

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI MONDAY 12 JULY 2021



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Baghel to play key role in Cong's UP poll preparation; meets Priyanka in Delhi



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Ananya takes up the cause of discussing and promoting awareness about cyberbullying



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WINDOWS



Belgian actress Cecile De France during a photocall for *De Son Vivant (Peaceful)* at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes on Sunday.

— AFP

41,506 new Covid cases, 895 deaths in India in 24 hrs

New Delhi: India on Sunday witnessed a slight decrease in the number of Covid-19 infections and deaths in the last 24 hours. With 41,506 people testing positive in a day, the total tally of the viral infections has gone up to 3,08,37,222. The death toll has now climbed to 4,08,040 with 895 fresh fatalities. While many countries like the UK, Russia and Australia are dealing with the resurgence in daily infections, cases in India seem to be under control with daily infections being less than 50,000 for the past two weeks.

Full report on Page 3

MP: 6 members of family electrocuted

Bhopal: In a tragic incident, six members of a family in a village in Madhya Pradesh were on Sunday electrocuted to death during construction of a septic tank in their house. The incident took place in the village of Mahua Jhala village in Chhatrapur district

Full report on Page 4

Shatrughan Sinha likely to join TMC

Patna/Kolkata: Senior Congress leader Shatrughan Sinha is likely to crossover to Mamata Banerjee's TMC soon, sources close to him said on Sunday. When asked about his chance of joining the TMC, Sinha refused to make a direct comment, but said, "Politics is an art of possibility."

Full report on Page 4

COUNTERPOINT



Now only yogis and sadhvis will be eligible to contest polls!

WEATHER

Max: 32°C
Min: 27°C
RH: 72%
Rain: 60%

Forecast: Scattered rains

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Ashada Shuddha Dwitiya till 8.17 am
Star: Ashlesha till 3.12 am
Varjyam: 3.36 pm to 5.15 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.47 pm to 1.39 pm; 3.23 pm to 4.14 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
SUNSET TODAY 7.21 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.31 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 7.21 AM
MOONSET TODAY 9.21 PM

Indian embassy in Kabul still functional IAF on standby for sudden evacuation

As Taliban gain ground, India pulls out staff from Kandahar consulate

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

With the Taliban trying to gain control over parts of Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American troops from the war-torn country, India has quietly evacuated over 50 of its diplomatic staff and security personnel from its consulate in Kandahar. The consulate is, however, functional with the help of local staff.

A special aircraft of the Indian Air Force was sent to bring back the Indian diplomats, other staff members, including ITBP security personnel, without entering into Pakistan air space. The Indian embassy in Kabul as of

Air defences installed at Kabul airport

Kabul, July 11: Afghanistan's Kabul airport has been fitted with an air defence system to counter incoming rockets, officials said on Sunday, as the Taliban pressed on with a blistering offensive across the country.

Washington and its allies are due to end their military mission in

Afghanistan at the end of next month, even as the insurgents say they now control 85 per cent of the country—a claim impossible to independently verify and disputed by the government.

The Islamic fundamentalist group's rapid gains in recent weeks have raised fears about the

security of the capital and its airport, with Nato keen to secure a vital exit route to the outside world for foreign diplomats and aid workers.

"The system has proven useful in the world in repelling rocket and missile attacks," the interior ministry said.

— AFP

More on Page 6

been brought back for the time being. I want to emphasise that this is a purely temporary measure until the situation stabilizes. The Consulate continues to operate through our local staff members," spokesperson for the ministry of external affairs Arindam Bagchi said on Sunday.

He added arrangements are being made to ensure continued delivery of visa and consular services through the Indian embassy in Kabul.

"As an important partner of Afghanistan, India remains committed to a peaceful, sovereign and democratic Afghanistan," Mr Bagchi said.

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Kejri promises regular, free power in U'khand

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

With an eye on the upcoming Uttarakhand polls, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that if elected to power in Uttarakhand, the Aam Aadmi Party will ensure free electricity up to 300 units per month to every family, waive old bills and give free electricity to farmers.

Making the announcements in the hill state, where the Assembly elections are due next year, Mr Kejriwal said his government has done it in Delhi and can also do it in Uttarakhand as the state generates power.

"These things are guaranteed if we come to power in the state. If we can do it in Delhi, then why can't we do it in Uttarakhand, which not only produces electricity but also gives it to other states," Mr Kejriwal said at a press conference.

"There will be no power cuts. Free electricity



doesn't mean long outages. When we took over in Delhi 7-8 hours long power outages were common. We set that right," said the AAP leader, who recently promised free electricity to every household in Punjab that consumes up to 300 units of power if his party forms government in the state next year.

Mr Kejriwal had last year announced a 100 per cent subsidy for those households which consume up to 200 units of electricity in Delhi. Consumers of 201-400 units received approximately 50 per cent subsidy.

In Uttarakhand, he said, every household will be provided 300 units of free electricity if the AAP forms the government.

The freebies announced on Sunday are being seen as his attempt to woo voters and steal the ruling BJP's thunder by going one step ahead of it.

More on Page 4

Yogi: Rising population 'hurdle in development'

Unveils policy to stabilise it, says more efforts needed for control

Lucknow, July 11: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday unveiled a policy aimed at stabilising the population in the state and reducing maternal and infant deaths in a time-bound manner as he termed rising population a "hurdle in development".

The Uttar Pradesh Population Policy 2021-2030, unveiled on the occasion of World Population Day, also aims at bringing down the gross fertility rate among women to 2.1 by 2026 and to 1.9 by 2030.

A few days ago, a draft bill on population control was put up on the website of the Uttar Pradesh law commission inviting suggestions from the public till July 19. It says people having more than two children in Uttar Pradesh will be debarred from contesting local bodies polls,



UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath during the launch of a new population policy on World Population Day in Lucknow on Sunday.

— PTI

applying for government jobs or receiving any kind of subsidy.

It also seeks to prohibit promotions in government jobs for such people, while offering incentives to those limiting their children to two.

Unveiling the population policy on Sunday, Mr Adityanath said, "Across the world, concerns have been raised from time to time about increasing

population being a hurdle in development. Discussions on it have been going on for the four decades."

"The countries and states which have made efforts in this direction have seen positive results. However, more efforts are needed," he said, adding the Uttar Pradesh government was implementing this policy keeping in mind all

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G-20 FMs back plan to stop use of tax havens

Washington, July 11: Top finance officials representing most of the world's economy have backed a sweeping revision of international taxation that includes a 15 per cent global minimum corporate levy to deter big companies from resorting to low-rate tax havens.

Finance ministers from the G-20 countries endorsed the plan in Venice on Saturday.

US treasury secretary Janet Yellen said the proposal would end a self-defeating international tax competition in which countries have for years lowered their rates to attract companies.

— AP

Novak wins Wimbledon to tie Federer, Nadal with 20 Slams



Serbia's Novak Djokovic kisses the winner's trophy after beating Italy's Matteo Berrettini during their men's singles final of the Wimbledon tournament in southwest London on Sunday. Djokovic tied Roger Federer and Rafael

Nadal by claiming his 20th Grand Slam title, coming back to beat Berrettini 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in the final. The world No. 1 earned a third consecutive championship at the All England Club and sixth overall.

Report on Page 8

— AP

Branson pips Bezos, reaches space in his ship

Truth or Consequences (US), July 11: Swashbuckling entrepreneur Richard Branson hurtled into space aboard his own winged rocket ship on Sunday in his boldest adventure yet, beating out fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos.

The nearly 71-year-old Branson and five crewmates from his Virgin Galactic space tourism company reached an altitude of about 88 km over



71-YR-OLD swashbuckling entrepreneur Richard Branson became the first person to blast off in his own spaceship, beating fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos by 9 days

the New Mexico desert enough to experience three to four minutes of weightlessness and see the curvature of the Earth and then safely glided back home to a runway landing.

Seventeen years of hard work to get us this far, a

jubilant Branson said as he congratulated his team on the trip back.

Mr Branson became the first person to blast off in his own spaceship, beating Mr Bezos by nine days.

He also became only the second septuagenarian to

depart for space. (John Glenn flew on the shuttle at age 77 in 1998.)

With about 500 people watching, including Mr Branson's wife, children and grandchildren, a twin-fuselage aircraft with his space plane attached underneath took off in the first stage of the flight.

Virgin Galactic conducted three previous test flights into space with crews of just two or three.

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Raids by NIA in J&K, 6 held over ISIS 'conspiracy'

YUSUF JAMEEL
SRINAGAR, JULY 11

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday conducted raids at multiple locations across the Kashmir Valley and arrested six persons, including the head of an Islamic seminary, in connection with a "jihad terrorism" case.

The agency said that the case was registered by it on June 29 this year under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 in connection with the "conspiracy of the ISIS (Islamic State) to radicalise and recruit impressionable youth in the country to wage violent jihad against the Indian state".

This comes a day after the J&K government sacked its 11 employees, including two sons of Hizbul Mujahideen chief Muhammad Yusuf Shah alias Syed Salahuddin, on charges of being involved in anti-India activities.

The Hizb chief's sons were fired based on the investigations done by the NIA in an alleged ter-

Twitter appoints new India-based grievance officer

Publishes 1st compliance report

New Delhi, July 11: Twitter received 94 grievances and "actioned" 133 URLs between May 26 and June 25, the microblogging platform said in its maiden monthly compliance report as mandated by the IT rules.

The US-based company, which has been in the eye of a storm over its failure to comply with the new IT rules in India, has also named Vinay Prakash as its resident grievance officer for India to comply with the said rules.

Twitter, in the report titled "India Transparency Report: User Grievances and Proactive Monitoring July 2021", said it had received 94 grievances via its grievance officer-India channel between May 26, 2021, and June 25, 2021, that included content on Twitter.

This includes complaints received from individual users with accompanying court orders.

The majority of complaints received in this channel during the reporting period fell into categories, including defamation (20), abuse/harassment (6), sensitive adult content (4), impersonation and privacy infringement (3 each), IP-related infringement (1), and misinformation/syn-



thetic and manipulated media (1).

The total number of URLs actioned in these categories stood at defamation (87), abuse/harassment (38), sensitive adult content (nil), impersonation (1), privacy infringement (6), IP-related infringement (nil), and misinformation/synthetic and manipulated media (1), as per the report.

"In addition to the above data, we processed 56 grievances which were appealing Twitter account suspensions. These were all resolved and the appropriate responses were sent," Twitter said.

It added that the platform "overturned seven of the account suspensions based on the specifics of the situation, but the other accounts remain suspended".

In a separate category — "Proactive Monitoring

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3 more cases of Zika virus in Kerala, total count at 18

Thiruvananthapuram, July 11: Three more, including a toddler, were found to be infected by Zika virus in Kerala on Sunday, taking the total count to 18. Health minister Veena George said the state government has arranged testing facilities at Thiruvananthapuram, Thirissur and Kozhikode medical colleges and also at the National Institute of Virology unit at

Alappuzha. "A 22-month-old toddler was found infected. A 46-year-old man and a 29-year-old health worker have also been found infected. We have 18 confirmed cases," she said in a release.

Ms George also said out of the 27 samples which were sent for testing in two batches, 26 have turned out to be negative.

PTI

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Mitra may step down as West Bengal FinMin due to ill health

Kolkata, July 11: Noted economist and senior TMC leader Amit Mitra is likely to step down as the West Bengal finance minister and even retire from active politics due to ill health, party sources said on Sunday.

Seventy-three-year-old Mitra, who has been the state finance minister since 2011 when the TMC came to power after ending the 34-year-long rule of the Left Front, had refrained from contesting this year's Assembly elections.

"Amit Da will not continue as the state finance minister as he will be completing six months in the post without being elected on November 4. He has already informed the party leadership that he doesn't want to continue in politics and administration due to ill health."

But, due to CM Mamata Banerjee's insistence, Mr Mitra had taken charge as the finance minister of the state after the party returned to power for the third time in May this year," a senior TMC leader said on condition of anonymity.

PTI



SHORT TAKES

3 arrested for Bara Hindu Rao firing incident

New Delhi: Three men have been arrested in connection with a firing incident in the Bara Hindu Rao area, which left two passers-by dead three days ago, police said on Sunday. Accused Rahul alias Charlie (23), Himanshu (21), both residents of Nand Nagri and Mehtab (52), resident of Farsh Khana have been arrested, they said. Police said the men were hired by a local builder to threaten a businessman named Mohd. Naeem and his nephew Munib over a property dispute but instead, two passers-by got killed in the firing. One of the deceased was identified while the other is yet to be identified. The incident took place on Thursday evening in north Delhi's Filmistan Road when a group of persons intercepted Mohd. Naeem and his nephew Munib and started quarrelling with them after stopping their car. However, with the help of passers-by, the two men overpowered the group but they (accused) managed to escape. Later, as per plan, the alleged group returned and fired indiscriminately targeting Naeem and his nephew but unfortunately the fired bullets hit two passers-by leading to their deaths, according to police. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said "Five special teams of north district was constituted to work on the case along with a joint coordination with the teams of northeast district, Special Cell, and Crime Branch to work out the case. The analysis of CCTV footages helped the teams in identifying four of the assailants."

Woman held for strangulating her 11-month-old son

New Delhi: A 26-year-old woman was arrested for strangulating her 11-month-old infant to death following a quarrel with her husband in south Delhi's Fatehpur Beri area, police said on Sunday. Accused Jyoti who hails from Ritoo village, Gurgaon, got married in 2011, when she was 16 years old but did not share cordial relations with her husband, they said. She told police that her 11-month-old son was suffering from fever and her husband Satveer Tanwar refused to take him to a doctor, police said. On July 9, the woman used dupatta to strangle her infant following a quarrel between her and Satveer. The child was then taken to Apex Hospital, Chattarpur by his father and other relatives where he was declared brought dead, a senior police officer said. A case of murder was registered and during investigation, both the mother and father of the child alleged against each other for killing the infant but during investigation, CCTV footage from the village, call records, statements of witnesses were taken which revealed that the murder was committed by Jyoti, he said. "Accused Jyoti has been arrested in the case and the duppatta used by her to strangle the infant was also recovered on the instance of accused," the officer said.

'Sanjeevani@Your Doorstep' jabs 300 CRPF jawans

New Delhi: In view of hectic schedule of security personnel of CRPF, first of its kind Covid vaccination drive 'Sanjeevani@Your Doorstep' moved a step forward to provide them the vaccine at their camp only. In a day-long drive at 5th Battalion CRPF Camp Mahavir Nagar in West Delhi, 300 personnel and their family members were inoculated on Tuesday. Senior officials of the CRPF appreciated the Drive led by young Bhartiya Janata Party Youth Wing leader Umang Bajaj who personally spearheaded the drive at the camp. "We are encouraged to get tremendous response to our drive. Our aim is to reach out people who find it a bit difficult to schedule their vaccination to a distant center because of several reasons. At CRPF camp security personnel and their family member came in large number to get vaccinated. Nearly 2,500 people residing in slum areas, residential and market places have been vaccinated under the drive.

DJB moves SC seeking Delhi's share of Yamuna water from Haryana

Haryana withholding 120 million gallons water a day meant for Delhi, says DJB head Chadha

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) vice chairman Raghav Chadha on Sunday said the water utility has moved the Supreme Court, seeking directions to Haryana to release the capital's legitimate share of water. He claimed that Haryana has been withholding 120 million gallons of water a day (MGD) meant for Delhi and that the raw water being discharged into the Yamuna by the neighbouring state is at an "all-time low". "The DJB has just now filed the petition in Hon'ble SC seeking discharge of Delhi's legitimate share of water by Haryana which was decided by SC itself in 1995-96. Tough times in Delhi because Haryana has withheld Delhi's water in an outright contempt of SC's existing order," Chadha tweeted. "Delhi does not have a source of water of its own. It gets water from neighbouring states under legally-binding treaties. Some unprecedented incidents have happened this year... Haryana has withheld

AAP youth wing members reach city BJP chief's house to cut water supply, detained

New Delhi, July 11: AAP youth wing members were detained on Sunday when they went to cut the water connection to the house of Delhi BJP chief Adesh Gupta in protest against the Haryana government allegedly not providing the national capital its share of water. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj had threatened on Saturday that if the BJP-led Haryana government does not release Delhi's "rightful portion" of water in 24 hours, the water supply to Gupta's house will be stopped. He

had alleged that the Haryana government had curtailed Delhi's water supply by around 100 million gallons per day (MGD). The AAP youth wing members reached Gupta's West Patel Nagar residence on Sunday. "They were detained and taken to the Rajender Nagar police station," a senior officer said. AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said Delhi's water should be released soon by Haryana. "No improvement in the water problem even after the Aam Aadmi Party gave 24

hours to the BJP," he said and accused the Haryana government of deliberately stopping the water coming from the state. Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor strongly condemned the AAP for sending a large contingent of "party workers and goons" to attack Gupta's residence. "It is sad that AAP workers damaged the water pipeline serving the entire block where Mr Gupta lives, discomfiting hundreds of resident families," he said.

— PTI

With Haryana withholding 120 MGD of water, the river has completely dried up and the operational capacity at various treatment plants has reduced by 40 to 50 per cent, Chadha said. He said the Chandrawal Water Treatment Plant (WTP) has been operating at 55 MGD capacity against the normal of 90 MGD.

Similarly, the Wazirabad WTP and Okhla WTP have been operating at 80 MGD and 12 MGD capacity against their normal of 135 MGD and 20 MGD, respectively. Delhi is not begging before Haryana or asking any favour from it. The capital demands whatever it has been given under legally-binding treaties, he

said. "We are witnessing all-time low water levels in Yamuna river as Delhi's water share withheld by Haryana. @DelhiJalBoard has decided to move Hon'ble Supreme Court against Haryana Govt seeking due supply of Delhi's legitimate share as already determined by the Hon'ble SC in 1995," Chadha had tweeted earlier in the day. "Raw water discharge through Yamuna by Haryana is at an all-time low. Even 1 ft decline can cause havoc in the city but currently pond level has fallen from 674.5 ft to 667 ft. Delhi's legitimate share is withheld by Haryana government," the DJB vice chairman said, attaching pictures of reduced water levels at the Wazirabad pond. "There is zero cusec release of raw water in Yamuna from Haryana," he said.

On Saturday, Chadha had said the Haryana government was solely responsible for the water crisis in Delhi as it had been supplying 120 MGD less water against the legally prescribed amount.

Kejriwal promises 300 units free power to every family, waiver of old bills in U'khand

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

Eyeing on Uttarakhand elections, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday that if elected to power in Uttarakhand, the Aam Aadmi Party will ensure free electricity up to 300 units per month to every family, waive old bills and give free electricity to farmers. Making the announcements in the hill state where assembly elections are due next year, Kejriwal said his government has done it in Delhi and can do it in Uttarakhand also as the state generates power. "These things are guaranteed if we come to power in the state. If we can do it in Delhi, then why can't we do it in Uttarakhand, which not only produces electricity but also gives it



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal with Uttarakhand AAP in-charge Dinesh Mohaniya (left) and Colonel Ajay Kothiyal at a press conference in Dehradun on Sunday.

— PTI

to other states," Kejriwal said at a press conference. "There will be no power cuts. Free electricity doesn't mean long outages. When we took over in Delhi 7-8 hours long power outages were common. We set that right," A said the AAP leader who recently prom-

ised free electricity to every household in Punjab that consumes up to 300 units of power if his party forms government in the state next year. Kejriwal had last year announced a 100 per cent subsidy for those households which consume up to 200 units of

electricity in Delhi. Consumers of 201-400 units received approximately 50 per cent subsidy. In Uttarakhand, he said, every household will be provided 300 units of free electricity if the AAP forms the government. The freebies announced on Sunday are being seen as his attempt to woo voters and steal the ruling BJP's thunder by going one step ahead of it. The AAP leader remembered how he and his ministers went door-to-door to get transformers and wires replaced. Kejriwal said he will announce the party's chief ministerial candidate during his next visit to the state. He alleged that the BJP and the Congress have led Uttarakhand "to doom" and the people of the state have fallen victim to their design.

Only meetings in schools & colleges allowed from today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

Unlocking Delhi further from next week, the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government on Sunday, announced the seventh phase of unlocking for the Capital city. In this phase, the government has allowed academic gatherings and meetings at schools and colleges from Monday.

However, students will not be able to attend educational institutions physically and only teachers and professors will be allowed to attend schools for holding online lectures and other administrative work.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) issued a notification on Sunday which read that only teachers and professors will be allowed inside educational institutions for online lectures and other administrative work. The notification stated. However, Spas, social, political, cultural, religious, and other such gatherings continue

Part of Sadar Bazar closed for Covid norms violation

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

The Delhi government on Sunday closed till July 13 a part of the Sadar Bazar, from Bara Tooti Chowk to Qutub Road, in view of violation of Covid-19 protocols at the market area.

The Central district magistrate (DM) said in an official order that shopkeepers, street vendors and people were found not following Covid-appropriate behaviour on Saturday.

Taking "immediate and stringent action to curtail the spreading of the virus", the market area will remain closed till 10

pm on July 13, according to the order.

"The market area from Bara Tooti Chowk to Qutub Road, Sadar Bazar, Delhi, is hereby restricted to open with effect from 10:00 pm on 10 July 2021 to 13 July, 2021, 10:00 pm or further orders, whichever is earlier," it said.

The restrictions will not be applicable on shops dealing in essential goods and providing essential services, the order stated. Delhi on Sunday reported 53 Covid-19 cases, the lowest since April 15 last year, and three more deaths as the positivity rate dropped to 0.07 per cent.

Exemption has also been given for Delhi Police and Army personnel to attend skill training classes. They will no longer require permission from the DDMA to attend these programmes.

IIT-D alumnus scales Everest within 7 weeks of Covid recovery

New Delhi, July 11: Neeraj Chaudhary tested positive for Covid-19 on the day he was to start from Kathmandu for the Mount Everest but that did not deter the IIT Delhi alumnus who returned to the base camp within weeks of his recovery and ultimately managed to hoist the institution's flag in addition to the tricolour atop the summit.

While the country was reeling under the aggressive second wave of Covid-19, Mr Chaudhary's family members in Rajasthan were hooked to their

phones waiting for an update about his well-being.

Mr Chaudhary (37) did his MTech in Environmental Sciences and Management at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Delhi during 2009-11 and he is currently working with the Rajasthan government's water resources department.

He took up mountaineering in 2014 and in 2020 got selected as a member of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) Everest



Neeraj Chaudhary

Expedition under the ministry of youth affairs and sports. However, the expedition was postponed due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

This year, amid the uncertainty posed by the pandemic, he reached Kathmandu with the team

to begin the expedition. "But I hit a roadblock when I tested positive for Covid and had to return to Jaipur. I was feeling fatigued for a few days but I had no other symptoms," Mr Chaudhary told a news agency.

"In that moment also I wasn't really thinking of Covid. All I could think of was how much effort I had put in and the preparations I had done to reach there and that this was my chance to complete it. I think that the motivation of not having a second chance anytime soon

Heavy rains expected in north India, including Delhi

Monsoon eludes Delhi yet again

New Delhi, July 11: The long-delayed monsoon missed yet another date with Delhi which was kept waiting for the rains as the weather department said its arrival in the capital is likely to be declared on Monday.

There have been several instances this season when the India Meteorological Department (IMD) got its monsoon forecast for Delhi and nearby regions wrong, leaving the area high and dry.

IMD on Sunday said heavy to very heavy rains at isolated places are expected over several parts of north India including Delhi by Monday morning, but there was little relief from the unforgiving heat throughout the day as the Southwest Monsoon has not still reached the remaining parts of the region.

As monsoon played truant in the region, Central Delhi is now the most rain-deficient district in India. Receiving only 8.5 mm rainfall against the normal of 125.1 mm since

June 1, when the monsoon season starts, it has recorded a shortfall of 93 per cent.

Overall, Delhi has received 64 per cent less rainfall than normal so far, putting it in the category of "large deficient" states.

"The conditions continue to remain favourable for further advance of southwest monsoon over Delhi, remaining parts of west Uttar Pradesh, some more parts of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan during the next 24 hours," the India Meteorological Department said in its latest statement.

Though it is going to rain in Delhi on Sunday, the arrival of the monsoon will be announced in Monday's midday bulletin — based on observations at 8.30 am on July 12, IMD scientist Sunitha Devi said.

According to the standard operating procedure, the monsoon onset is declared based on the rainfall reported during the past 24 hours ending at 8.30 am, she explained.

— PTI



BJP leader Adesh Gupta with party workers during a protest against an alleged DTC bus scam outside the CM residence in New Delhi on Sunday.

— PTI

Scam alleged in procurement of DTC buses

City BJP stages dharna, demands CM's resignation

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

Delhi BJP leaders staged a protest near chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence demanding his resignation alleging a "scam" in procurement of buses by the DTC. They also demanded a probe by the Anti Corruption Branch (ACB) and removal of the Transport minister.

State BJP president Adesh Gupta demanded the CM's resignation asserting that protests will continue till the matter is resolved.

A three-member committee appointed by the

Lieutenant Governor in its report has said that there is no "infirmity" in procurement of buses but pointed to several "procedural lapses" in annual maintenance contract (AMC).

The committee, in its report submitted to the LG earlier this week, recommended scrapping the AMC for 1,000 low-floor buses being procured by the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and floating a fresh bid.

The Delhi BJP chief alleged that the tender for maintenance of buses was floated for about three times the cost of the pur-

chase of buses.

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said when the Inquiry Committee has accepted that the maintenance tender should be issued afresh, it is clear that there was a "scam" in the matter.

Bidhuri said the DTC has its own workshops and employees, so why should the maintenance work be outsourced.

Senior AAP leader and deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday had accused the Delhi BJP leaders of "obstructing" DTC's procurement of buses.

Techie among 3 held for honey-trapping bizman

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

A software engineer and his two associates have been arrested for allegedly honey-trapping a businessman and demanding ₹1 crore from him after threatening to upload them if they failed to pay up, they said.

The arrests of all the three accused were made by Delhi Police's Crime Branch after it received a complaint from the businessman.

In the complaint, the businessman stated that he had received calls from an unknown person who was demanding ₹1 crore from him and threatening to publish his nude and morphed pictures along with a woman on social media sites, according to police.

wealthy businessmen, shoot their intimate pictures or videos and demanded money from them after threatening to upload them if they failed to pay up, they said.

The arrests of all the three accused were made by Delhi Police's Crime Branch after it received a complaint from the businessman.

In the complaint, the businessman stated that he had received calls from an unknown person who was demanding ₹1 crore from him and threatening to publish his nude and morphed pictures along with a woman on social media sites, according to police.

3 held for armed robbery at realtor's house in west Delhi

New Delhi, July 11: Police on Sunday arrested three men for executing an armed robbery of cash worth ₹8 lakh and gold ornaments at a property dealer's house in west Delhi's Uttam Nagar after holding his family hostage, officials said.

Two of the accused — Ankush (23) and Mukul (24) — were arrested following a brief encounter near Uttam Nagar bus terminal, they said. When the police team tried to apprehend them, the duo opened fire which hit the bullet proof jacket of one of the policemen. In retaliation, the police team returned fire that hit Ankush, police said.

Based on their disclosure, the third accused, Deepanshu alias Vashu (21), a resident of Sadar Bazar, was arrested. He is an employee of property dealer Vinod Lal, whose house they had executed the armed robbery, a senior police officer said.

Deepanshu was arrested later for providing information to the accused men about the availability of cash and jewellery at Lal's house, he said.

The incident that took place on July 7. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

MP man held for his remark on PM

Ujjain: Madhya Pradesh police have arrested a 28-year-old man for allegedly making objectionable comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union women and child development minister Smriti Irani on social media, an official said on Sunday. A local BJP leader filed a police complaint on Saturday against Govardhan Nagar, a resident of Akyia Jagir village in Ujjain district, Khachrod police station in-charge Ramkishor Singhavat said. In his complaint, Khachrod BJP mandal unit president Chetan Sharma alleged that the accused posted an edited picture along with some objectionable comments on social media platforms, the official said. Following the complaint, Nagar was arrested and a case registered against him under provisions of the Information Technology Act, the official said, adding that the accused was later released on bail. — PTI

BKU leader hurt while repairing tubewell

Muzaffarnagar: Bharatiya Kisan Union national president Naresh Tikait sustained injuries while repairing a tubewell at home in Sisauli village here on Sunday, sources said. The incident took place when he was repairing the tubewell and hit his face on an iron rod. According to BKU sources, Tikait was rushed to a private hospital for treatment but later returned home. Last month, Tikait led a rally of 100 tractors from Muzaffarnagar to the protest site on the Delhi-UP border in Ghaziabad where farmers have been agitating against the Centre's farm laws. — PTI



Naresh Tikait

Amid Covid, Zika outbreak adds to Kerala woes

State reporting 12K & 15K cases daily with no end in sight to 'prolonged surge'

HARY M. PILLAI
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
JULY 11

The rising Covid-19 cases in Kerala, coupled with the recent outbreak of the Zika virus, is causing concern to the health authorities here as the southern state battles to bring down the fresh infections.

After winning accolades for its "Kerala model" of combating the contagion about a year ago, the state is now seeing daily fresh cases between 12,000 and 15,000 with no end in sight to the "prolonged surge," as some experts put it.

The state had reported 14,087 fresh Covid infections on Saturday and 109 deaths, taking the total caseload to 30,39,029 and death toll to 14,380. The

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▶ The state had reported 14,087 fresh Covid infections on Saturday and 109 deaths, taking the total caseload to 30,39,029 and death toll to 14,380. The number of active cases is 1,13,115.

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Health minister Veena George had recently said the virus numbers spiked due to certain unlock measures and are expected to go down.

Incidentally, India's first Covid-19 case emerged from the state in January 2020 when a third year medical student from Wuhan, the epicentre of the virus in China, tested positive.

Two other Wuhan returnees from the state had also tested positive and all the three had subsequently recovered.

Dr Amar Fettle, the state nodal officer for Covid-19, said that the Kerala government is carrying out extensive testing to ensure no one who is infected is missed out and it is taking measures to ensure that elderly people and children, who would be vulnerable

to the infection, are protected.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had expressed concern over the persistently high number of Covid cases coming from Maharashtra and Kerala.

The Opposition Congress and BJP in Kerala have attacked the ruling dispensation over the Covid-related casualties, alleging a "mismatch" in their numbers while Ms George has maintained that the government has nothing to hide and all deaths are being reported.

To add to its woes, the state now has 14 active Zika virus cases and a Central team would reach here later to assist the government in handling the situation.

— PTI

Kolkata: 37 held for flouting Covid rules, partying in hotel

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 11

In a major crackdown, the Kolkata Police raided a five-star hotel in the city after Saturday midnight and arrested 37 persons from there for celebrating a weekend party violating the Covid-19 lockdown with loud music.

37 cellphones, drugs and alcohol were seized from the second and third floors which were booked for the party at The Park on Park Street.

The seized items included two Pioneer DJ discs, an amplifier, two sound boxes, a DJ light, three hookahs, four liquor bottles and a packet of Ganja, according to the police.

Besides, a Mercedes sedan and an SUV, belonging to two among the accused, which were parked at the hotel were

▶ THE COPS, however, faced resistance when they turned up at the two upper floors in plain clothes. Some of the revellers fought with them physically. The 37 arrested and the hotel were booked in a case at the Park Street police station under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Disaster Management Act.

▶ 37 CELLPHONES, drugs and alcohol were seized from the second and third floors which were booked for the party at The Park on Park Street

also impounded. The raid at the posh hotel took place at around 1.15 am following a tip-off.

The cops, however, faced resistance when they turned up at the two

upper floors in plain clothes. Some of the revellers fought with them physically. The 37 arrested and the hotel were booked in a case at the Park Street police station under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Disaster Management Act. On Sunday they were produced at the Bankshall Court. The police prayed to the judge for the custody of only nine among the 37.

But the court remanded seven of them to police custody and two others to jail custody till July 16 while granting bail to the rest 28 against a personal bond of ₹1,000 for each.

A team of forensic experts inspected the hotel during the day and collected samples for examination. The police meanwhile summoned a hotel official for questioning in the case.

MP: RSS to train cadres to tackle 3rd Covid wave

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, JULY 11

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) will train its cadres to tackle the third Covid wave, speculated to hit the country in September-October this year.

The RSS would impart training to its workers across the country on how to cooperate with the local administration to tackle the pandemic and how to help the potential victims during the period.

The decision was taken at the ongoing All India 'Prant Pracharak' meeting, being organised at Chitrakoot in Satna district in Madhya Pradesh on Sunday, a spokesman of the organisation said here.

India sees decline in infection, 41,506 new cases in 24hrs

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

India on Friday witnessed a slight decrease in the number of Covid-19 infections and related deaths in the last 24 hours. With 41,506 people testing positive in a day, the total tally of the viral infection has gone up to 3,08,37,222. The death toll has now climbed to 4,08,040 with 895 fresh fatalities.

While many countries like the UK, Russia, Australia, and Bangladesh are dealing with the resurgence in daily infections, the cases in India seem to be under control with daily infections being less than 50,000 for the past two weeks.

The active cases in India comprise 1.47 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has increased to 97.20 per cent. The daily positivity rate, which stands at 2.25 per cent, has been less than three per cent for 20 consecutive days. The weekly positivity rate has also declined to 2.32 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,99,75,064 and the case fatality rate stands at 1.32 per cent. As many as 18,43,500 tests were conducted on Saturday, taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of Covid-19 in the country to 43,08,85,470. The cumulative number of vaccine doses administered so far has reached 37.60 crore under the nationwide vaccination drive.

The Union health min-

Assam to give ₹2.5L to Covid-19 widows

Guwahati: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday rolled out a scheme to provide one-time financial assistance of ₹2.5 lakh each to all widows, whose husbands died due to covid, if their annual family income is less than ₹5 lakh. Under the new 'chief minister's Covid Widows Support Scheme', Sarma handed over cheques to 176 eligible beneficiaries from eight districts at a function here. At least 873 beneficiaries have been identified as of now under this scheme, and all the cheques will be given to them by state ministers in districts by the next week, Mr Sarma said. "This is not a happy programme for us. When we invite beneficiaries for some government schemes, we always take pride. But for today's event, we are neither proud nor happy," he said. — PTI

istry said that over 1.44 crore balance and unutilised Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states, UTs, and private hospitals to be administered.

Over 38.60 crore vaccine doses have been provided to the states and UTs so far through all sources and a further 11,25,140 doses are in the pipeline. Of this, the total consumption including wastage is 37,16,47,625 doses. The new phase of universalisation of Covid-19 vaccination is to commence from June 21.

BJP govt will review 'land to outsiders' issue: Dhani

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

Amid growing support and demand for strict land laws and restricting sale of land to "outsiders" in Uttarakhand, the newly appointed chief minister of the poll going state, Pushkar Singh Dhani on Sunday said the ruling BJP will "review" the issue and will "keep in mind the public interest" while taking any decision on it. For the first time, a BJP leader has addressed the issue, which the opposition Congress has claimed to implement if it comes to power. Started by youths of the state as a social media campaign - #Uttarakhand_maangae_bhu_kanoon - the issue is now being amplified by the involvement of seniors in villages, towns and cities and is turning into a major poll issue.

"We will talk to everyone... will review the issue and if required will work on it," said the new CM regarding the demand.

Rejecting reports of growing factionalism in the party's state unit, Mr Dhani asserted that the BJP will go to polls as a team and he has "blessings" of the party seniors.

Some seniors in the BJP state unit had objected to the elevation of "third-generation" leader to the CM's post and Union home minister Amit Shah had then intervened.

The new chief minister also rubbished the new political entrant in the state, AAP's poll promise of 300 units free electricity, saying Uttarakhand will once again vote for development, which only the BJP can provide.

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Prosperous Haryana

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Chief Minister, Haryana
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SHORT TAKES

6 of family members electrocuted in MP

Bhopal: In a tragic incident, six members of a family in a village in Madhya Pradesh were on Sunday electrocuted to death during construction of a septic tank in their house. The incident took place in the village of Mahua Jhala village in Chhatarpur district, while construction work of a septic tank was in progress, Bijawar police station in-charge Mukesh Singh Tomar said. One of the victims entered the septic tank to remove the iron plates used to cast the roof slab and got electrocuted due to lighting arrangements made to carry out the work. Then, five other members got electrocuted one after another while trying to rescue each other. They were rushed to the local government hospital where the doctors declared them dead, the police said. The deceased were in the age group of 22 to 78 years.

NIA arrests arms trafficker in Meerut

New Delhi: The NIA has arrested an arms trafficker from Uttar Pradesh's Meerut, who was involved in an extortion case, in which Khalistani terrorists are also named, an official said on Sunday. Mohammad Asif Ali (32) was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which conducted searches at his premises. The case relates to information received by the Punjab Police that Arshdeep Singh and Ramandeep Singh, currently abroad, had formed a gang and were threatening and extorting money from businessmen in Punjab, the NIA official said. The NIA took over the investigation and during the search conducted in Meerut on Saturday, two country-made pistols of 0.315 bore, 10 live rounds of 0.315 bore, one mobile phone, two SIM cards and one memory card were seized. — PTI

Union minister for caste-based census

Bengaluru: Union minister of state for social justice and empowerment Ramdas Athawale on Sunday pitched for a caste-based census in the country, which will help the needy avail social, economic and academic benefits. "There is a need for caste-based census to figure out the community-wise population. This will help avail social, economic and academic benefits to the needy," Mr Athawale told reporters here. The Union minister also stressed upon increasing the reservation so that socially and economically backward people can avail its benefit. He said the amount of reservation should not exceed 50 per cent as per rules, but there is a need to increase the quota for social justice. — PTI

RSS REPLACES ITS POINTSMAN FOR BJP

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JULY 11

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), it was learnt, has decided to replace its pointsman for the BJP, with Arun Kumar to succeed Dr Krishna Gopal for the post. The decision, sources said, was taken by the RSS top brass at the ongoing meeting at Chitrakoot. Both Dr Gopal and Mr Kumar are joint general secretaries in the Sangh. Dr Gopal, who had succeeded Suresh Soni in 2014 — the year BJP came to power at the Centre — to oversee the coordination between the BJP and the Sangh, it was learnt, had not been keeping well and had been infected with the Covid-19 twice since last year. Mr Kumar, who was the prachar pramukh of the Sangh, was elevated to the post of joint general secretary in March this year when Dattatreya Hosabale replaced Suresh Bhaiyya Joshi as the RSS general secretary. The RSS has also overhauled its West Bengal team by replacing the Prant pracharak, kshetra pracharak and the sahkshetra pracharak. This decision, sources said, was taken after the BJP failed to dislodge Mamata Banerjee led TMC despite the entire BJP central leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union ministers campaigning in the state.

Pawar rules out Sena's claim to post of Speaker

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, JULY 11

NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday put to rest speculations over the speaker's post in Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) saying the post will remain with the Congress only. The three constituents of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) have decided that the next speaker will be from the Congress party, he said.

Ever since senior Shiv Sena MLA Bhaskar Jadhav, acting as a presiding officer, suspended 12 BJP MLAs on the charges of unruly behaviour in Vidhan Sabha in the recently concluded monsoon session of the State Legislature, there have been talks of Sena interested in holding the speaker's post by giving the forest minister's post from its quota to the Congress.

However, Mr Pawar made it clear that the speaker's post belongs to Congress. "The three parties (Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress) have decided that the new Speaker will be from the Congress party only. We all will support whatever the Congress decides about the speaker," he said at Baramati in Pune.

In the power-sharing agreement within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government, the speaker's post has been allotted to the Congress. However, Mr Jadhav has said he would be happy to become the speaker of Vidhan Sabha if given a responsibility. In the Shiv Sena circles too, there are talks that the party should give up its vacant forest minister's post to Congress in exchange of the Speaker's post.



Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman during a high tea session for all women Cabinet ministers hosted by FM at her residence in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

2 blasts in Mizoram amid border row with Assam

Guwahati, July 11: A day after a suspected IED blast was carried out inside Cachar district of Assam allegedly by miscreants from Mizoram during an eviction drive, two back to back explosions took place on Sunday along the inter-state border on the side of the neighbouring state, a police source said.

Tension is running high in Khulicherra area of the district, where people from Mizoram have reportedly entered up to 6.5 kilometres inside Assam land a few days ago, following which the Assam Police along with civil administration carried out an eviction drive.

"Two blast sounds were heard coming from the Mizoram side at 2.40 am and 2.43 am. The CRPF, which is a neutral force deployed at Khulicherra Point-II, has been asked to enquire into the suspected blasts on the Mizoram side," an Assam Police source told PTI.

The situation is at present normal although tension still prevails and

▶ **ASSAM CHIEF minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that he has written to his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga to settle the border dispute by using satellite mapping of the actual border locations**

Assam Police personnel are in alert position in the entire border area, he added.

On Saturday, an explosion took place targeting a delegation of Assam government officials, including senior police officials, who were on a visit to oversee the construction of a road along the border, but no casualty was reported in the incident.

Initially it was believed to be a grenade attack but the police later suspected that the miscreants used an IED, the source said. Additional director-general of police (border) Harmeet Singh is camping at the spot and monitoring the situation.

Meanwhile, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that he has

written to his Mizoram counterpart Zoramthanga to settle the border dispute by using satellite mapping of the actual border locations.

"For complete peace, we should hand over the inter-state border to central police forces after we fix the border issue. We are building roads within the Constitutional boundary of Assam. We will not take an inch of land from Mizoram," he added.

There has been a long border dispute between Assam and Mizoram in that area along with other locations in Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj districts of the Barak valley.

The latest tussle started on Saturday when around 25-30 people from Mizoram came up to 25 metres ahead of Khulicherra CRPF camp and tried to encroach the land inside Assam, attempting to stop the forest track clearing work and prevent PWD officials from constructing a road, a senior police official said. — PTI

BJP plans sweeping changes in Bengal

Mulls to put up 'screening window' while inducting leaders from other parties

PRADIPTA TAPADAR
KOLKATA, JULY 11

Smarting under the Assembly election defeat, the West Bengal BJP is likely to bring about a sweeping organisational reshuffle to crack the whip on recalcitrant leaders and a section of turncoats, who joined the saffron party ahead of the polls.

The state BJP is also mulling to put up a "screening window" while inducting leaders from other parties, and taking a "Bengal-specific political line" in tandem with its pan-India policy to take on the TMC's sub-nationalism, party sources said.

The BJP has decided to revamp the organisation by rewarding efficient party workers and leaders and remove several turncoats from local and district levels. It has also decided to rein in dissidence with a two-pronged approach.

The proposed measures come in the backdrop of poll reverses, growing infighting and reverse exodus, the latest being the switchover of BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy to the ruling party in the state.

After its defeat in the Assembly polls in May, the state BJP has been a divided house with constant

▶ **THE BJP has decided to revamp the organisation by rewarding efficient party workers and leaders and remove several turncoats from local and district levels**

bickering among senior leaders who are blaming each other for the failure, the party sources said.

"Discussions are underway for certain changes at various levels of the organisation. There have been some issues. It would have been better if such things could have been avoided," state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh said.

Asked whether the BJP will take action against

dissidents who are openly speaking against the party, Mr Ghosh said, "No one is above party discipline".

"There are some people who had joined the party in the hope of getting something if the BJP came to power. But now, as we have failed, they are speaking in a different tone. All of us have to follow the rules and discipline of the party," he said.

There is a growing resentment among rank and file as no action has been taken against turncoats like Rajib Banerjee and Saumitra Khan who have been openly speaking against the BJP leadership, sources said. — PTI

India pulls out staff from Kandahar consulate

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Taliban guerilla fighters have claimed to have captured "85 per cent" of the Afghanistan territory.

The MEA has said India is carefully monitoring the security situation in Afghanistan and its implications on the safety and security of Indian nationals present in the country.

Apart from its consulates in Kandahar and embassy in Kabul, India also has consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and Jalabad, out of which the last two have been temporarily shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India is involved in several devel-

opment projects in the country and many Indian nationals — both government officials and non-government — are working in these projects.

India has asked its citizens to be very careful and not to venture out unnecessarily and cancel their plans to visit the country for the time being, saying the security situation in Afghanistan "is highly volatile, unpredictable and dangerous".

"Different terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan have escalated violent activities and carried out a series of complex attacks in Kabul city and other parts of Afghanistan, not only tar-

getting the Afghan defence and security forces and government institutions, but also the international community and even innocent civilians. Indians are no exception and they additionally face a serious threat of kidnapping by militants. Recently, targeted attacks are on the rise in Kabul and major provincial capitals, where the militants are attacking not only government establishments, but also hospitals, religious institutions and even civilians. The road-side IED blasts and magnetic IEDs are being used to target vehicles," Indian government had said in its advisory.

Raids by NIA in J&K, 6 held

■ **Continued from Page 1**
"ISIS voice of Hind case" registered by it in New Delhi under Sections 124A, 153A, and 153 B of the IPC and Sections 17, 18, 18B, 38, 39 and 40 of UAFA 1967.

"In order to execute its nefarious plan, an organised campaign has been launched over the cyber space which is supplemented by on ground (militant) financing activities," it said.

The statement read,

"ISIS operating from various conflict zones along with ISIS cadres in India, by assuming pseudo-online identities, have created a network wherein ISIS related propaganda material is disseminated for radicalising and recruiting members to the fold of ISIS." It added, "In this connection an India-centric online propaganda magazine 'the Voice of Hind' (VOH) is published on monthly basis with an aim to incite and radi-

calise impressionable youth by projecting a skewed narrative of imagined injustices in India to arouse a feeling of alienation and communal hatred."

The Central investigating agency claimed that the searches led to recovery and seizure of a large number of "incriminating documents and digital devices such as mobile phones, tablets, laptop, hard disks and T-Shirts having ISIS logo."

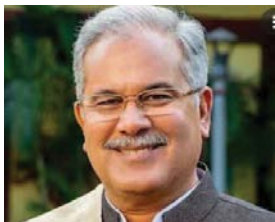
Baghel to play key role in UP poll preparations

C'garh CM meets Priyanka Gandhi, others in Delhi

New Delhi, July 11: Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel is likely to play a key role in preparing the Congress organisation in Uttar Pradesh for the Assembly polls next year with a focus on strategising and booth management, sources said on Sunday.

Mr Baghel, who had played a crucial role in the run up to the Assam Assembly polls with his team carrying out extensive booth training of party workers, met Congress general secretary in-charge Uttar Pradesh Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, treasurer Pawan Kumar Bansal and Rajeev Shukla here at party chief Sonia Gandhi's 10 Janpath residence.

According to sources, Priyanka Gandhi has asked Chhattisgarh Congress leaders be sent to Uttar Pradesh, and during the meeting, an outline of booth management and worker's conference in the poll-bound state was also discussed.



Bhupesh Baghel

▶ **ACCORDING TO sources, Priyanka Gandhi has asked Chhattisgarh Congress leaders be sent to Uttar Pradesh**

There was also a discussion on intensifying the activities of the Congress organisation in Uttar Pradesh.

On the recommendation of Mr Baghel, his parliamentary advisor Rajesh Tiwari has been made AICC secretary-in-charge of Uttar Pradesh.

Amid speculation about an agreement in 2018 that Mr Baghel would be chief minister of Chhattisgarh for two and a half years after which the state's health minister, T.S.

Singhdeo, would take over, Mr Baghel told reporters that he had taken oath after the high command asked him to and if the party top brass asks someone else to step in, it will be so. However, sources in the Baghel camp said the party's top leadership has assured him that he would continue as the chief minister.

PL Punia, the AICC in-charge Chhattisgarh, said the speculation over leadership change was only in the media and was not true. "Whatever is being circulated in the media (about leadership change) has no truth in it and there is no such agreement or decision on it that is being talked about," Mr Punia said.

Asked if Mr Baghel would continue as the chief minister, he answered in the affirmative.

Mr Baghel had also met Punia at the latter's residence here earlier in the day before heading back to Chhattisgarh. — PTI

Shatrughan Sinha likely to join TMC on Martyrs' Day

Patna/Kolkata, July 11: Senior Congress leader Shatrughan Sinha is likely to crossover to Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress soon, sources close to him said on Sunday.

Though through a tweet in Hindi with pro-Narendra Modi flavour recently, Mr Sinha had triggered guesswork that he might stage a "Ghar Wapsi" to the BJP, the sources said he is more inclined towards the TMC, which recently humbled the saffron party and Ms Banerjee emerged as a potent rival of Prime Minister Modi in 2024 general election.

When asked about his chance of joining the TMC, Mr Sinha refused to make a direct comment, but said, "Politics is an art of possibility."

Sources close to him, however, did not deny the chance. A section of the TMC leaders also said in Kolkata that talks are in an advanced stage in this regard.

The TMC leaders said the actor-politician always had a good relation with Banerjee.

Sources said there is a chance of Mr Sinha switching over to the TMC on its July 21 Martyrs' day



Shatrughan Sinha

celebration function.

Mr Sinha, popularly known as "Bihari Babu", made lavish praise on Mamata Banerjee, calling her "real Royal Bengal tiger" and a "tried and tested leader who trounced propaganda and 'dhanshakti' (money power) in the just-concluded Bengal polls".

Mr Sinha's former colleague in the Atal Behari Vajpayee ministry, Yashwant Sinha, is now national vice-president of the TMC.

Mr Sinha, the two-term BJP MP from Patna Sahib, had joined the Congress and entered into the fray from the same constituency in the 2019 polls but lost to former union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Though a big name in politics, Mr Sinha has not been given any big responsibility by the Congress. — PTI

3 suspected terrorists of JMB held in Kolkata

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JULY 11

Three suspected Jamaat-ul Mujahideen (JMB) operatives were arrested by the special task force (STF) of the Kolkata police from the south western parts of the city in a secret operation early on Sunday.

The arrest of the JMB operatives has prompted the Central and state security agencies to investigate the possibility of a sleeper cell formation by the banned terror outfit. The accused were identified as Nazim Rahman, Sheikh Sabir and Rabiul Islam.

According to a preliminary investigation, all of them belong to JMB functionary Master Zia's camp and their job was to raise funds and recruit young members for a module.

Originally hailing from Gopaganj in the neighbouring country, they allegedly forged documents and entered West Bengal through the India-Bangladesh border, sources revealed.

Disguised as hawkers selling fruits and mosquito nets, they were living at a rented house in Haridevpur for over last two months.

Twitter names resident grievance officer

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Data", Twitter said 18,385 accounts were suspended over the issue of child sexual exploitation, non-consensual nudity, and similar content, while 4,179 accounts were suspended for promotion of terrorism.

Twitter, however, said the "Proactive Monitoring Data" represents global actions taken, and not just actions related to content from India. "Proactive Monitoring" refers to content proactively identified by employing internal proprietary tools and industry hash sharing initiatives, it added.

Twitter said each user complaint received via the India grievance channel is assessed under its terms of service (ToS) and rules, and any content that is determined to be in violation is "actioned" in line with its range of enforcement options.

This includes tweet level enforcement (like labeling of tweets, limiting visibility and removal), direct message-level enforcement and account-level enforcement (includes permanent suspension) among other actions.

Twitter noted that going forward, it will publish this report on a monthly basis and that it will make improvements over time, based on feedback received from the government, or in accordance with internal changes that allow it to provide more granular data.

Companies, including Google, Facebook and Koo, have already published their maiden compliance reports as required under the IT rules.

Facebook had said it "actioned" over 30 million content pieces across 10 violation categories during May 15-June 15 in the country, while Instagram took action against about two million pieces across nine categories during the same period.

This data was a part of an interim report on July 2 providing information on the number of content Facebook removed proactively during May 15-June 15. The final report will be published on July 15, containing details of user complaints received and action taken. The July 15 report will also contain data related to WhatsApp, which is part of Facebook's family of apps.

Google, in its report, 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.

Koo had said it proactively moderated 54,235 content pieces, while 5,502 posts were reported by its users during June.

Under the new IT rules, large digital platforms (with over 50 lakh users) are required to publish periodic compliance reports every month, mentioning the details of complaints received and action taken thereon.

Twitter had courted controversy over the new social media rules, and the Indian government had confronted Twitter over deliberate defiance and failure to comply with the IT rules, despite repeated reminders. — PTI

Yogi: Rising population 'hurdle in development'

■ **Continued from Page 1**
sections of the society.

Besides seeking to achieve population stabilisation and reduce preventable maternal and infant deaths, the UP Population Policy also aims at preventing the death of children under the age of 5 years and improving their nutritional condition.

Addressing a function at his official residence, the chief minister said efforts to control population is linked to comprehensive awareness in the society.

"We should not forget that the increase in population contributes to that poverty in the society. Hence, until all sections of society are made comprehensively aware, there will be a delay in fulfilling various goals. Every section of the society has to be associated with the awareness campaign," Mr Adityanath said.

If there is no gap between the birth of two children, it affects their nourishment, he said, adding the efforts made in the past four to

five years have yielded good results, but more efforts are needed. The health of a mother and her child have to be linked with this, the CM said.

Hitting out at the BJP government over its draft population control bill, SP MP Shafiqur Rahman Barq asked where will India get manpower in case of war if people are not allowed to procreate.

The parliamentarian from Sambhal said it is Allah who decides the number of lives on earth

and no amount of checks can control that.

Taking a jibe at the BJP government, Mr Barq said, "As far as Yogi (Adityanath) PM (Narendra) Modi and (RSS chief) Mohan Bhagwat are concerned, do not have children. Now, if entire India is not allowed to procreate and a situation arises that we have to face another country, from where we get men? This (draft) population control bill) will prove to be a loss-making deal." — PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

12 JULY 2021

India must make clear its Afghan role after US exit

The pressure on India to delineate its future path in Afghanistan becomes apparent after the announcement by US President Joe Biden last week that US forces will be out of Afghanistan by August 31, sooner than the September 11 deadline indicated earlier.

The US leader also made it amply clear that sorting out the politics of that benighted country and its way forward in the world was for its people to decide. Putting a lid on an old debate, Mr Biden was clear that “nation-building” in Afghanistan was not America’s mandate.

The sense of drama has grown in light of practically daily news reports in recent weeks of rapid military gains made by the Taliban. Western media reporting has also amplified the Taliban claim that the insurgent group controls as much as 85 per cent of the country.

Is this true? Do the Taliban really have the capacity to hold territory? Is the Afghan military weak, helpless, and inadequately equipped? International reporting is practically silent on these crucial aspects of the situation. Nor has it shed any light on the internal political scenario in Afghanistan? In the event, a general scare seems to have been created about the Taliban storming Kabul in the not too distant future.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar has lately been in Tehran and Moscow, New Delhi’s traditional allies in the Afghan context. It has to be ascertained to what extent Iran and Russia are changing.

If the past military performance of the Taliban is any guide, it will be surprising if it can storm to power in Kabul in the next year or so, although this is exactly what senior US Army officials have put out, feeding scare-mongering.

While Afghanistan’s Army is trained and equipped essentially as a counter-terrorism force (it does not have artillery and armour, for example), it is a first-rate fighting body. Numerous times in the past it has shown the capacity to recover lost ground from the Taliban, who have repeatedly displayed the inability to hold ground.

At suitable levels, India has opened channels of communication with the Taliban. New Delhi should not be left without options in an evolving scenario. But it needs to be appreciated that the Taliban are but a small part of the political spectrum, especially in light of the noteworthy fact that a new generation of Afghans has taken shape in the past 20 years (the period since the US intervened) which is far from extremist in outlook and looks toward a modernist, democracy-oriented transformation.

India is reasonably well-grounded in the non-Taliban political spaces, unlike arguably any other country. This is an enviable position to be in. Much depends on how New Delhi seeks to leverage itself politically. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar has lately been in Tehran and Moscow, New Delhi’s traditional allies in the Afghan context. These power centres had been anti-Taliban in the past. It has to be ascertained to what extent Iran and Russia are changing.

Regardless of this, however, India will have to decide its stance without equivocation if it wishes to be seen as a serious player. Standing by Pakistan’s side, resource-rich China has emerged as a new — and open — factor in Afghanistan. New Delhi has to bear this in mind while being conscious that Beijing and Islamabad will act in tandem, though Pakistan remains deeply unpopular in Afghanistan. Since the dice is rolling, India cannot indefinitely delay taking a posture. If this is to be to stand by the people of Afghanistan, in whom this country has invested much in the past two decades, the first charge on New Delhi is to ensure that non-Taliban factions mutually build a functional understanding even if they have differences with the leader of their government, President Ashraf Ghani.

Stem poll violence in UP

The Uttar Pradesh unit of the BJP, and its national leadership, exult over the results of the block panchayat elections in the state. The party claims that it has won elections in 685 of the 825 block panchayats. This comes close on the heels of the party claiming victory in 66 of the 75 posts of district panchayat chiefs for which elections were held last month. Given that the state Assembly polls are hardly a year away, the party has gone out of the way to present it as a precursor to the big fight. While chief minister Yogi Adityanath and the party’s state unit chief were attributing the win to the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the latter has commented on the chief minister’s leadership for the win.

The Opposition parties will, however, have none of it. They allege widespread violence by the ruling party in the polls, which include instances of stopping their people from filing the nomination papers to threatening their candidates. They say the BJP wants to paint a rosy picture after it lost the gram panchayat elections. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav has reminded the BJP that his party had made similar claims after the polls five years ago but lost the Assembly comprehensively.

Claims and counterclaims apart, violence has emerged as a key player in the elections in the state this time around. It is not just the Opposition that complains about hooliganism on the part of the ruling party; the message of the police officer to his boss that BJP workers slapped him could be the reflection of the reality.

The picture the nation gets from Uttar Pradesh is that the Election Commission of India will have to go the extra mile and ensure that none gets to blame violence as a key factor in the election to the state Assembly. It must open its eyes and take early steps to meet its constitutional responsibilities.

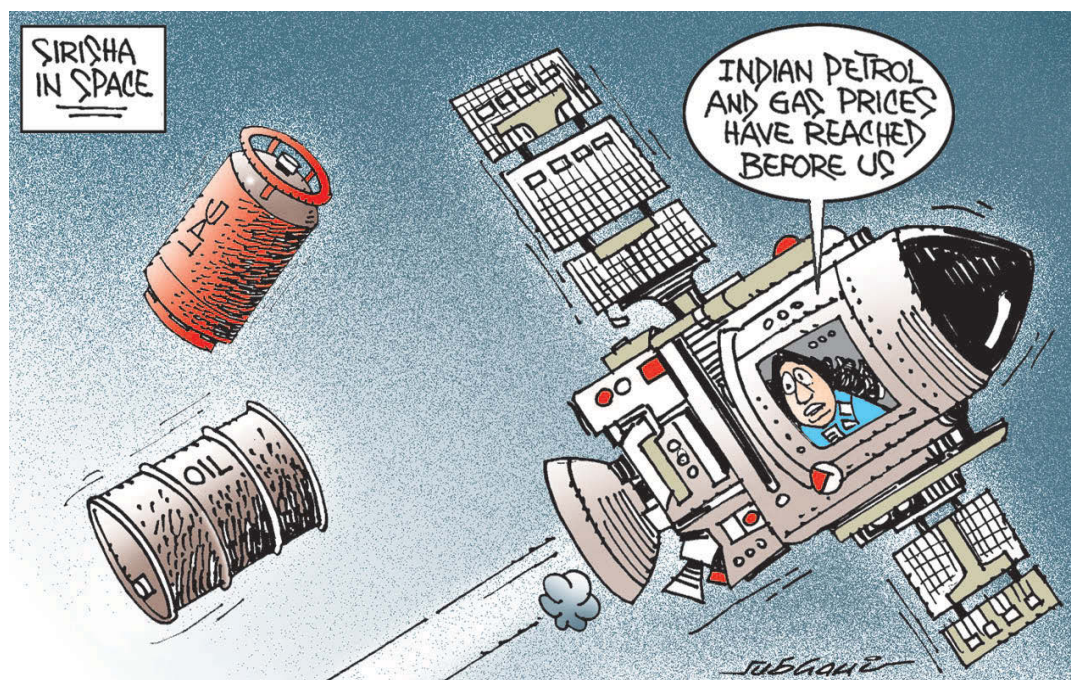
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Subhani



India-China: Bhai-bhai to buy-buy to bye-bye



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

This is a historic month for China. The Communist Party of China came into being 100 years ago, in July 1921. Communist China entered the international mainstream a half century ago, in July 1971, when the United States decided to come to terms with the reality of its existence. China’s spectacular rise over the past quarter century, as a global trading superpower, the “factory of the world”, and as Asia’s most powerful nation, ready to challenge America’s global dominance, is the stuff of legend.

Yet, even as China celebrates these landmark events, large parts of the world have become increasingly concerned about its assertion of newly acquired hard power — economic and military. In looking back at China’s rise a large part of the public discourse in India has been dominated by commentators on foreign policy, security and defence. Regrettably, very little has appeared in print on the social, cultural and human dimensions of China’s transformation and rise.

In his recently published pithy narration of the events at Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989 (*Tiananmen Square: The Making of a Protest, A Diplomat Looks Back*), former foreign secretary and a former Indian ambassador to China Vijay Gokhale observes in passing: “Indians can no longer afford to have a superficial understanding of events involving their largest neighbour and to-be-hegemon, other than at their own peril”.

Mr Gokhale is spot on. Yet so much about what appears in print in India about China is about foreign affairs and the economy, written mostly by Westerners or Indians

living in the West, and so little from Indians with a first-hand knowledge and experience of life and people in China. For most Indians China is an adversary, a source of cheap products or the home of chow mein.

At one level this is not surprising. The fact is that the interaction between the neighbours has been limited through most history. More important, people-to-people interaction between the two republics over the past three quarters of a century has been even more limited. Little wonder then that even today we depend so much on retired diplomats to educate us about contemporary China. Only a couple of bright Indian journalists and a handful of scholars have been able to bridge the public awareness gap between the two.

This worryingly low level of social and cultural interaction between China and India has dipped further thanks to renewed tensions between the two and the post-Galwan and post-Covid freeze in bilateral interactions. The China-India relationship has moved from the honeymoon days of “*Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai*”, and the post-Cold War phase of increased economic and business interaction — “*India-China buy-buy*”, as someone put it — to the current “*Cold War*” phase of “*India-China bye-bye*”. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs.

Whatever the differences between the two countries, and there are many, there ought to be both a better understanding of each other within both societies and increased people-to-people interaction. For over a century Indians fought Western imperialism and colonialism and yet not only acquired an inti-

mate knowledge of Western culture, science, literature, music and so on, but also benefitted from such knowledge.

India’s attitude towards China today should not be very different from the view that Mahatma Gandhi famously expressed of the kind of relationship that he sought with Britain and its people in the midst of the national movement for Independence. When asked by a Briton in that period “How far would you cut India off from the Empire?”, Gandhiji replied: “From the Empire, completely; from the British nation, not at all, if I want India to gain and not to grieve. The British Empire must go and I should love to be an equal partner with Britain, sharing her joys and sorrows. But it must be a partnership on equal terms.”

Even as India rejects China’s hegemonic ambitions, as it did the hegemony of the West, and disapproves of its authoritarian political system, Indians must acquire a better understanding and appreciation of Chinese society, culture and its knowledge-creating institutions. China is not merely an authoritarian, militarised Communist regime, which it is, but it is also a highly creative and productive knowledge-based society and economy. China has risen on the foundations of its human capabilities. Indians ought to have a better appreciation of that.

The Xi Jinping regime is itself to blame for the acute focus in Indian public discourse on China’s negative attributes. However, it is in India’s inter-

The Xi Jinping regime is itself to blame for the focus in Indian public discourse on China’s negative attributes. It is in India’s interest to balance that with a better understanding of life in China.

est to balance that with a better understanding of life in China. The Chinese too should realise that Indians are a proud people with their own memory of their civilisational inheritance and can be nobody’s cat’s paw.

The history of Indian nationalism is in many ways greater than the history of Chinese nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress did not fight for India’s liberation alone. They fought for the liberation of all colonised people and against imperialism and colonialism in all its manifestations. Whatever strategic and foreign policy compromises India might make in the short run cannot be a deviation from its “tryst with destiny”.

In July 1971, when then US national security adviser Henry Kissinger met Chairman Mao Zedong in Beijing and proposed a US-China condominium against the Soviet Union, China did not give up its civilisational inheritance of being an independent-minded nation. It walked a path that gave it the strategic space for its own rise. India too seeks that space for its own development. Over the past 50 years the people-to-people contact between the United States and China has been intense and extensive. It has created the foundation for a durable relationship even when the two seek today greater strategic space for themselves.

It is in the interests of both China and India that there is similar engagement between their people, even as the two states jostle with each other for strategic space within Asia and the world. People-to-people relationships must stand on their own footing and not always be subject to state-to-state relations.

The writer, an economist and adviser to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, has recently edited a collection of essays titled A New Cold War: Henry Kissinger and the Rise of China

LETTERS

TERROR SHADOW

Due to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan’s Kandahar, many from among the Indian embassy staff have been sent back to India. The Taliban has captured more than 85 per cent territories in the country. More than 200,000 Afghan civilians are displaced already. There is an active civil war going on between the Afghan forces and Taliban fighters in 200 districts out of a total of 375. This spells bad news for India as Pakistan-based terror groups have received a shot in the arm and attacks against India will now be on the rise.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

HONEYMOON OVER

TWITTER HAS given in to pressure and finally appointed its grievance redressal officer in the shape of one Vinay Prakash to deal with complaints arising from posts critiquing the actions and policies of the Indian government. The US-based company has also published its compliance report for the period of May 26, 2021, to June 25, 2021. This is discomforting. The social media platform is no longer an intermediary for observations, opinions and ideas. Now, few can afford to be ignorant, senile, foolish, playful or plain mistaken. It is the end of the free speech honeymoon.

Priyanka Mathur
Kolkata

RIP PK WARRIOR

IN THE DEATH of centenarian Dr P.K. Warrior, India has lost a doyen of Ayurveda and a champion of the poor. Dr Warrior introduced modern practices and methods to Ayurveda. The Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, started essentially as a village clinic a century ago, flourished under him. Kottakkal town also became synonymous with this ancient Indian system of medicine. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2010. His demise marks the end of an era.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Bhaskar Roy (July 10). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

A.G. Noorani



Kashmir and the delicate activism of ensuring that delimitation fair

It is very unfortunate that at their very first test members of the People’s Alliance of the Gupkar Declaration in Kashmir split on the issue of delimitation of assembly constituencies. Mehbooba Mufti of the People’s Democratic Party refused to appear before the Delimitation Commission. All were agreed that the wrongs of Aug 4, 2019, should be undone first.

Delimitation is one of the most delicate and highly controversial problems in democratic governance. But it is also ignored until controversy catches up with it. The issue is simple. How do you draw up the boundaries of electoral constituencies in order to ensure fairness to all? Britain woke up pretty late to the problem. There is an electoral commission, a late entrant. It establishes boundary committees and evaluates its reports. Rules prescribe guidance.

Within the constraints of the existing majority electoral system it is clearly desirable that votes should be, as nearly as possible, of

equal value: a vote in A should be worth as much as a vote in B. If this is to be substantially achieved, the boundaries of constituencies should be drawn in such a way that their electorates do not differ too greatly in size. Other factors may also have to be taken into account in drawing the boundaries, but it is of the greatest importance that the process should not be influenced by considerations of party advantage. Another and a hugely neglected factor in India — the Muslim seats. They depend entirely on how Muslim majority areas are grouped.

India has a delimitation commission set up by an act of parliament. The commission is charged with the task of readjusting “on the basis of the latest census figures” the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha to the states, the total number of seats in state assemblies, and the division of each state into territorial constituencies for the purpose of elections to the Lok Sabha and to the assemblies. The electoral roll is common to both. A given number of assembly constituencies

are grouped to form a parliamentary constituency. Upon publication “every such order shall have the force of law”. This is valid. Not so what follows: “And shall not be called in question in any court.” No law can oust the powers of judicial review conferred by the Indian constitution on the Supreme Court and the high courts. Even an amendment to the constitution cannot do that, for judicial review is incontestably an integral part of the “basic structure” of the Constitution.

Ouster clauses are strictly construed by the courts. It does not prevent the courts from reviewing a delimitation order. Drawing the boundaries of any constituency on the ground inter alia that it is grossly unfair or that the commission did not follow the rules of natural justice by giving a reasonable opportunity for a hearing to the political parties or interested citizens’ bodies.

We owe to the research of Alistair McMillan details of the grossly unfair delimitation as it obtains now. He points out, for instance,

that “a vote in Calcutta North-West, with 698,009 electors, is worth roughly four times as much as one in Thane in Maharashtra, where there are 2,771,746 electors”.

In 1962, the US supreme court carried through a political revolution by ordering that long under-represented urban and suburban areas be given their proper weight in state legislatures. It is not a “political question” exempt from judicial review. Two years later chief justice Earl Warren carried the process further and delivered the famous quotes on the weightage to rural areas.

Chief justice Earl Warren said: “A predominant consideration in determining whether a state’s legislative apportionment scheme constitutes an invidious discrimination violative of rights asserted under the Equal Protection Clause is that the rights allegedly impaired are individual and personal in nature. ... Undoubtedly, the right of suffrage is a fundamental matter in a free and democratic society. Especially since the right to exercise the franchise in a free

and unimpaired manner is preservative of other basic civil and political rights, any alleged infringement of the right of citizens to vote must be carefully and meticulously scrutinised.

“...Legislators are elected by voters, not farms or cities or economic interests. If ours is a representative form of government, and our legislatures are those instruments of government elected directly by and directly representative of the people, the right to elect legislators in a free and unimpaired fashion is a bedrock of our political system. ...

“And, if a state should provide that the votes of citizens in one part of the state should be given two times, or five times, or 10 times the weight of votes of citizens in another part of the state, it could hardly be contended that the right to vote of those residing in the disfavoured areas had not been effectively diluted.”

Muslims have suffered because their leaders do not do the homework which a challenge requires.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

TURKEY BUS
ACCIDENT
LEAVES 12 DEAD

Ankara: Twelve people died and 26 others were injured when a bus carrying migrants crashed in eastern Turkey on Saturday night, local media reported, quoting authorities in the prefecture of Van.

Among the dead were 11 migrants and a person who helped organise their illegal transport, the authorities were quoted as saying on Sunday.

The injured were taken to hospital and the owner of the bus was detained, they added.

Situated near Turkey's eastern border with Iran, the city of Van is used as a crossing point for migrants on their long journey to reach Europe, with many coming from Afghanistan.

In July 2020, a boat carrying up to 60 migrants sank on Lake Van.

TWO IS-LINKED
MILITANTS KILLED
IN C. INDONESIA

Palu (Indonesia): Indonesian security forces on Sunday killed two suspected militants with ties to the Islamic State group who were believed to be connected to the killing of Christian farmers on Sulawesi island, the country's military said.

The two men, identified as Rukli and Ahmad Gazali, were fatally shot during a pre-dawn raid by a five-man team of military and police in Central Sulawesi province's mountainous Parigi Moutong district, said Maj Gen Richard Tampubolon, who heads the joint operation. Parigi Moutong borders Poso district, considered an extremist hotbed in the province.

Security operations in Central Sulawesi have intensified in recent months to try to capture members of the East Indonesia Mujahideen network, particularly targeting Ali Kalora, the group's leader and Indonesia's most wanted militant.

EXPLOSION IN
SUDAN PORT CITY
KILLS FOUR

Khartoum: An explosion has killed four people in a Sudanese Red Sea port city, officials said Sunday, the latest in a series of violent incidents in the area.

Tensions have been simmering in recent days in Port Sudan, where anti-government protesters have reportedly blocked roads over rising insecurity.

Local media have linked the unrest to rejection by the Hadendoo tribe of an October peace deal between rebel groups and the government.

The Hadendoo, the largest subdivision of the Beja people in the region, fear their tribe will be under-represented in regional legislative and executive bodies under the agreement.

Saturday's blast took place late in the evening at a busy sporting club in Port Sudan, the provincial capital of the Red Sea state and the country's main port, and also involved an armed attack.

"An explosive device went off at Al-Amir club... killing four people," the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors said in a statement. Three others were wounded after being shot or stabbed, it added.

GEORGIAN TV
CAMERAMAN
KILLED IN ATTACK

Tbilisi: A Georgian TV cameraman has died after being badly beaten by far-right assailants during a protest against an LGBTQ Pride march, his station said Sunday, as pressure mounted on authorities over attacks on journalists.

Alexander Lashkarava, a 37-year-old cameraman working for independent TV station Pirveli, was found dead in his bed in the early hours on Sunday, the channel reported.

On Monday, he was assaulted by a violent mob of anti-LGBTQ protesters and sustained fractures to his facial bones. More than 50 journalists were attacked that day by anti-LGBTQ groups protesting the planned Pride march, which was cancelled over safety fears.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) condemned the attacks, saying journalists "sustained injuries that included concussion, chemical burns and broken arms." It accused authorities of "culpable passivity" and said police had failed to protect journalists.

Branson reaches space in his own ship

Sirisha becomes third Indian woman to fly to space, plane detached at an altitude of about 13 km

Truth or Consequences (US), July 11: Swashbuckling entrepreneur Richard Branson hurtled into space aboard his own winged rocket ship Sunday in his boldest adventure yet, beating out fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos.

The nearly 71-year-old Branson and five crewmates from his Virgin Galactic space tourism company reached an altitude of about 88 km (53 miles) over the New Mexico desert enough to experience three to four minutes of weightlessness and see the curvature of the Earth and then safely glided back home to a runway landing.

"Seventeen years of hard work to get us this far," a jubilant Branson said as he congratulated his team on the trip back.

Branson became the first person to blast off in his own spaceship, beating Bezos by nine days.

With about 500 people watching, including Branson's wife, children and grandchildren, a twin-fuselage aircraft with his space plane attached underneath took off in the first stage of the flight.

The space plane then detached from the mother ship at an altitude of about 13 km (8.5 miles) and fired its engine, reaching the edge of space. The entire flight up and back aboard the sleek white ship, named Unity, took just under 15 minutes.

Branson's five-member crew also included a Guntur-born aeronautical engineer Sirisha Bandla. She became the third Indian-American woman

to fly into space after Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams. Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma is the only Indian citizen to travel in space. The former Indian Air Force pilot flew aboard Soyuz T-11 on April 3, 1984, part of the Soviet Interkosmos programme.

Branson, the flamboyant, London-born founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways wasn't supposed to fly until later this summer. But he assigned himself to an earlier flight after Bezos announced plans to ride his own rocket into space from Texas on July 20, the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing.

Bezos' Blue Origin company intends to send tourists past the so-called Karman line 100 km (62 miles) above Earth, which

is recognised by international aviation and aerospace federations as the threshold of space.

But NASA, the Air Force, the Federal Aviation Administration and some astrophysicists consider the boundary between the atmosphere and space to begin 80 km (50 miles) up.

Ever the showman, Branson insisted on a global livestream of the Sunday morning flight and invited celebrities and former space station astronauts to the company's Spaceport America base in New Mexico. Virgin Galactic already has more than 600 reservations from would-be space tourists, with tickets initially costing \$250,000 apiece. Blue Origin is waiting for Bezos' flight before announcing its ticket prices.

— Agencies



Virgin Galactic founder Richard Branson carries crew member Sirisha Bandla on his shoulders while celebrating their flight to space at Spaceport America near Truth or Consequences, N.M., Sunday.

— AP

Pak braces to fight fourth wave

Islamabad, July 11: Pakistan is bracing to battle the fourth wave of the Coronavirus pandemic as the country saw a three-fold increase in number of people being tested positive everyday in less than three weeks. Health experts are blaming the reopening of businesses and tourism sector for the resurgence in cases and have urged the government to announce a lockdown so that Eidul Azha is celebrated with the observance of strict health-related restrictions.

The country detected 1,980 new cases in the last 24 hours at the positivity rate of 4.09 per cent, according to the official data released on Sunday. On June 21, the tally of new cases was only 663. It is for the first time that the positivity rate crossed 4 per cent since May 30 when 4.05 per cent was recorded, according to the Ministry of National Health Services.

Positivity rate is the percentage of people who test positive for the virus compared to the total number of people who have been tested. A high value of positivity rate suggests high Coronavirus infection rate, implying greater prevalence of the disease.

The national tally of confirmed cases reached 9,73,284 while the death toll touched 22,582 as 27 more patients died in the last 24 hours. The data showed that 9,13,203 people have fully recovered so far but still some 2,119 were in critical condition, meaning the death toll may rise. The government is banking on vaccination and so far has administered over 19.067 million doses. — PTI



People stand with empty oxygen canisters as they wait to fill them up outside a factory in Yangon on Sunday, amid a surge in Covid-19 cases.

— AFP

Myanmar caught off guard
as cases surge, O2 dwindles

Bangkok, July 11: Soe Win stood in line at a plant to buy oxygen for his grandmother, who is struggling with Covid-19 symptoms. "I have been waiting since 5 in the morning until 12 noon but I'm still in line. Oxygen is scarcer than money," said the resident of Myanmar's biggest city, Yangon. Consumed by a bitter and violent political struggle since the military seized power in February, Myanmar has been slow to wake up to a devastating surge in cases since mid-May.

It has left many of the

sick like Soe Win's grandmother to suffer at home if they cannot find a bed at an army hospital, or prefer not to trust their care to the widely disliked government.

Under Aung San Suu Kyi, the civilian leader ousted by the military, Myanmar had weathered its second Coronavirus surge beginning in August last year by severely restricting travel, sealing off Yangon, and curbing election campaigning in virus hot spots where lockdowns were imposed.

Suu Kyi appeared fre-

quently on television with stern but empathetic entreaties to the public on how to deal with the situation. Vaccine supplies were secured from India and China. Her ouster came less than a week after the first jabs were given to health workers.

Suu Kyi's removal by the military sparked widespread protests, and medical workers spearheaded a popular civil disobedience movement that called on professionals and civil servants not to cooperate with the military-installed government.

— AP

Kabul airport gets missile
system as Taliban advance

Kabul, July 11: Afghan authorities said on Sunday they have installed an anti-missile system at Kabul airport to counter incoming rockets, as the Taliban pressed on with a blistering offensive across the country.

Washington and its allies are due to end their military mission in Afghanistan at the end of August, even as the insurgents say they now control 85 percent of the country — a claim that could not be independently verified and is disputed by the government.

The Islamic fundamentalist group's rapid gains in recent weeks have raised fears about the security of the capital and its airport, with Nato keen to secure a vital exit route to the outside world for foreign diplomats and aid workers.

"The newly installed air defence system has been operational in Kabul since 2:00 am Sunday," the interior ministry said in a statement. "The system has proven useful in the world in repelling rocket and missile attacks." Ministry spokesman Tariq Arjan said it had been installed at the airport, while security forces spokesman Ajmal Omar Shinwari said the system was given by "our foreign friends".

"It has very complicated technology. For now our foreign friends are operating it while we are trying to build the capacity to use it," Shinwari said, adding that in the past week 1,177 Taliban fighters were killed in fighting

Islamabad, July 11: Pakistan is well prepared to deal with the spillover effect it may face in case of a civil war in neighbouring Afghanistan, the country's Army spokesman has said, insisting that Islamabad is only a facilitator of the Afghan peace process, not a guarantor.

Major Gen Babar Iftikhar's comments came as Taliban officials said the group had taken control of 85 per cent of territory in Afghanistan. "Pakistan is only a facilitator of the Afghan peace process, not a guarantor," Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar said. "Pakistan has no favourites among the Afghan stakeholders. The Afghans have to choose

with government forces.

The Taliban have regularly launched rockets and mortars at government forces across the countryside, with the jihadist Islamic State group (IS) carrying out similar strikes on the capital in 2020. IS also claimed responsibility for a rocket attack this year at Bagram Air Base, the biggest US military facility in the country, which was recently handed over to Afghan forces.

Over the years, the US military installed several C-RAMS (Counter Rocket,

their leadership," he said. He said Pakistan was well aware of the spillover effect it may face in case of a civil war in Afghanistan and measures had been taken to deal with it.

He said the security on the border was tight. More than 90 per cent of the 2,611 kilometre-long border has been fenced.

Pakistan is "very well prepared" and the current border security mechanism was "much better", he said. The spokesperson also said that there was fear of a fresh wave of Afghan refugees and the interior ministry has already put together a contingency plan to deal with the situation.

— PTI

Artillery and Mortar Systems) across its bases, including at Bagram, to destroy incoming rockets targeting the facilities, a foreign security official and media reports said.

The C-RAMS includes cameras to detect incoming rockets and alert local forces.

"The Taliban do not have any organised capacity but have demonstrated that they can fire modified rockets from vehicles and create panic, especially if aimed at an airport," a foreign security official said.

— AFP

US swelters as 30M
under heat warning

Los Angeles, July 11: Hot weather alerts are in place for more than 30 million people across the western United States after the region's second heat wave in weeks brought another round of record-equalling high temperatures.

Sweltering conditions have hit much of the Pacific seaboard and as far inland as the western edge of the Rocky Mountains over the weekend, with forecasters warning of more to come on Sunday.

Las Vegas matched its

all-time record of 117 degrees Fahrenheit (47.2 Celsius), according to the National Weather Service (NWS) — a temperature recorded in the desert entertainment city once in 1942 and three other times since 2005.

Forecasters issued an excessive heat warning for the city along with several other urban centers including the southern city of Phoenix and San Jose, the center of the Silicon Valley tech industry south of San Francisco.

— AFP

China vows retaliation as US bans firms

Beijing, July 11: China on Sunday said it will take "necessary measures" to respond to the U.S. blacklisting of Chinese companies over their alleged role in abuses of Uyghur people and other Muslim ethnic minorities.

The Commerce Ministry said the US move constituted an "unreasonable suppression of Chinese enterprises and a serious breach of international economic and trade rules."

China will "take necessary measures to firmly safeguard Chinese companies' legitimate rights and interests," the ministry's statement said.

No details were given, but China has denied allegations of arbitrary detention and forced labor in the far western region of Xinjiang and increasingly responded to sanctions against companies and officials with its own bans on visas and financial links.

The US Commerce Department said in a statement Friday that the electronics and technology firms and other businesses helped enable "Beijing's campaign of repression, mass detention and high-technology surveillance" against Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

The penalties prohibit Americans from selling equipment or other goods to the firms. The United States has stepped up financial and trade penalties over China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities, along with its crackdown on democracy in the semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong.

The Chinese government since 2017 has detained a million or more people in Xinjiang. Critics accuse China of operating forced labor camps and carrying out torture and coerced sterilization as it allegedly seeks to assimilate Muslim ethnic minority

groups.

The US Commerce Department said 14 companies were added to its Entity List over their dealings in Xinjiang, and another five for aiding China's armed forces.

"The Department of Commerce remains firmly committed to taking strong, decisive action to target entities that are enabling human rights abuses in Xinjiang or that use US technology to fuel China's destabilising military modernisation efforts."

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said in a statement posted on the department's website.

— AP

BAD | DOG

Researchers warn of global public health risk in range of raw dog food

Study finds superbug link to man's best friend

Paris, July 11: Antibiotic-resistant "superbugs" — which the World Health Organisation calls one of the top global threats to public health — usually conjure images of hospital settings.

But new research may point to a less-obvious source: the family dog.

Researchers warned Sunday of "an international public health risk" after finding antibiotic-resistant bacteria in a range of different types of raw dog food.

"The trend for feeding dogs raw food may be

fuelling the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria," the researchers said in a press release for their study, to be presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases.

Separate research to be presented at the same conference found resistance to a last-resort antibiotic may be passing between pet dogs and their owners.

Antibiotic-resistant bugs can render minor injuries and common infections potentially deadly.

Resistance has grown in recent years due to over-

● **THE BACTERIA is able to live harmlessly in human and animal intestines but can be dangerous in other parts of the body and can be resistant to antibiotics.**

use of such drugs in humans and farm animals.

In the dog food study, a team from the University of Porto analysed 55 samples of dog food from 25 brands including 14 raw frozen types, looking for Enterococci bacteria.

The bacteria is able to

live harmlessly in human and animal intestines but can be dangerous in other parts of the body and can be resistant to antibiotics.

Researchers found that all of the raw dog food samples contained antibiotic-resistant Enterococci, including bacteria resistant to the last-resort antibiotic linezolid.

Genetic sequencing revealed that some of these antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the raw dog food were the same kind found in hospital patients in the UK, Germany and

the Netherlands.

"The close contact of humans with dogs and the commercialisation of the studied brands in different countries poses an international public health risk," said researcher Ana Freitas.

"European authorities must raise awareness about the potential health risks when feeding raw diets to pets and the manufacture of dog food, including ingredient selection and hygiene practices, must be reviewed." She added that dog owners should wash their hands

after handling pet food and disposing of faeces.

In a separate study, which has not yet been submitted to a medical journal for publication, another team from Portugal tested pet owners and animals from 80 households for bacteria with the mcr-1 gene, which provides resistance to the last-resort antibiotic colistin. Drug-resistant infections kill an estimated 7,00,000 people a year globally and the UN has warned that could rise to 10 million by 2050 if no action is taken.

— AFP



Abiy Ahmed

ETHIOPIA: ABIY'S
PARTY BAGS
LANDSLIDE WIN

Addis Ababa, July 11: Ethiopia's ruling Prosperity Party on Saturday was declared the winner of last month's national election in a landslide, assuring a second five-year term for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

The National Election Board of Ethiopia said the ruling party won 410 seats out of 436 contested in the federal parliament, which will see dozens of other seats remain vacant after one-fifth of constituencies didn't vote due to unrest or logistical reasons.

Ethiopia's new government is expected to be formed in October. The vote was a major test for Abiy, who came to power in 2018 after the former prime minister resigned amid widespread protests. Abiy oversaw dramatic political reforms that led in part to a Nobel Peace Prize the following year, but critics say he is backtracking on political and media freedoms.

— AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52386.19	-0.35
Nifty 50	15689.80	-0.24
S&P 500*	4,369.55	1.13
Dollar (₹)	74.63	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.98	0.01
Euro (₹)	88.47	-0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,844*451	0.96
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	75.56	1.94
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.186	1.01
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.343	0.055

* As of Friday/Saturday

Hero Electric Vehicles to invest ₹700 cr

Hero Electric Vehicles will invest Rs 700 crore by 2025 to rev up its business expansion, including setting up a new unit, for which it has raised Rs 220 crore to part-fund the activities. The firm plans to set up a facility with 10 lakh units capacity, besides increasing production at its current plant at Ludhiana to 3 lakh units per annum from 75,000 units at present, as it targets to sell around 10 lakh units a year by 2025-26.

Amazon sees rise in sellers grossing over ₹1 crore biz



Amazon India said it has seen six-fold growth in the number of sellers grossing over Rs 1 crore in sales during three-day Small Business Days event. "During the three-day event, more than 84, 000 sellers received an order; 68 per cent of these sellers who received an order were from non-metro cities like Kodagu (Karnataka), Dholpur (Rajasthan), Eta (UP), Giridh (Jharkhand), Una (HP) and Tinsukia (Assam), Amazon said.

FPIs pull out ₹2,249 cr from equities in July

After a month of net inflows, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulled out Rs 2,249 crore from the equities market in the first seven trading sessions of July. This could be largely attributed to profit-taking by FPIs with markets trading near all-time highs and investors choosing to stay on the sidelines, said Morningstar India associate director (manager research) Himanshu Srivastava.

Tea exports may decline by 15% this year

The tea industry is bracing for a decline in exports to the tune of 30-40 million kg this year as compared to 2020, due to the availability of low-cost varieties in the global market and trade restrictions in user countries, industry sources said. For January-March this year, exports fell by 13.23 per cent year-on-year and by 29.03 per cent compared to 2019, as per Tea Board India data. Altogether, 45.86 million kg was exported.

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Rules restrict gas supply to PSUs BPCL LPG rights new selloff snag

AMMAR ZAIDI NEW DELHI, JULY 11

A two-decade-old LPG supply order restricting supply of domestically produced LPG to only state-owned oil companies has stymied plans to allow Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) to continue selling subsidised cooking gas (LPG) after its privatisation.

A legal opinion has now been sought to ascertain if privatised BPCL will be eligible to receive liquefied petroleum gas produced by companies such as ONGC and Gail, two government officials with knowledge of the development said.

Currently, BPCL has more than 8.4 crore domestic LPG customers, including 2.1 crore Ujjwala customers. The company does not produce enough LPG at its refineries to be able to cater to the requirement of all these.

It, like other oil marketing companies, buys LPG from state-owned firms like Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Gail (India) Ltd as well as private companies such as Reliance Industries Ltd.

The Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2020, known as LPG Control Order of 2000, restricts sale of indigenously produced cooking gas only to state-owned oil marketing companies, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and BPCL.



It restricts supply of LPG produced by firms such as ONGC and GAIL to private firms. Private LPG retailers, called parallel marketers, have to use imported gas for supplying to customers.

The 2000 Control Order was issued as the nation is short in LPG production.

Once BPCL is privatised, the 2000 order will bar ONGC and GAIL from selling LPG to BPCL, the officials said.

"Post-divestment of the government's stake in BPCL, it shall cease to be a government oil company in terms of clause 2(g) of LPG Control Order of 2000," an official said.

With no access to indigenously produced LPG, BPCL won't be able to serve its customers and it would not be possible to shift the customers to IOC and HPCL, as LPG cylinder equipment at customer end will need to be changed. Also, IOC and HPCL may not have the required infrastructure to cater to such a large customer base, the officials said.

As a way out, it is being considered to continue to treat BPCL as a government company for the purpose of the 2000 Control Order for three years, the officials said adding that a legal opinion has been sought to ascertain if such a move is tenable under the law.

The other alternative is to amend the LPG Control Order itself to allow private firms to access indigenously produced LPG. This would open up LPG retailing to other private firms.

Officials said law ministry opinion has been sought to determine if the term government oil company in the LPG Control Order necessary requires the company to be a government company and if BPCL post-privatisation can be notified as a government oil company.

To interpret the term 'government company', the opinion of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs (MoCA) has been sought, they said. —PTI

Goyal for faceless vetting of subsidy applications

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 11

The applications received under subsidy-oriented schemes for the textile industry should be processed transparently, using automation so that personal contact between industry and department is eliminated, Piyush Goyal, who has taken charge as the textile minister, suggested.

"The applications received under subsidy-oriented schemes should be processed in a transparent manner using automation keeping in view the broad objective of each scheme and necessary mechanisms should be devised so that personal contact of industry and department can be eliminated," he said while talking to industry representatives. He also suggested a special dispensation for MSMEs.

According to A Shaktivel, chairman of the Apparel Export Promotion Council, automation and elimination of human interface will reduce the delay in the processing. Once automated, there would be a specific time-



Piyush Goyal

line to process the applications and this will benefit the industry.

Goyal said the formats for submission of statutory returns from industry needs to be simplified, and emphasised on rationalisation and optimal use of manpower at the Office of the Textile Commissioner and Textiles Committee.

In order to increase productivity of cotton, the minister suggested that the Cotton Corporation of India can work out possibilities for providing kapas plucking machines to the cotton farmers. These machines can be provided by start-ups by availing of mudra loan.

He also suggested a meeting with stakeholders to make a strategic plan to eliminate child labour in the textiles sector.

SONY TO USE ROBOTS TO CUT COSTS

ANCHALEE WORRACHATE JULY 11

Sony Corp. predicts that robots will take over its manufacturing of televisions, smartphones and cameras as the company shifts attention to services, the Financial Times reported.

Unmanned production lines are expected to cut costs by 70 per cent at Sony's mainstay TV factory in Malaysia by the fiscal year 2023, compared with 2018, the FT cited Kimio Maki, head of Sony's electronics businesses, as saying in an interview. The acceleration of factory automation will also reduce product defects, he said.

The plan will be carried out in conjunction with an increased focus on online sales and data analysis. Sales data will be analysed using artificial intelligence to more effectively set manufacturing volume, Maki said.

—Bloomberg

Six North-eastern states have no hallmarking centres

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JULY 11

Though mandatory hall-marking has come into force in the country, most of the North-eastern region will remain outside the purview of the rules, as six of the eight north-eastern states have no hallmarking centres.

Hallmarking for gold jewellery and artefacts has been mandated in districts which have hall-marking centres. However, a large part of the North-east will remain out of the mandate, as Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Sikkim have no hallmarking centres.

Further, among the eight districts in Tripura, only two—North Tripura and West Tripura—have



hallmarking centres. Even a bigger state like Assam, which has 33 districts, has hallmarking centres only in Barpeta, Cachar and Kamrup Metro.

The story is no different in the small states of the eastern region. Among the 28 districts in Chhattisgarh, only Raipur and Durg have hallmarking centres. The presence of such centres is limited to four districts

in Jharkhand.

Though the Northern region has a fairly large number of centres, smaller state Uttarakhand has hallmark centres only in two districts. Western and southern regions account for a major share of the hallmarking centres.

As per the recent government decision, the jewellers in all the districts with hallmarking centres have to sell only hallmarked jewellery and

get their entire inventory hallmarked by September 1. Till then, the government officials will not take any coercive action against the jewellers.

In the rest of the districts, steps will be taken to set up hallmarking centres at a fast pace. As and when the centres are set up, jewellers will have to get a Bureau of Indian Standards licence and get their inventory hallmarked. The government will also provide subsidies to set up new centres in these districts.

In the past few years, hallmarking centres have been coming up in regions which have a higher share of gold consumption. Several jewellers in these regions are already selling fully hallmarked jewellery.

Big insurers launch net-zero climate alliance

Milan, July 11: Eight of the world's leading insurance and reinsurance companies on Sunday launched an alliance to help speed up a transition to a net zero emissions economy.

The companies, which include Europe's top three insurers by premiums—Allianz, AXA and Generali—said the Net-Zero Insurance Alliance (NZIA) would work to shift underwriting portfolios towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The move comes as insurers come under increasing pressure to

spell out how they plan to decarbonise their businesses amid growing calls for them to stop underwriting and investing in fossil fuel projects.

Each of the companies will individually set intermediate targets every five years and report on progress annually in cooperation with competition authorities, the NZIA members said in a statement.

"With this new Net-Zero Insurance Alliance, we are raising our climate ambition further," said Thomas Buberl, Chief Executive of the AXA Group, which

chairs the NZIA.

NZIA members, which also include Aviva, Munich Re, SCOR, Swiss Re and Zurich Insurance Group, will set underwriting criteria for the most carbon-intensive activities in their underwriting portfolios and offer solutions for low-emission and zero-emission technologies.

They will also include net-zero and decarbonisation risk criteria in their risk management frameworks.

"By committing to join the gold standard alliance for net zero, the (NZIA) will ultimately make

underwriting contingent on underlying companies having credible net-zero transition strategies," said UN climate envoy Mark Carney.

The Alliance, first outlined in April, was presented by Generali CEO Philippe Donnet at Sunday's G20 Climate Summit in Venice.

Many of the leading Europe-based insurers have already adopted climate-friendly policies. Last month, Generali pledged to reach carbon neutrality in its direct investment portfolio by 2050. —Reuters

Woman infected with 2 Covid variants highlights next risk

SUZI RING JULY 11

A 90-year-old woman died after becoming infected with two different strains of Covid-19, revealing another risk in the fight against the disease, Belgian researchers found.

In the first peer-reviewed analysis of an infection with multiple strains, scientists found the woman had contracted both the alpha variant, which first surfaced in the UK, and the beta strain, first found in South Africa. The infections probably came from separate people, according to a report published on Saturday and presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases.

The woman was admitted to a Belgian hospital in March after a number of falls, and tested positive for Covid-19 the same day. She lived alone, receiving nursing care at home, and hadn't been vaccinated. Her respiratory symptoms rapidly worsened and she died five days later. When her respiratory samples were tested for variants of concern, both

strains were found in two tests. The researchers couldn't say whether the co-infection played a role in her rapid deterioration. The idea of multiple infections isn't completely new. In January, Brazilian scientists reported two cases of Covid-19 co-infection, but the study hasn't

yet been released in a scientific journal. Researchers have also previously found evidence of people becoming infected with multiple strains of influenza. The cases suggest co-infection might be more common than currently known. —Bloomberg

AUSTRALIA-S'PORE TRAVEL BUBBLE TIMING PUSHED BACK TO END 2021

EMILY CADMAN JULY 11

Sydney's virus outbreak means plans for an Australian-Singapore travel bubble have been delayed until at least the end of the year, the Australian trade minister said on Sunday.

While opening up the travel corridor remains a priority, the scale of the outbreak that has forced the country's largest city into a renewed lockdown means plans are on hold, Dan Tehan told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"It has been put back due to the third wave of

the virus," he said. "The hope might be towards the end of the year that you could look at a travel bubble with Singapore."

Following the initial discussions, the two countries haven't committed to a specific date for the travel bubble.

While Australia was an early success story in the fight against the coronavirus, a sluggish vaccine rollout means even as the rest of the world opens up the country's borders are expected to stay shut until mid-2022. Just 26 per cent of the population have received their first jab. —Bloomberg

HIGH IRON-ORE, PELLET PRICES FORCING SMALL UNITS TO EXIT



Kolkata, July 11: Unprecedentedly high prices of iron-ore and pellet are compelling small, secondary steel units in various states, including West Bengal, to down shutters or curtail production, officials said on Sunday.

In West Bengal, at least five such MSME units have closed down while 100-115 others curtailed production between 15 and 50 per cent, Steel Rolling Mills Association chairman Vivek Adukia said.

"The secondary steel MSMEs are also surrendering power requirements from the DVC and the WBSEDCL (West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited)," Adukia told PTI.

In Bengal, about 500 units are engaged in sponge iron, rolling mills and steel making through the induction furnace route. All these units are suffering along with mills in other states in the wake of unprecedented iron ore, pellet prices from unhindered export.

The secondary steel associations of West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have jointly appealed to the Prime Minister and steel minister for their intervention and imposing export duty of 50 per cent on pellets.

The secondary steel-makers had been pleading for imposing export duty on pellets for the last one year, Adukia said. West Bengal Sponge Iron Manufacturers Association president Shankar Lal Agarwal said pellet price soared from Rs 4,500 per tonne in May 2020 to Rs 15,000 per tonne in June this year resulting in a cost impact on a tonne of steel of Rs 20,800. —PTI

CHINESE CHECKERS One of the last chip firms is being acquired by a Chinese firm

UK sold off \$42 bn of chip firms before review

GILES TURNER & KITTY DONALDSON JULY 11

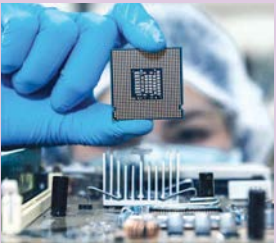
The UK was once the leading semiconductor innovator in Europe, producing the likes of Arm Ltd, whose technology is found in 90 per cent of all mobile devices, and Imagination Technologies Group Ltd, which supplies chip designs used by Apple Inc.

But that was before they were sold off to foreign buyers. Arm was acquired by Japan's SoftBank Group Corp. with the government's approval before being handed off to Nvidia Corp. Imagination was sold to a Chinese buyout fund, signed off by then-Prime Minister Theresa May, even as one of the

funds' founders was under investigation by the FBI for insider trading.

In total, semiconductor companies valued at about \$42 billion have been sold to foreign buyers since May 2010, when the current Conservative government came to power, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. That figure excludes Arm's most recent sale to Nvidia.

Now, in the middle of a semiconductor shortage, one of the last of those assets, Newport Wafer Fab Ltd, is being snapped up by a Chinese manufacturer for around \$3 million pounds (\$87 million), according to a person familiar with the deal. After initially waving it through, Prime Minister



Boris Johnson's government is pledging to review the deal, but critics say it's too little too late.

Newport Wafer Fab has become a test case: It's the first high-profile Chinese takeover in Britain since the government strengthened takeover laws to give itself 30 days to call deals in for scrutiny.

"Newport Wafer Fab is extremely worrying,"

Conservative MP Bob Seely said in an interview. "We need coherence on dealing with the Chinese state. I worry that we are still not there, and I worry that we are still failing to understand our dependency on China and the need to move away from that trade dependency."

It's rare for the UK to halt a sale over national security. When it does, the deals have often been small and involved the aerospace industry. In 2020, a Chinese investor ditched a bid for defence manufacturer Mettiss Aerospace Ltd after the government said it would review the deal. The same year, the government also halted a deal for Impcress Ltd from a China-backed buyer.

Instead, the UK has preferred to place conditions such as increasing local jobs and investment.

Unlike Arm and Imagination Technologies, which are multibillion-dollar companies that play key roles in semiconductor supply chains, it's unclear whether Newport Wafer Fab is of strategic importance to the UK.

The firm makes and prepares the ultra-small sheets of silicon, which serve as the base for microchips and are used for power management in products like cars. It reported a loss of 6.05 million pounds on revenues of 49 million pounds in the fiscal year ending in Sept. 2019, its most recent financial report. —Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

India hit back to level T20 series

Hove: Indian spinners worked wonders during the final overs as visitors edged out England by eight runs in the second women's T20 International to level the three-match series here on Sunday. Batting first, India lost way after a good start provided by opener Shafali Verma (48 off 38 balls) to finish on 148 for 4. In reply, opener Tammy Beaumont's 59 off 50 balls put England in good position before they were restricted to 140/8 in 20 overs.

Poonam Yadav (2/17) and Deepti Sharma (1/17) brought India back in the game during final five overs. — *PTI*
Brief scores: India Women 148 for 4 in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 48, Harmanpreet Kaur 31, Nat Sciver 1/20) bt England 140 for 8 in 20 overs (Tammy Beaumont 59, Poonam Yadav 2/17, Deepti Sharma 1/17).

Sri Lanka's first team test negative

Colombo: The entire Sri Lankan first team, including senior players Kusal Perera, Dushmantha Chameera and Dhananjaya de Silva, have all returned negative in their latest RT-PCR tests ahead of the limited overs series against India. The tests were conducted by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC). It is now expected that the players would be allowed to enter the bio-bubble by Monday as they complete a week-long hard quarantine after their arrival from the United Kingdom. "Normally, the moment we get any positive result we announce. There has been another round of RT-PCR tests conducted yesterday and the results were supposed to come today. We only get the results if there is any positive cases," a source in SLC said. — *PTI*

England clinch Pakistan series

London: Lewis Gregory starred with both bat and ball as England beat Pakistan by 52 runs in the second one-day international at Lord's on Saturday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in a three-match series. Set 248 to win in a game reduced to 47 overs per side by rain, Pakistan were dismissed for 195. Somerset pace-bowling all-rounder Gregory, in just his second match at this level, struck with his first ball on Saturday on the way to 3-44 as England won with six overs to spare. That followed his valuable 40 and an eighth-wicket stand of 69 with Brydon Carse (31), in a maiden ODI innings for both batsmen, after England had slumped to 160-7.
Brief scores: England 247 (Phil Salt 60, James Vince 56, Lewis Gregory 40; Hasan Ali 5/51) bt Pakistan 195 (Saud Shakeel 56; Lewis Gregory 3/44).

Bangladesh put it past Zimbabwe

Harare: More resolute batting and dropped catches held up Bangladesh before they completed a crushing 220-run win over Zimbabwe on the final day of a one-off Test at Harare Sports Club on Sunday. Needing a world record 477 to win, the hosts were all out for 256 after brave innings from nightwatchman Donald Tiripano and fast-medium bowler Blessing Muzarabani delayed the tourists' celebrations. It was the fifth Test victory for Bangladesh outside the country. — *AFP*
Brief scores: Bangladesh 468 & 284/1 (Shadman Islam 115 (not out), Najmul Hossain Shanto 117 (not out)) bt Zimbabwe 276 & 256 (Brendan Taylor 92, Donald Tiripano 52; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 4/66, Taskin Ahmed 4/82).

Hetmyer shines in Windies' easy win

Saint Lucia: Shimron Hetmyer led a formidable West Indies batting effort on the way to a comfortable 56-run victory and a 2-0 lead over Australia in the second T20 International of their five-match series at the Daren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia on Saturday. — *AFP*
Brief scores: West Indies 196/4 (Shimron Hetmyer 61, Dwayne Bravo 47 (not out)) bt Australia 140 (Mitchell Marsh 54; Hayden Walsh 3/29, Sheldon Cottrell 2/22).



Argentina's Lionel Messi holds the trophy aloft as he celebrates with teammates after winning the Copa America final against Brazil on Saturday.

— AFP

MESSI, NEYMAR NAMED BEST OF COPA AMERICA

Rio De Janeiro, July 11: Argentina's Lionel Messi and Brazil's Neymar were picked as the two best players of the Copa America just before they met in the final on Saturday.

"It is not possible to choose only one (best) player because this tournament has two of them," CONMEBOL said in a statement.

Messi dished up four goals and five assists in six matches.

Neymar delivered two goals and three assists in five games.

CONMEBOL's technical study group added that the players had a positive impact on their teams and were "the reflection of the South American DNA in every match they played" in the Copa.

Neymar has steered Brazil with his dribbles, passes and shots. His exchanges with Lucas Paqueta have made Brazil more fluid up front.

— AP

ANGEL TO THE RESCUE

Di Maria delivers as Argentina beat rivals Brazil for Copa America title

Rio de Janeiro, July 11: Superstar Lionel Messi won his first trophy with his national team as Angel Di Maria's goal gave Argentina a 1-0 win over hosts Brazil in the Copa America final on Saturday. The victory at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium ended Argentina's 28-year wait for a major trophy, and also ended Brazil's unbeaten home record that stretched back more than 2,500 days.

Argentina had last tasted success at a major tournament in 1993 when the great Gabriel Batistuta's brace gave them a 2-1 win over Mexico in the Copa final in Ecuador.

"It's a great title, especially for our people. The fans support the team unconditionally. I think they can identify with this team that never gives in," said Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

It was the first time in six editions playing at home that Brazil had failed to lift the trophy.



Brazil's Neymar (left) with Lionel Messi at the end of the Copa final in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday.

— AP

Argentina edged a brutal and fractious affair thanks to Di Maria's goal on 22 minutes.

The 33-year-old winger ran onto Rodrigo De Paul's sumptuous through ball to lob Brazil goalkeeper Ederson with a first time finish.

"We fell short so many times, we dreamt so much about this, fought so hard," said Di Maria, who was named man of the match.

"Many people said we wouldn't manage it, we were criticized a lot. But we kept knocking at the door and kept going until today we knocked it down and entered."

Messi could have wrapped up the win two minutes from time but slipped when clean through with only Ederson to beat.

"We have to be big enough to recognize (the

defeat) regardless of how painful and difficult it is," said Brazil coach Tite.

In a frantic start, Argentina's burly enforcer Nicolas Otamendi was quickly in with his first foul while Brazilian midfielder Fred picked up the first booking after just three minutes for a studs up lunge at Gonzalo Montiel.

Brazil were unchanged from their semi-final win over Peru while Scaloni made five alterations, notably bringing in Di Maria — who made an energetic and decisive entry off the bench against Colombia last time out.

Brazil struggled to create anything of note and even when they had a free-kick from shooting range, Neymar couldn't beat the wall.

When the hosts did finally maintain some pressure late in the first half, Everton's deflected strike bobbled though to goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

— AFP

Messi's quest for glory finally comes to an end

Rio De Janeiro, July 11: When Lionel Messi, already a regular starter for the mighty Barcelona, made his international bow in 2005 as an 18-year-old for a powerful Argentina side he surely never imagined it would take him 16 years to finally claim a trophy with his country.

But the six time Ballon d'Or winner had to suffer numerous disappointments, including losing four finals, before leading his country to a 1-0 victory over "eternal rivals" Brazil in the Copa America final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium on Saturday.

Despite a glittering career that has seen him

MESSI'S ARGENTINA HONOURS

- 2021 Copa America title & golden boot winner
- Fifa U-20 World Cup in 2005.
- Olympic Gold Medal in 2008.
- Record number of appearances for Argentina: 151

help Barcelona to win the Champions League four times, La Liga 10 times and the Copa Del Rey seven times, Messi's hopes of matching that with inter-

national success were repeatedly frustrated.

In truth he wasn't as inspired in the final as throughout the tournament, even slipping over when clean through two minutes from time and facing Brazil's goalkeeper Ederson with a chance to finish the match.

But the way his teammates threw him into the air after the final whistle showed how important and appreciated he is within the Argentina camp.

"It was my dream. It was what I wanted most in the world," said Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez following the triumph. "We gave it to Messi, who deserved it the most." — *AFP*

N-OLE, OLE, OLE!

Djokovic wins 20th slam, joins Federer, Nadal at top

London, July 11: Novak Djokovic won a record-equaling 20th Grand Slam title and sixth Wimbledon on Sunday with a four-set victory over battling Matteo Berrettini of Italy.

The world number one triumphed 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to move level on 20 majors with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

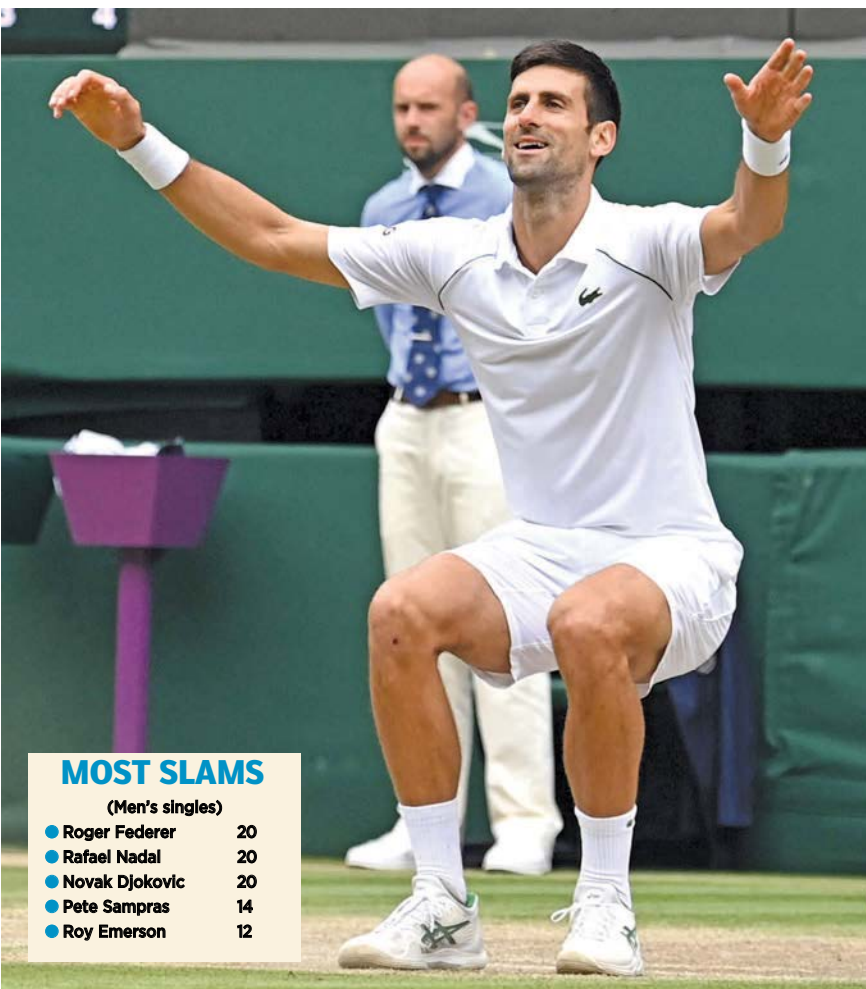
His win also put him three-quarters of the way to the first calendar Grand Slam of all four majors since 1969.

A sixth victory at the All England Club for Djokovic, who was playing in his 30th final at the Slams, added to his nine Australian Opens, two Roland Garros titles as well as three at the US Open.

Should he win a fourth title in New York in September, he will become just the third man in history after Don Budge (1938) and Rod Laver (1962 and 1969) to complete the calendar Grand Slam.

"It was more than a battle. He is a true Italian hammer I felt it on my skin," said Djokovic of Berrettini.

"It means none of us three will stop. Roger and Rafa are legends they are the reason I am where I am today." Federer — who bowed out in the quarter-finals while Nadal did not play — tweeted his congratulations. "Congrats Novak on your 20th major," he said. "I'm proud to have the opportunity to play in a special era of tennis champions. Wonderful performance, well done!"



Serbian star Novak Djokovic celebrates after beating Matteo Berrettini of Italy in the Wimbledon final on Sunday.

— AFP

MOST SLAMS

(Men's singles)

- Roger Federer 20
- Rafael Nadal 20
- Novak Djokovic 20
- Pete Sampras 14
- Roy Emerson 12

The Serb also now has 85 career titles while he has become the first man to break the \$150 million prize money barrier.

A gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics could give him the first ever Golden Grand Slam by a

male player.

Djokovic overcame a nervy start to break for 3-1, which he stretched to 5-2. He even had a set point in a marathon eighth game which the Italian saved after eight deuces.

Reinvigorated, he broke

Djokovic when he served for the set and then dominated the tiebreaker which he sealed with his fourth ace of the contest.

The top seed stormed to a 5-1 lead in the second set on the back of a double break. Berrettini, bidding

to be Italy's first men's Grand Slam winner since Adriano Panatta at the 1976 French Open, clawed his way back to 4-5, saving three set points, but Djokovic this time served it out for a set apiece.

Djokovic struck first again for a 2-1 lead in the third set and fought off three break points in the sixth game, a show of defiance which brought watching Hollywood star Tom Cruise to his feet.

That was Berrettini's last chance of the set as Djokovic served it out in the 10th game.

INDIAN-ORIGIN SAMIR LIFTS BOYS' TITLE

Indo-American tennis player Samir Banerjee lifted the Wimbledon boys' singles title on Sunday, a remarkable triumph for the youngster who was testing his skills in a Grand Slam for only the second time in his fledgling career.

All of 17, the boy from New Jersey just wanted to win a match at the biggest stage in the junior circuit, but little did he know that he would be the last boy standing at the hallowed grass courts. Up against compatriot Victor Lillo, the teenager won 7-5 6-3 in the summit clash that lasted one hour 22 minutes. He broke his rival thrice and dropped serve only once in a facile win.

"I came into this tournament looking to win a round and trying to play well because I knew I was playing well before this," he was quoted as saying by *itftennis.com*.

— Agencies

Olympic briefs

Music keeps Neeraj positive

Starved for competitive exposure in the build-up to the Olympics, star India javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has found a unique way to ensure that his mind feels ready for his maiden appearance in the Games. "I listen to slow music and imagine that I am in a competition, taking part and throwing in the Olympics, so that I don't feel completely new in my first competition," Chopra said. Touted as one of India's strongest bets for a medal in Tokyo, Chopra said his build-up to the Games has been quite challenging given the lack of competitive exposure.

Boxers to leave on July 17

India's Olympic-bound boxing contingent, which is preparing for the Games in Italy right now, will leave for Tokyo from their training base in Assisi on July 17. An unprecedented nine Indian pugilists have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, including five men and four women. All of them are giving final touches to their Games preparations in Assisi. The Games will open on July 23 with boxing competitions starting the next day. The men who have qualified are world number one and Asian Games champion Amit Panghal (52kg), Manish Kaushik (63kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg), Ashish Kumar (75kg), and Satish Kumar (+91kg).

Anand defeats Kasparov again

Zagreb, July 11: Former world champion Viswanathan Anand defeated long-time rival Garry Kasparov for the second consecutive time, in the 13th round of the Croatia Grand Chess Tour's Blitz event here on Sunday. He had beaten Kasparov on the first day too.

The victory came for the Indian maestro after three straight draws in rounds 10, 11 and 12 against Anish Giri (the Netherlands), Jan-Krzysztof Duda (Poland) and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (France) respectively. He followed it up with a

superb win over Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi, the top-seed in the 14th round to be joint third in the standings with Giri on 18 points.

Playing black, Anand got the better of Kasparov in 25 moves in a Nimzo-Indian defence game.

On the first day of the Blitz on Saturday, the Indian ace had recorded four wins, drawn three matches and suffered two defeats. The former world champion had ended up seventh after the Rapid section, with nine points. He had posted two wins and drawn five and lost two matches. — *PTI*