correct.

In the 69th, Mena's cross from the left found Ben Brereton, whose looping header had Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson wrong-footed but caromed off the crossbar.

RESULTS

Brazil (Lucas Paqueta 46)	1
Chile	0
Peru (Gianluca Lapadula 21, 40, Yoshimar Yotun 80)	3
Paraguay (Gustavo Gómez 11, Júnior Alonso 54, Gabriel Avalos 90)	3
(Peru won 4-3 in shoot-out)	

PERU MOVE INTO SEMIS

Peru beat Paraguay 4-3 on penalties to punch their ticket to the Copa America semi-finals after the teams played to a 3-3 draw after an action-packed 90 minutes. Miguel Trauco scored the decisive penalty for Peru in a shoot-out that echoed the drama match with two shots over the crossbar and three saves.

Peruvian keeper Pedro Gallese set the stage for Trauco with his diving save of Alberto Espinola's attempt.

Paraguay captain Gustavo Gomez had opened the scoring in the 11th minute, but Gianluca Lapadula scored in the 21st and 40th to give Peru the lead. — *AFP*



Brazil's Luis Paqueta (left) and Neymar celebrate after defeating Chile in the Copa America quarterfinal in Rio De Janeiro on Saturday.

— Twitter

Olympic briefs

24 para-athletes for Tokyo

The Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) on Saturday announced a 24-member athletics team, headlined by star javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia and high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu, for the Tokyo Paralympics, beginning August 24. Besides Jhajharia and Thangavelu, who won gold in the F46 javelin and T-42 high jump events respectively in the 2016 Rio Paralympics, other top para-athletes include world record holders Sandeep Chowdhury and Sumeet.

Gopi eyes rich haul of medals

Chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand reckoned the upcoming Olympics would be one "like never before" because of the coronavirus-related restrictions but he is expecting a rich haul of medals from the Indian athletes to herald a sporting turnaround for the country. "This is going to be challenging but I do believe that Indian sport is at crossroads of making a big achievement or a big jump. I hope that we get enough medals, so they give a boost in the arm to us," he said.

SPECIAL FLIGHT | TO TOKYO

Team India to leave on July 14

NEHA SURANA
CHENNAI, JULY 3

Indian Olympic Association secretary Rajeev Mehta on Saturday said the first batch of the country's Olympic contingent will leave for Tokyo in an Air India chartered flight on July 14.

Mehta confirmed that they will undergo a four-day quarantine upon arrival in Japan. "As many as 115 athletes and some officials will leave on July 14. After the quarantine, we can move around in Tokyo," said Mehta during an online felicitation ceremony organised by Chennai-based Sunshine Senior Secondary School and Youthlink Foundation. Mehta expects a minimum of 10 medals from Indian athletes in Tokyo.

SHARATH LOOKS TO PULL OFF SURPRISE

Indian table tennis star Achanta Sharath Kamal said the Tokyo Olympics will spread the much-needed positivity across the world when the sporting spectacle begins on July 23

amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It is quite a difficult situation for all of us. There is uncertainty and a lot of negativity. I think sport is something which can bring out positivity and it is one of the most important reasons why the Olympics should happen. It's really good that they haven't cancelled the Olympics," said Sharath.

Along with the TT veteran, a host of Olympic-bound athletes such as G. Sathiyam, C.A. Bhavani Devi, Dutee Chand, Varun Thakkar, K.C. Ganapathy and Sajjan Prakash were also honoured.

Sharath, who will be competing in his fourth Games, has set his sights on surprising a few top-ranked players in Tokyo.

"There are a lot of good players out there to beat. But one team whom the world wants to defeat is China. Table tennis is completely dominated by them. Hopefully, this time I will be able to surprise a few top-seeded players. And, for that we have been training quite hard," he said.

Ranji back after a year break

New Delhi, July 3: The BCCI will conduct all its domestic tournaments across age-groups with the coveted Ranji Trophy, starting on November 16, being the marquee event among the 2127 matches scheduled for 2021-22 season.

Last season, the BCCI couldn't conduct any age-group tournament and was forced to cancel the Ranji Trophy due to Covid-19 pandemic.

However, a full-fledged domestic season will take place this year with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 to begin from October 20 and the National One-Day Championship for Vijay Hazare Trophy being scheduled from February 23 next year.

"The season will com-

DOMESTIC CALENDAR	
Syed Mushtaq Ali T20	October 20 to November 12
Ranji Trophy 2021	November 16 to February 19
Vijay Hazare 2021	February 23 to March 26
Women's one-day	September 21 to October 22
Women's Challenger	October 27 to October 31
Women's T20	March 19 to April 11

mence on September 21, 2021, with the Senior Women's One Day League and will be followed by the Senior Women's One Day Challenger Trophy, which will take place from October 27, 2021," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a media release.

The final of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy will be played on November 12 this year.

The coveted Ranji

Trophy will be played in a three-month window from November 16, 2021 to February 19, 2022.

The Vijay Hazare Trophy final will take place on March 26, 2022.

"The BCCI is confident of hosting the domestic season with health and safety of players and all people involved being paramount," the statement further read.

The Ranji Trophy will

be played with two Elite groups comprising nine teams each and the C group and Plate will have 10 teams each.

It is expected that the top five teams as per points from the Elite groups will make it to the quarterfinals while two from group C and topper of Plate group completing the last eight line-up.

In case of Vijay Hazare Trophy, the groupings will remain same while Mushtaq Ali T20 will have five groups with two groups of seven teams and three groups of eight teams each respectively.

The BCCI will conduct Vinoo Mankad Trophy and U-19 Challengers Trophy in between September to November. — *PTI*

Federer glides into last 16

London, July 3: Roger Federer moved into the fourth round of a Grand Slam tournament for the 69th time on Saturday, overcoming a raucous home crowd and the last British man in the draw Cameron Norrie in an entertaining 6-4, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4 win at Wimbledon.

Federer kept his dream alive of a record-extending ninth singles title.

Federer said this Wimbledon held special significance for him.

"I hope there is a little bit more left in me as this one is special for it is the last slam before I hit the big 40," said Federer, the third oldest man to reach the Last 16 in the Open era.

Zverev ended big-serving Taylor Fritz's impressive campaign — 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) — given he exited the French Open in a wheelchair due to a knee injury. The match of the day on the men's side was

Coco Gauff of the US celebrates after defeating Kaja Juvan of Slovenia in the third round on Saturday. — *AP*

a dumpy squib as fiery Aussie entertainer Nick Kyrgios retired with an abdominal injury tied at one set all with stylish Canadian 16th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The maverick that is Kyrgios did not have the

best of starts as he had left his shoes in the locker room.

Coco Gauff and Angelique Kerber will meet in the last 16 after the American teenager breezed past Slovenian Kaja Juvan while the

RESULTS

Men's singles: Third round: Roger Federer (SUI x6) bt Cameron Norrie (GBR) 6-4, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4; Alexander Zverev (GER x4) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x31) 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4); Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x16) bt Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 2-6, 6-1 (retired); Lorenzo Sonego (ITA x23) bt James Duckworth (AUS) 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

Women's singles: Third round: Coco Gauff (USA x20) bt Kaja Juvan (SLO) 6-3, 6-3; Angelique Kerber (GER x25) bt Aliaksandra Sasnovich (BLR) 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; Barbora Krejickova (CZE x14) bt Anastasija Sevastova (LAT) 7-6 (7/1), 3-6, 7-5.

German had a tough

three-setter against

Aliaksandra Sasnovich of

Belarus.

Gauff is not the only

teenager making her

mark at Wimbledon this

year. Britain's Canada-

born 18-year-old Emma

Raducanu, who moved with her Romanian father and Chinese mother to England aged two, produced a brilliant display to beat the experienced Sorana Cirstea of Romania 6-3, 7-5.

SANIA-BETHANIE BOW OUT

Indian star Sania Mirza and her American partner Bethanie Mattek-Sands on Saturday bowed out of the women's doubles event at the Wimbledon Championships following a straight-set defeat.

Mirza, who has returned to grass court Grand Slam after three years, and Mattek-Sands lost 4-6 3-6 to the Russian pair of Elena Vesnina and Veronika Kudremetova in one hour and 28 minutes.

Mirza is still alive in the tournament as she will play in the mixed doubles second round with compatriot Rohan Bopanna.

— *Agencies*