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WINDOWS

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I did nothing else but praise govt 24x7 and fault Oppn for everything. How then can they call me a non-performer?

Hot, humid conditions in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Humid conditions prevailed in the national capital on Friday as it recorded a maximum temperature of 38.2 degrees Celsius. The city experienced its fourth 'heat wave day' this month on Thursday with the mercury soaring to 41.8 degrees Celsius. It reeled under heat wave on July 1 (43.1 degrees Celsius), July 2 (41.3 degrees Celsius) and July 7 (42.6 degrees Celsius) also. The city

recorded 8.8 mm of rainfall till 8.30 am on Friday as the humidity levels oscillated between 89 per cent and 49 per cent. Palam observatory recorded a high of 38.2 degrees Celsius while the one in Lodhi Road saw a maximum temperature of 37.1 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature in the city was recorded at 24.1 degrees

7-year-old girl raped in Punjab

HOSHIARPUR: A seven-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour in a village here, police said on Friday. The incident took place in Nangal Shahidan village on Thursday when the girl's parents, who are daily wagers, were at work and the victim was alone at home. A case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act was registered on the complaint of the victim's mother. According to the complaint, the accused, Sarbjit fields, raped her.

81 cases, 3 more deaths in Delhi

NEW DELHI: The national capital recorded 81 fresh COVID-19 cases, and three deaths due to the disease on Friday, according to data shared by the health department here. The positivity rate slightly dropped to 0.11 per cent from 0.12 per cent on Thursday when 93 cases and three deaths were recorded. The three new fatalities have pushed the death toll in the city to 25,011, according to the latest bulletin. On Tuesday, Delhi had reported 79 cases and four deaths. And on Wednesday, 93 cases and four deaths were recorded, according to official figures. On February 16, ninety-four people were diagnosed Covid positive while the daily tally was 96 on January 27, according to official figures. The infection rate. which had reached TO 36 per cent in the last week of April, has come down to below 0.15 per cent now.

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE GETS DELHI HIGH COURT BACKING

FAVOURING the introduction of Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the Delhi High Court has said the Indian youth need not be forced to struggle with issues arising due to conflicts in various personal laws in relation to marriage and di-

The modern Indian society was "gradually becoming homogenous, the traditional barriers of religion, community and caste are slowly dissipating" and thus UCC "ought not to remain a mere hope", Justice Prathiba M Singh stated in an order dated July 7. "The youth of India belonging to various communi-

their marriages ought not to be forced to struggle with issues arising due to conflicts in various personal laws, especially in relation to marriage and divorce," the order said.

While referring to several decisions of the Supreme court on the need for UCC, including the historical Shah Bano case of 1985, the high court said: "The hope expressed in Article 44 of the Constitution that the State shall secure for its citizens Uniform Civil Code ought not to remain a mere hope." In the Shah Bano case, the apex court had said that a common civil code would help the cause of national integration by removing disparate

loyalties to laws having conflicting ideologies. It had also observed that the State was charged with the duty of securing UCC for the citizens of the country.

The high court observed that the need for UCC was reiterated from time to time by the Supreme Court, however, "it is unclear as to what steps have been taken in this regard till date". It directed that a copy of the order be communicated to the Secretary, Ministry of Law & Justice, Government of India, for necessary action as deemed appropriate. The court was dealing as to whether the marriage between the parties who belonged to the Meena community were excluded from the ambit of the Hindu Marriage Act,

> band sought divorce, the wife contended that HMA did not apply to them as Meena community was a notified Scheduled Tribe in Rajasthan. The court rejected the wife's stand and said that cases like the present one "highlight the need for such a Code

1955 (HMA). When the hus-

form principles being applied in respect of aspects such as marriage, divorce, succession etc." It recorded that since inception of the litigation, both parties have pleaded that their marriage was solemnised according to Hindu rites and ceremonies and they follow Hindu customs. The same, the court noted, as reflected in several documents including the marriage invitation and complaint filed under domestic violence act. The court said that although there was no definition of Hindu, the Supreme Court has held that if members of Tribes are Hinduised, HMA would be applicable to them.

Privacy policy put on hold, **WhatsApp tells Delhi HC**

WhatsApp LLC told the Delhi High Court on Friday that till the data protection bill comes into force, it will not compel users to opt for its new privacy policy as it has been put on hold and will implement it "if Parliament allows it".

WhatsApp clarified before bench of Chief justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh that it would not limit the functionality for users who are not opting for new privacy policy in the meantime. Appearing for the instant

messaging platform, Senior Advocate Harish Salve said, "We voluntarily agreed to put it (the policy) on hold... We will not compel people to accept." Salve said that WhatsApp would nonetheless continue to display the update to its users. In response to Salve's submission, the court observed that even though the implementation had been put on hold, the policy still continued to ex-

"You are not implementing it but the policy is with you and any day it can come," the court said. Salve reiterated that the approach would be maintained till the data protection bill becomes the law. "Commitment is

that I will do nothing till the Parliament's law comes in. If Parliament allows it, I will have it. If it doesn't, bad luck... I've taken it off till the Parliament makes a law. Either we fit in or we don't," Salve said.

The Personal Data Protection Bill seeks to regulate the use of individual's data by the government and private companies. The Joint Committee of Parliament

examining the Bill has been given extension till the monsoon session to submit its report. The court was hearing the appeals of Facebook and its firm WhatsApp against the singlejudge order refusing to stop the competition regulator CCI's order directing a probe into WhatsApp's new privacy policy. Last month, an application was moved by WhatsApp for interim stay on the probe. Salve argued that since the genesis of the probe -the privacy policy - has been stalled for now, the inquiry into the same by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had become academic. "Objectionable part was 'take it or leave it'. For present, 'take it or leave it' is something we are not doing. Opt in, opt out is not there. Everybody is using," he said.

He also urged the court to grant WhatsApp time till the end of July to respond to the questionnaire sent by CCI to it in relation to the inquiry. Salve informed the court that on June 4, WhatsApp received a letter from CCI, seeking information directly in relation to the issue of privacy which is being looked into by the Supreme Court and the high court.

1,500 O2 plants soon: Modi

New Delhi

More than 1,500 PSA (Pressure Swing Adsorption) oxygen plants are coming up across the country, the government said on Friday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the progress of augmentation and availability of the life-saving gas.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), in a statement, said Modi asked officials to ensure that these plants are made functional at the earliest and also told them to work closely with state governments in this re-

These upcoming oxygen plants include those being built with the contribution from

the PM CARES fund as well as from various ministries and PSUs, it said. PSA oxygen plants contributed by the PM CARES fund are coming up in all states and districts of the country, and Modi was told that they will support more than 4 lakh oxygenated beds once functional, the PMO said.

"PM asked officials to ensure there is adequate training of hospital staff on operation and maintenance of oxygen plants. He also directed officials to ensure that each district has trained personnel available," it said. The prime minister was informed by officials that a training module prepared by experts is in place, and they are targeting training of around 8,000 people across the country.



Huge crowd during the funeral procession of former Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh, in Shimla on Friday

Cong to reach out to each house ahead of MCD polls

New Delhi

THE Delhi Congress would be executing a major outreach programme to reach out to each household in each ward to collection information on

the issues there and also gather people's feedback on the government's role during the pandemic. Delhi Congress

President Anil Kumar Chaudhary told IANS: "We are in the process of training the party volunteers to visit each household and get the feedback of the people and government's role during the pandemic be it Union government, Delhi government or

the MCD as many hospitals are being run in Delhi by the MCD." Chaudhary said said that during the sec-

ond wave, the government failed and due to mismanagement, people suffered in the pandemic. He said that only Congress volunteers were on the road. He also questioned the role of private

hospitals during the pandemic and alleged that many hospitals indulged in malpractice and profiteering and this was due to lack of administra-

> Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. "Kejriwal is only interested in publicity like the Prime Minister and not interested to serve the people of the

tive skills of Delhi

Delhi," he said. Chaudhary was appointed the Congress' Delhi unit president after the party failed to win a single seat in the assembly polls and his first litmus test will be the MCD

polls. Parvez Alam Khan, the block president of Okhla, said: "We are getting ready with proforma and will visit each house as the programme starts."

The Congress is out of power in the MCD and BJP is ruling the local body.

CBI arrests 2 in graft case

NEW DELHI: The CBI on Friday arrested Jai Prakash Gupta, an assistant manager with the National Institute for Smart Government, along with another person in an alleged bribery case.

A CBI spokesperson said that the agency has arrested Gupta, working as the State Resource Person (SRP) of UIDAI in Jaipur under an MoU between UIDAI and the National Institute for Smart Government, and Hemraj Tanwar, the owner of Tanwar Complete Services in Jaipur.

The official said that the agency has registered a case registered against Tanwar and unknown public servants of UIDAI posted in Delhi or Jaipur on a complaint alleging that the owner of the private firm had demanded undue advantage of Rs 25,000 from the complainant in the name of the unknown public servants of UIDAI of Jaipur or New Delhi for facilitating the complainant in restoring his Operator ID which was suspended in March, 2021.

Non-compliance of new IT rules

No coercive steps against NBA members: Kerala HC

Косні

THE Kerala High Court on Friday directed the Centre not to take any coercive action against the members of News Broadcasters Association (NBA), which represents several news channels, over non-compliance of the new IT rules.

Justice P B Suresh Kumar also issued notice to the Centre and sought its stand on the plea by NBA which has contended that the new IT Rules give government authorities "excessive powers" to "unreasonably and impermissibly restrict" the freedom of speech and expression of the media.

Senior advocate Maninder Singh, who appeared for the NBA, said that under the new IT rules, a Joint Secretary would be heading the oversight mechanism which would supervise the self-



retired judge.

Under the rules, media companies or their associations have to form self-regulatory bodies which would be headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court or High Courts or an eminent person.

Singh contended that as a result a Joint Secretary would be supervising orders of a retired judge.

The Supreme Court on Friday said the Centre's plea seeking transfer of petitions challenging the validity of new IT Rules from different high courts to the apex court would be heard on July 16 along with a pending matter related to regulation of overthe-top (OTT) platforms.

SC: It's very amusing Delhi has come to us against Centre via PIL

New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday declined to entertain the Delhi government's PIL seeking closure of 10 power plants in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, claiming they contributed majorly to pollution in the national capital.

A bench comprising Justices Navin Sinha and R. Subhash Reddy observed: "Find it very amusing state is coming to the SC against Union of In-

Declining to entertain the PIL, the bench asked the Delhi government to intervene in air pollution case pending before the top court and emphasised there was no need for Delhi to

Despite exhortation from the Delhi government counsel, the top court did not budge from its stand and decline to entertain the PIL.

The bench also cautioned the government that it may shoot a volley of questions, if it insists on hearing the

Justice Sinha told senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the Delhi government: "We have a lot of questions to ask you... we are giving you the option (to withdraw the

"If we ask all the questions, we do not which way the case will move. So, it's better for Delhi government to intervene in the pending matter."



Justice Sinha told Gonsalves that the government is asking for a mandamus to close these power plants or to immediately seize operations, if technology (to reduce emissions) is not installed in them. Gonsalves submitted pollution is a serious concern for the state government, as it severely affects the health and also leads to death of the people.

"Power plants contribute 80 per cent of sulphates etc. Control of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide has to be there. These are the killer gases," he added.

He cited that it was stated by Central Pollution Control Board in its report that the Flue Gas Desulphurization (FGD) will be installed by 2019. The bench pointed out that now the deadline is 2022. Gonsalves replied that it makes a mockery of the entire thing and pollution is becoming worse now, thus, the deadline should

As Justice Sinha replied that that "we understood your case, state has come under a PIL against government of India". Gonsalves said this is because it is affected by the power plants.

The top court told Gonsalves to intervene in air pollution case, or "if you want to go to NGT go there or intervene in pending matter", and reiterated that government should with-

draw the plea. Justice Sinha told Gonsalves that "your case is Centre made a statement before the court and now they are deviating. If it is in the order, then go under that case (intervene in that

After hearing argument, the top court said that the writ is dismissed as withdrawn.

On Thursday, the top court commenting on the ongoing political tussle between Centre and Delhi government, had said for better governance, both will have to "walk hand-in-hand or at least, side-by-side". It added that differences between the two over the exercise of administrative powers in Delhi "is almost a daily governance tussle", and maturity is required from both sides.

AMEESHA PATEL @AMEESHA_PATEL

Showing ur back doesn't mean u don't care means u just want to move ahead from the past shoot mode





Sameera Reddy talks about how yoga helped her lose weight

ctress Sameera Reddy on Friday highlighted the role of Yoga in her weight loss journey. The actress is trying to shed a few extra kilos by Diwali

"2020 was letting go and 2021 is about regaining control over my fitness goals. I just finished an hour of yoga with @yogabypramila. I wonder if everyone else in the online class is sweating and panting as much as I am. It's #fitnessfriday and I'm on a mission!! 84.9 kg and I am on my way to 75 kg. I'm thrilled with the so many people writing in on how they feel energised with our Friday motivation! It's a group effort and we can do it. How's it going people #fitnessmotivation #letsdothis," Sameera shared in an Instagram post.

The actress recently took to social media to inform that she has reduced seven kilos from 92kg, abstains from emotional eating, snacking and maintains portion control while eating.

HOW TO USE KALONJI OIL FOR HAIR PROBLEMS



alonji are produced by Nigella Sativa, a flower ⊾native to Eastern Europe, Southwest Asia, and the Middle

Black seed oil is the fixed oil extracted by pressing the seeds of Nigella sativa, an annual flowering plant found in many parts of India. The small and bitterflavoured seeds act like food to your hair to cure baldness and fix problems like hair loss or premature shedding, greying and dandruff. Kalonji seeds or onion seeds, as they are sometimes called, constitute 38 per cent of oil that is responsible for its aromatic flavour.

These little incredible seeds have been used in remedies for thousands of years for allergies, asthma, diabetes, headache, weight loss, arthritis, and intestinal worms. The unique-looking seeds have a distinctive flavour, also used in cooking to add flavour to breads, curries, and pickle.

They're used as flavoring agents while cooking, using them in various forms of bread like naan, paratha, chapatti and others. In Bengal, kalonji seeds are used to flavour dals, vegetables and even fish. In fact, it is known to have healing properties, as it helps to control cholesterol and also regulates high blood sugar. What is even more beneficial is that it encourages weight loss.



which encourages blood circulation, especially in the head. This is known to promote rapid hair growth within weeks."

Regular use of kalonji oil helps to not just prevent premature greying, but also reverses greying of hair in a number of case . Boil a few black cumin seeds until they appear bland in flavour. When the mixture is cool, strain it out. Add vinegar solution to the cumin water and rinse your hair with the solution Wash off with shampoo after hours or the next day. You can use it thrice in a week for better results.

Another important benefit is that it encourages the formation of pigment and thus helps to prevent and delay greying of the hair. Since the oil of Nigella seeds is said to contain antioxidants, it helps to fight age-related degeneration too and that is why it helps to control greying of the hair. It also improves the texture and quality of the hair and may even help to reverse greying.

One important advantage is that oil of the kalonji seeds can be mixed with other ingredients

and

and applied on the skin or scalp. For instance, you can mix it with a pressed oil, like coconut oil, sesame seed oil or olive oil.

Mix one 1 tablespoon black seed oil with 1 tablespoon of any pressed oil in a jar.

Start massaging the oil blend into your scalp. Focus on the areas that are losing most hair. Leave the oil in for about 30 minutes to an hour and then wash it off with your regular shampoo. You can use this mixture 3 times a week.

You can also mix it with aloe vera gel, or even honey and apply it directly to the scalp. Apart from using the oil, you can also grind the seeds into a powder. Mix one teaspoon of the powder with a little oil or milk and apply on the scalp. Leave on for 15 minutes and then massage the scalp lightly with the fingertips. The powdered seeds work like a scrub and help to cleanse the pores of the scalp. They also help in the removal of sticky dandruff, when the flakes adhere to the scalp. If there is dandruff, you can also mix the kalonji seed powder with apple cider vinegar and apply on the scalp. This helps to restore the normal acid-alkaline balance of the scalp and thus restores health to the hair. Or mix one teaspoon kalonji seed powder with aloe vera gel and apply on the scalp. Leave on for 20 to 30 minutes and then wash off. This really helps to soothe and moisturise the scalp. Mix half cup coconut oil,1 tablespoon honey, and 1 tablespoon black seed oil to make a paste. Massage the mixture into your scalp using fingers in a circular motion. Cover your hair with a warm towel to improve the efficacy of the hair mask. Leave the mixture on for 30 minutes and wash it off with sulfate-free shampoo. We do not have to look far, because Nature has provided us with what we need to flavour our food, heal ailments and restore both health and beauty.

Pina Coloda Day Pina Colada is steeped is mystery, folklore, and conflict. Pina Coloda Day Pina Colada is steeped is mystery, folklore, and conflict. Pina Coloda Day Pina Coloda is steeped is mystery, folklore, and conflict.

The Pina Colada has a long **L** and noble history, both as a mixological standard, and as the heart of a song about not giving up on love, just because you think it's gotten stale.

The name for the drink comes from the basis of its creation, Pina means "Pineapple" and Colada means "Strained." This drink is a delicious mix of all the things that speak to the Caribbean and tropical locales, with the pineapple juice mixed together with a rich coconut cream, spiked up with just a bit of white rum into the mix.

Is there anything that speaks more of warm white sand beaches and beautiful azure skies than a drink that was born on those same shores?

As befits a drink born of tropic fruits from tropical shores, stirred with a drink distilled from the rich sugar born drink favored by merchants and pirates alike, the history of the

The first and oldest story of the drink is born in the Caribbean waters around Peurto Rico, upon the ship of one Roberto Cofresi, Captain of a crew of the foulest batch of pirates to sail the seas in the early 19th century. While this is the earliest known origin of the drink, used to boost the morale of the crew, the recipe was lost for a time after his death in 1825.

It wasn't until 1954 that the drink was to find itself rediscovered by one Ricardo Garcia, a story tells that it was discovered as a series of fortunately unfortunate events, starting with a strike of the coconut cutters union that led to a shortage of the favored cup of the resorts favored drink, the Coco-Loco.

on the skin or scalp. The oil of the

Nigella seeds can be diluted and

applied to the scalp to soothe and

cure infection and eruptions. It

contains compounds that help to

fight hair loss. It also nourishes

the hair follicles and this helps to

promote hair growth. As we all

know, the hair grows out of a hair

follicle. Restoring health to the

hair follicle helps hair growth.

Since the kalonji oil is a natural

plant product, it is a safe way of

helping hair growth and does not

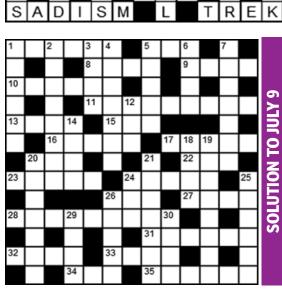
have harmful effects. The black

seed oil contains omega-3 and 6

Without a freshly macheted coconut shell to serve it in, Ricardo adapted to the circumstances in front of him by presenting the drink in a hollowed out pineapple instead. Thus, according to this bit of lore, the Pina Colada was reborn.



L A D Y GLOATS M P H TOMMYROT $I \mid N \mid T \mid O \mid$ COEXIST M M O T H E RSTRONGBOX RAN EV | S | O | T | O | S | P BUYING K|E|T|C|H|U C|L|A|R|I|N|E N A B



Across

- 1 A unit of astronomical distance - "capers"
- anagram?(6) Manage (3)
- Old English pronoun? (4) Peak (4)
- 10 Try again? (6)
- 11 Small letters (5,4)
- 13 Fuel from a bog (4)
- 15 At once (3)
- 16 Red-breasted bird? (5)
- 17 A savoury jelly (5) 20 Inquire about (3)
- 22 Monetary unit Afghanistan (3)
- 23 Less restricted (5)
- 24 Faithful reliable (5)
- 26 Did possess (3)
- 27 Old time Russian ruler (4)
- 28 Sailors' musical instruments (9)
- 31 Motionless (6) 32 Space; region (4)
- 33 Showily pretentious (4) 34 Pen point (3)

CROSSWORD SUDOKU

35 Marked by spirited enjoyment (6)

Down 1 Type of garnet - "popery"

- anagram (6) 2 Practise (8)
- And others, abbreviated,
- in Latin (2,2) Persistent (7)
- Extend a subscription (5)
- Pusher's chaser (4)
- Commence a sea voyage
- 12 Succeeded (3)
- 14 A pull on a cigarette or pipe (4)
- 18 Petty quarrel (4)
- 19 Throbs (8) 20 Arsenal (7)
- 21 Diffidence (7)

25 Expensive (6)

- 24 Napkin's place (3)
- 26 Muslim headscarf (5) 29 North Indian restaurant
- staple (4) 30 Eye problem (4)

6 5 8 9 6 4 6 9 4 8 2

9

3

6

SOLUTION TO JULY 9	6	3	5	2	9	1	7	4	8
	2	8	9	5	4	7	6	3	1
	7	4	1	6	8	3	5	9	2
	9	6	7	1	2	4	8	5	3
	4	5	3	8	7	6	1	2	9
	1	2	8	3	5	9	4	7	6
	3	7	6	9	1	5	2	8	4
	5	9	2	4	6	8	3	1	7
	8	1	4	7	3	2	9	6	5

Katrina Launches Colour Correcting Primer Kay Beauty

very girl wants a perfect canvas for her make-up. A primer weight and doesn't leave any streaks. I love the gentle #kare ingredients that keep my skin done right is the first step to a hydrated every time I use it", flawless and radiant complexion. A great primer that can launches the new colour corcolour correct, and camouflage recting primer range for her all blemishes means fewer laybeauty line, Kay Beauty. ers of make-up and fresh, natural-looking skin. It's

so simple to use, even if you are on the go, what's more, it's

says actress Katrina Kaif as she Infused with light-diffusing technology, the Primer

launches in five variants to address different skin concerns using the colour wheel to help you make the right choice. Green neutralizes redness and hides blemishes; Purple counteracts dullness and brightens skin; Yellow combats broken capil-

spots. The two variants of Peach and Orange suit a wide spectrum of Indian skin tones, from light to medium and dark, as they cancel out dark spots, veins and under-eye circles. The water-based formula ensures high hydration, acts as a filter to the skin and doesn't budge even after an entire day of wear, owing to its

laries and

hides age

transfer proof and smudge proof promise. The 100 percent silicone free primer is suitable for all skin types, and has a lightweight, absorbent, non-greasy formula that allows doesn't clog your pores or cause breakouts, pro-

your makeup to breathe, viding an even and luminous finish.

SP manifesto to promise free power, pension to women, jobs

THE Samajwadi Party has started preparing its election manifesto for the upcoming Assembly elections in Uttar

Taking a leaf from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) manifesto, the Samajwadi Party will be promising free electricity up to 300 units for poor families and Rs 1,500 monthly pension to women head of the BPL families. The party will also assure 10 lakh jobs for the

"Free electricity scheme is likely to figure in the manifesto along with pension for women and jobs for youth," said a senior leader, collecting the feedback from the party workers on the manifesto.

According to party sources, leaders preparing the manifesto are scanning the manifestoes of those parties that have successfully defeated the BJP in recent elections -- AAP in Delhi, Trinamool Congress

in West Bengal and Congress in Punjab.

These issues have also found approval among party cadres across the state when the SP leadership sought their feedback on what should be included in the party manifesto for the Assembly polls, slated to be held early next

Most of the party workers said such issues which directly affect the poor and the middle class should be a part of the

manifesto as it will give SP an edge over its political rivals.

Sources said party leadership was also holding consultations with experts to take a call on the financial viability of the three issues that are being included in the manifesto.

Party's chief spokesperson and secretary Rajendra Chaudhary, said, "Party workers and leaders have made such a suggestion because they have earlier seen how our national president lived up to

the promise of distributing free laptops, metro rail project and Lucknow-Agra Expressway project."

He said people know that when the party makes a promise, it fulfils it too.

Many of the party workers have also suggested that the party should also announce that these promises will be fulfilled in the first cabinet meeting that will be held after the SP is voted to power in the 2022 polls.



DEATHS DURING STIR AGAINST FARM LAWS

SAD promises govt job to kin of farmers

CHANDIGARH

SHIROMANI Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Friday promised government job to the kin of farmers who died during the agitation against the Centre's farm laws if the coalition led by his party comes to power in the state.

The SAD president also assured free education to children and grandchildren of the farmers who lost their lives during the protest. The SAD is contesting the 2022 Assembly polls in the state in alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). "Today, I assure Punjabis: Immediately after forming the govt in 2022, SAD-BSP will honour the martyrs of Kisan Andolan with one govt job per family, free education to their children & grandchildren till post-graduation & health insurance cover to the entire family," said Badal in a

In a video posted on his Twitter handle, Badal said for the past seven months, farmers have been camping at the Delhi borders, demanding repeal of the "black" farm laws brought by the Modi government at the Centre. He said more than 550 farmers have "laid down" their lives during this agi-



tation. If the SAD-BSP alliance comes to power, its first decision will be to provide government jobs to a family member of the each farmer who died during the agitation, Badal said.

He also hoped that farmers would be victorious in their agitation against the three farm legislations. Farmers mostly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been camping at Delhi borders since November last year, demanding that the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential

Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 be rolled back and a new law made to guarantee minimum support price for crops.

However, the government has maintained that the laws are profarmer. Several rounds of talks between farmers and the government have failed to break the deadlock over the three laws.

Punjab lifts weekend night curfew, opens bars, cinema halls

CHANDIGARH

WITH the state's Covid-19 positivity rate sliding to 0.4 per cent, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday ordered lifting of weekend and night curfew, and allowed gatherings of 100 persons indoors and 200 outdoors from Mon-

At the same time, he directed the Director General of Police to fine all political leaders violating Covid behavior rules while holding rallies and protest meetings.

Even as he hoped that better sense will prevail on the political parties and leaders brazenly violating curbs by holding massive



Gupta to issue challans against those indulging in anti-Covid behaviour. The Chief Minister also ordered opening of bars, cinema halls, restaurants, spas, swimming pools, gyms, malls, sports complexes, museums, zoos, etc., subject to all eligible staff members and visitors having taken at least one dose each of the vaccine.

Though schools will continue to

centres and all other institutions of higher learning will be allowed to open by the Deputy Commissioner concerned, subject to a certificate having been submitted that all teaching, non-teaching staff, and students have been given at least one dose of vaccination, at least two weeks ago. Of the 623 cases, 67 are from outside the state, the Health Secretary informed the meeting, adding that 337 cases were under treatment and 154 had been discharged while 51 patients had died.

The maximum cases reported in a day were 34 on May 27, while the average of daily cases in the first week of July stood at 5.

Uttar Pradesh *jamun* exported to UK

Lucknow

A new variety of 'jamun' (black plum) developed by the Central Institute of Sub-tropical Horticulture (CISH) in Lucknow is now being exported to London.

Jamwant, a special variety of black plum, having more than 90 per cent flesh, was cultivated by farmers in Bithoor, Kanpur, and is now on the export list. CISH director, Shailendra Rajan said: "It is a big breakthrough and it is the medicinal properties of jamun that has made it so popular. In fact,

it is categorized as 'exotic' in the European market."

The CISH director said that the first batch of the fruit was sent in the first week of June by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). Dr CB Singh, a senior official at APEDA, said that jamun holds a lot of export potential, just like mango. It has anti-diabetic properties, contains high level of Vitamin C and antioxidants, as well as bioactive compounds beneficial for human health. The bioactive compounds



help in the improvement of heart health, digestion and gum health.

While people eat the pulp, the jamun seeds are dried and ground and the powder is taken as a sup-

Though initially labelled as a poor man's fruit, jamun now sells up to Rs 300 per kilogram.

Crucial RSS meet begins in Chitrakoot

LUCKNOW

A five-day meeting of the (RSS) is set to begin in Chitrakoot from Friday. The meeting will be attended by senior RSS functionaries, including Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat, sarkaryawah Dattatreya Hosable and all five sah-sarkaryawah (joint general secretaries).

According to Akhil Bhartiya Prachar Pramukh, Sunil Ambedkar, Bhagwat will digitally connect with kshetra and sahkshetra pracharaks of 11 regions from across the country on Friday and Saturday. The kshetra pracharak is a crucial functionary who oversees Sangh activity in their regions. From Uttar Pradesh, the meeting would be attended by Anil Singh (east UP) and Mahendra (west UP).

Kshetra pracharaks' inputs

from Uttar Pradesh gain political significance in the wake of the Assembly polls next year. Uttar Pradesh has been the focus for Hosable, who has been keeping a vigil on political churnings in the state. Ambekar said that in wake of the pandemic, the number of participants has been restricted. On July 12, the 'prant' and 'sah prant pracharak' of all 45 prants would connect online to participate in the meeting.

On July 13, Akhil Bhartiya Sanghathan Mantri (All India organizing secretaries) of various organizations will participate in the meeting through online medium. This meeting would primarily focus on the organisational issues. The five-day meeting will review the work done by volunteers during the pandemic and will also draw up an action plan for the impending third wave of the corona pandemic.

Tokyo Olympics: CR GM cheers Indian contingent

MUMBAI

ALOK Kansal, General Manager, Central Railway (CR) cheered for the Indian contingent participating in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics by being photographed with the selfie kiosk at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Mumbai on Thursday

As part of the Olympic Games Campaign, a selfie photo session and 'Cheer for India' moment was organised by Central Railway Sports Association (CRSA) at the precincts of CSMT building. The selfie kiosk bearing the photographs of the present Olympians of Central Railway namely, Vandana Kataria,

Monika Malik, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam and Rajini Etimarpu, who are part of the Indian Women Hockey Team.

Kansal also interacted with the sportspersons and past Olympians with his inspiring talk. He urged the need to excel and to practice in the specific games that they belong to and also enquired about the practice facilities available to them.

Additional General Manager, Divisional Railway Manager, Mumbai Division and other officials and sportspersons of Central Railway were present on the

All Covid-19 protocols were observed during the occasion.



Yogi orders proper care of memorials, parks

Lucknow

IN another move designed to win over Dalits, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to ensure proper beautification and maintenance of all parks and memorials dedicated to the memory of leaders, particularly Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

In the first phase, parks and memorials dedicated to Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Maharaja Suheldev, Uda Devi, Avanti Bai, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Maharana Pratap and Ram Prasad Bismil will be spruced up.

According to official sources, the Chief Minister has made it clear that he wants no complaint about any of the parks or memorials lying uncared for.

"The Chief Minister said at a meeting that proper cleanliness in all the parks and memorials should be taken up on priority basis and repairs, if needed, should also be carried out. More amenities will be made available in these places too," a government spokesman said.

Adityanath also asked officials to develop a mechanism that



would ensure proper upkeep of parks and memorials on a permanent basis.

It is noteworthy that on several occasions, BSP president Mayawati, also the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, has lamented the fact that the memorials constructed in her regime in memory of Ambedkar, were not being properly maintained.

Yogi Adityanath's diktat on maintenance of parks and memorials-majority of whom are dedicated to Ambedkar, is now being seen as an attempt by the ruling BJP to appease Dalits and win them over for the Uttar $Pradesh\,assembly\,polls, slated\,to$ be held in 2022.

BKU to intensify stir in UP from August 1

THE Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) will be intensifying their agitation against the three central farm laws from August 1 in Uttar Pradesh. The agitation will now include local issues as well.

Yudhvir Singh, general secretary of the BKU, said that they will launch the agitation simultaneously in all the 18 divisions of Uttar Pradesh. He said, "From July 11, we will be holding meetings of our divisional and district committees and from August 1, we will start with our agitation in UP to press for our demands."

He further said that the divisional and district committees will spread awareness in districts about the three farm laws and also issues prevalent in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. "We will also raise the issue of hike in the price of electricity besides our pending sugarcane payments. Our farmers will hold demonstrations at the division and district level for the agitation.

"We will also raise the issue of education and health besides other local issues. While participating in agitation in UP, the farmers will also attend to the



calls given by the 'Samyukta Kisan Morcha' from time to time," he added. The BKU will demand compensation for farmers who died during the pandemic period. "We demand compensation for farmers who died during the Covid period. Since their tests were not conducted, they should be treated as death due to Covid and compensated under the 'Krishi Durghatna Yo-

"If compensation is not given, we will continue with our agitation. The agitation will also go on at the borders of Delhi and our farmers will also raise local issues in the state of UP," said Dharmendra Malik, national media coordinator of the BKU.

Nishank will be remembered for novel edu policy

EVEN though Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal has resigned from the Ministry of Education due to post Covid complications, his brilliant contribution to the National Education Policy will surely be remembered by education fraternity of the nation.

Realising the importance of continuous dialogue with all the stakeholders in crafting a new policy Dr Nishank successfully engaged with states' Education Ministers. Governors. Education Secretaries, and Vice Chancellors of Universities across the country. Efforts were made to reach out to 2.5 lakh gram panchayats to include everyone's opinion. In order to get feedback from the entire country Dr Nishank got it trans-

lated into twenty two Indian languages. In addition, he held a series of comprehensive meetings with the public representatives representing various regions of the country. Apart from meeting the MPs, Chief Ministers of the various states, he encouraged educationists to organise workshops and seminars in their institutions. NGOs and social organisations and government institutions were encouraged to hold a series of meetings and workshops on NEP 2020. This massive exercise resulted in collection of more than 2 lakh suggestions across India and abroad.

Considered to be one of the largest open innovative exercise, the wide consultation resulted in inclusion of stakeholders aspirations. The result is that the new



education policy has been widely welcomed in the country and abroad. Infact, it is for the first time in the history of Independent India, that an India centric education policy has been formulated. reflecting the strong resolve to make India a knowledge-based superpower. The best universities in the world such as Harvard, Cambridge and Michigan have lauded this innovative policy. Being scientific research-oriented, practical and innovative education pol-

icv, foreign scholars have also heaped praises on the new education policy. More than 100 top institutions of the world have analyzed and appreciated various aspects of the National education policy. This new education policy will in fact provide a strong foundation to build New India. It's only through successful implementation of this policy that we can fulfill the dream of making India a 'Vishwa Guru' in future.

Considering the important and central role of students in implementation, the education policy focuses on providing them excellent training opportunities with a focus to transform them completely. Number of positive measures are being undertaken to make our students strategically competitive at the global level.

CENTRAL RAILWAY

For & on behalf of President of India Principal Chief Engineer, Centra Railway, G.M. Building, 2" floor CSMT Mumbai- 400001 invites ebids at e-Procurement website www.ireps.gov.in". Tender No.: TEND372021 Date & Time of closing: 03.08.2021 at 15:00 hrs **Brief Description of Stores:** Manufacture and Supply o Prestressed Monoblock concrete Main line sleepers (pretensioned type) for Broad Gauge (1673 mm) conforming to as per RDSO Drg. No. /T-2496 (latest alteration) Quantity: 2,11,373 Nos. EMD: Rs. 50,00,000/-The complete information of above E-Procurement Tender notice is available on website "http://www.ireps.gov.in". Bids other than in the form of E-bids shall not be accepted against

Tender Notice No. 08/2021 Date: 08.07.2021 for e-Procurem

bove Tender

Pandemic origin, still a mystery

 $D^{\rm EBATE\ over\ the\ idea\ that\ the\ SARS-CoV-2\ coronavirus\ emerged}$ from a laboratory has escalated over the past few weeks, coinciding with the annual World Health Assembly, at which the World Health Organization (WHO) and officials from nearly 200 countries discussed the Covid-19 pandemic. After last year's assembly, the WHO agreed to sponsor the first phase of an investigation into the pandemic's origins, which took place in China in early 2021.

Most scientists say SARS-CoV-2 probably has a natural origin, and was transmitted from an animal to humans. However, a lab leak has not been ruled out, and many are calling for a deeper investigation into the hypothesis that the virus emerged from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), located in the Chinese city where the first Covid-19 cases were reported. On May 26, US President Joe Biden tasked the US In-

telligence Community to join efforts to find SARS-CoV-2's origins, whatever they might be, and report back in 90 days. Divisive Covid 'lab leak' debate prompts dire warnings from researchers. Australia, the European Union and Japan have also called for a robust investigation into SARS-CoV-2's origins in China.

The WHO has yet to reveal the next phase of its investigation. But China has asked that the probe examine other countries. Such reticence, and the fact that China has withheld information in the past, has fueled suspicions of a 'lab leak'. For instance, Chinese government officials suppressed crucial public-health data at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and during the 2002-04 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic, according to high-level reports.

However, there's not yet any substantial evidence for a lab leak. Why are scientists still considering it? Scientists don't have enough evidence about the origins of SARS-CoV-2 to rule out the lab-leak hypothesis, or to prove the alternative — that the virus has a natural origin. Many infectious-disease researchers agree that the most probable scenario is that the virus evolved naturally and spread from a bat either directly to a person or through an intermediate animal.

Most emerging infectious diseases begin with a spillover from nature, as was seen with HIV, influenza epidemics, Ebola outbreaks and the coronaviruses that caused the SARS epidemic beginning in 2002 and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) outbreak beginning in 2012. The possibility remains that SARS-CoV-2 escaped from a lab. Although lab leaks have never caused an epidemic, they have resulted in small outbreaks involving well-documented viruses.

A relevant example happened in 2004, when two researchers were independently infected by the virus that causes SARS at a virology lab in Beijing that studied the disease. They spread the infection to seven others before the outbreak was contained. In theory, COVID-19 could have come from a lab in a few ways. Researchers might have collected SARS-CoV-2 from an animal and maintained it in their lab to study, or they might have created it by engineering coronavirus genomes.

In these scenarios, a person in the lab might have then been accidentally or deliberately infected by the virus, and then spread it to others – sparking the pandemic. There is currently no clear evidence to back these scenarios, but they aren't impossible. This problem arises because nowadays science and technology as well businesses and politics have all got together in evolving the future of mankind.

The confused US withdrawal from Afghanistan

MAJ GEN MANDIP SINGH

■ HE recent attacks by Taliban in Baghlan, Farah, Kunduz, Herat, Takhar, Helmand, Ghazni Badakhshan provinces and the capture of Dahla dam which supplies water to Kandahar town should be a curtain raiser for those who ardently watch the story unfold in Afghanistan.

As on May 1, 139 pro-government and 44 civilians had lost their lives in just a week alone. On April 14, 2021, President Joe Biden promised to end the "Forever war" by announcing a full US pull out on September 11, 2021, largely out of symbolism to commemorate the 20th year of Global War on Terror (GWOT). But soon after the announcement, it is becoming apparent that the US has not thought through the larger implications of this decision.

It is quite apparent that even the US army is surprised by the sudden turn of events. The confusion in the US army is compounded by the contradictory statements emerging from the US military leadership.

"It's not a foregone conclusion, in my professional military estimate, that the Taliban automatically win and Kabul falls," said General Mark Millev, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, while speaking at the Pentagon on 6 May 2021 even as Afghan Army causalities began to mount in Taliban attacks within the week. He even came out in support of the ANDSF and their capabilities announcing that "I'm a personal witness -that the Afghan security forces can fight," Milley, who had previously served in Afghanistan, added.

"We've been supporting them, for sure, but they've been leading the fight.'

That is not how a former US commander who crafted US strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, Gen. David Petraeus assess the situation. In an interview he said, "I do fear that two to three years from now we are going to look back and regret the decision to withdraw the remaining 3,500 US troops," enthusing no confidence in the abilities of the ANDSF to stabilise Afghanistan post the withdrawal.

In fact he even predicted the return of ISIS and believed, "This is not going to end the endless war in Afghanistan; it is go-

Sharmila faces

huge challenge

nied her.

LETTERS

CHARMILA toured the entire state

and interacted with people as a soli-

mise of YS Rajashekar Reddy. She was

darity march, Odarpu Yatra after the de-

able to console 310 families across Telan-

gana in 56 days of her Odarpu Yatra cov-

taken yatra at different timings, and Mr P

ering 8,510 kilometres. She had under-

Srinivas Reddy (Khammam) accompa-

It may be an uphill task for the new

need to appreciate for having the guts, as

being the first lady from Telugu speaking

states, founding a new regional party. But

Kanagiri S Prasad, Hyderabad

humongous challenges lie ahead of

astute politician in times to come.

We still refuse to learn

Sharmila, as she confronts Mr. KCR an

party to be successful in Telangana. We

ing to end the US and the coalition involvement in that war militarily" and warned of resurgence of Daesh.

For instance, the recent Taliban attacks have seen desperate calls for the Afghan Air Force to assist the ground troops in fighting the Taliban. The Afghan Air Force is almost entirely dependent on the US for its force sustenance and would be ineffective unless this support is assured. The US has indicated that it would be capable of supporting operations from its air bases in close proximity of Afghanistan like the Middle East and has been actively courting Uzbekistan as a possible destination. But that does in no way mitigate the problems of keeping Afghan Air Force in the air. Gen Mark Milley accepts that "[M]aintaining logistic support to the Afghan Air Force is a key test that we have to sort out", and even hinted that some contractors could return to Afghanistan after the withdrawal is com-

In fact the SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction) report released on April 30, 2021 stated that the Afghan Air Force could be grounded "within months without the current level of contractor support".(italics mine). The SIGAR report is more candid as it quotes US military leadership expressing their reservations and concerns at the capabilities of the ANDSF to defend Afghanistan. Consider these statements in the run up to Biden's speech of April 14, 2021.

On February 20, 2021, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin linked the US withdrawal to a reduction in Taliban attacks. "The violence must decrease now."

The same day, on February 20. 2021, General Kenneth F. McKenzie, in a meeting with Pakistani officials, warned that an early US pullout could risk the collapse of the Afghan government.

On March 13, 2021, the commander of US and allied forces in Afghanistan, General Austin Scott Miller, expressed concerns at the capabilities of the Afghan air force saying that "When you start talking about removing our presence... certain things like air, air support, and maintenance of that air support become more and more problematic".

On March 25, 2021, General Richard Clarke, Commander,



have to sort out", and even hinted that some

contractors could return to Afghanistan after the

US Special Operations Command accepted the Taliban have not upheld their end of the Doha accord and said: "It's clear the Taliban have not upheld what they said they would do and reduce the violence. It is clear they took a deliberate approach and increased their violence since the peace accords were signed."

withdrawal is complete

On April 20, 2021, the Commander of US Central Command, General Kenneth McKenzie, while testifying at a House Armed Services Committee stated that, "Everyone will leave. All US defence contractors will leave as part of the

withdrawal." The contradictions are visible. Violence has climbed by 37 per cent in the first quarter as compared to last year. With reference to Gen Kenneth McKenzie's statement, it is now clear that as many as 17,000 contractors, approximately 6000 of whom are US citizens are in Afghanistan will be permitted to renegotiate their contracts. The Economic Times comments that the Pentagon was toying with the option of turning over some contracts, particularly maintenance contracts presently effected by US contractors to Afghan control.

Even the CIA Director William Burns acceded during a hearing that "[W]hen the time comes for the US military to withdraw, the US government's ability to collect and act on threats will diminish... That is simply a fact."

Even the Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, released as recent as April 9, 2021 and tabled before Biden's announcement, assessed that the possibility of the success of an intra-Afghan deal between the Afghan government and the Taliban "will remain low during the next year," and that "the Taliban is likely to make gains on the battlefield, and the Afghan Government will

struggle to hold the Taliban at bay if the Coalition withdraws support." The Report expressed serious reservations about the capabilities of the ANDSF and concludes that the ANDSF "continues to face setbacks on the battlefield, and the Taliban is confident it can achieve military victory."

Almost as if on cue, and in complete synchronisation with the US, NATO too ordered its drawdown from Afghanistan, clearly aligning their interests with the US and showing how bereft EU is of an independent Afghan policy as well as the limitations of its military reach and capabilities. Almost immediately after Biden's announcement, on the same day, at a joint press conference NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that NATO ministers "decided that we will start the withdrawal of NATO Resolute Support forces by May 1... We plan to complete the drawdown of all our troops within a few months."

Clearly, the military leadership did not approve of or never sensed the impending announcement by the President. In any case, if indeed they made a pitch to the President, he obviously has overruled their ad-

The US withdrawal, as it unfolds at the present, is confusing and portends ill for the future of Afghanistan.

(The writer -- Maj Gen Mandip Singh, SM, VSM retired recently from Northern Command. He has been a Senior Fellow at MP-IDSA & Dean of the Army War College at Mhow. He is a keen China watcher and writes regularly on foreign & military affairs)



Ruins of ancient Sun temple in UP gets govt attention

 ${
m P}^{
m LANS}$ are afoot to revive a 8th century Sun temple, located in a Uttar Pradesh village in Pratapgarh district.

A joint team of the state tourism department and Uttar Pradesh Project Corporation Limited has conducted a survey for the revival plan of the Shivganj temple.

The villagers, under the banner of Bhayharan Nath Dham Kshetriya Vikas Sansthan, began the initiative by preserving idols, pillars and structures of the ancient Surya temple. They even removed encroachments near the temple site.

Samaj Shekhar, general secretary of the Sansthan, said that the team of tourism department picked up the ancient Sun temple after the state government moved the proposal to develop areas associated with ancient saints and sages in the state.

Shekhar said that a group of villagers had initiated steps to revive Sun temple built in the eighth century, and even held a series of meetings with the officials concerned.

"Majority of the people do not even have the knowledge of the existence of the Sun temple in this remote village of Pratapgarh district. Our Sansthan came forward to apprise people about the ruins of the historical edifice and sought their assistance to develop and maintain the area in and around the temple," he told reporters.

According to sources, a team of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had visited the spot in 2011 and registered seven of its remains, directing gram panchayat of Gaura to follow the rules under the Antiquities and Art Act, 1972.

The ASI had said the temple dated back to the pre-medieval period. Puneet Pandey, supervisor (Pratapgarh), Uttar Pradesh Project Corporation Limited, said that there are plans to develop the area as a religious tourist spot and a work plan is being prepared for the same.

Dehradun's Booknerds changing the way readers, authors connect

 ${\bf B}^{\rm OOKNERDS}$, a Dehradun-based initiative, is revolutionizing the way books and authors connect.

The Beginning

Booknerds is a literary startup based out of Dehradun, India founded by husband-wife bibliophile duo Rohan and Neha Raj with the vision to connect book lovers and authors in India and beyond. What started as a small book lover's community in the quaint town of Dehradun, India in the foothills of the Himalayas has now grown into a movement that is connecting book lovers across India. Their mission is to spread their love for reading!

Rohan has a penchant for technology and books while Neha is a stickler for aesthetics and organisation. Rohan and Neha being from technical backgrounds bring the innovative mindset which has been missing from the publishing landscape. When they are not devouring books or working at their office cum library they can be found playing with their kids or searching the next cool cafe in town for the upcoming book club sessions!

What they do

Booknerds team brings to you the best content from the world of books through their book recommendation videos, book club events, podcast, live sessions and so much more.

Nominated for the best reading club of India by India Reading Olympiad, coordinating one of North India's largest lit fests are some of their accomplishments over the past six years! After continuously bringing innovation in the publishing industry for more than half a decade, Booknerds is now synonymous with a thriving community of readers and authors. Through their reading community, they have come to understand what readers, authors and publishers want.

Booknerds, have conducted over 150 offline meetups and literary events, book launches and hosted more than 250 authors which include the best in the business Devdutt Pattanaik, Anand Neelakantan, Vir Sanghvi, John Keay, Andy Griffiths, Moin Mir, Mayank Shekhar, Bill Aitken, Vineet Bajpai, Kevin Missal and more.

The sessions

Some of the marquee offline sessions have been

The immensely successful Lit Dangal where authors go up against each other in a 7 minute no holds barred standoff has seen participation and footfall of over 300 attendees and more than 25 published authors.

Potterhead Hangout

The coming together of Potterheads like never before with cosplay, book readings, quizzes have regaled Doonites for two editions now, the community has seen children, young adults and adults participate and be at loggerheads to win for their Houses!

A concept that started as a joke between the co-founder duo about "people who don't return books" turned out to be an amazing experience for bibliophiles where they interact to convince each other to swap, exchange and hustle their books eventually leading to a Book Hustler.

Comicnerd

Rohan has always been a comic enthusiast, procuring loads of rental comics back in the 90s at the expense of studies sometimes!

A mix of Hindi and English comic books are discussed at the sessions including Amar Chitra Katha, Raj Comics, Diamond Comics, Marvel and DC with support from the likes of The Souled Store, TBS Planet and more.

The pandemic

When the pandemic hit Booknerds pivoted and started creating book recommendation videos, book unboxing videos, Reading Vlogs, Book Reels, Video Book reviews and more which caught the fancy of the young readers.

Some of the stalwarts of the publishing industry like Milee Ashwarya (Publisher, Penguin Random House), Priya and Kapil Kapoor (Roli Books), Aditi Maheshwari Goyal (Vani Prakashan), Namita Gokhale, Trisha Niyogi (Niyogi Books), Samir Somaiya (KitabKhana Bookstore, Mumbai) have featured on the video and audio podcast which brings the best literary content to bibliophiles with book discussions, author interviews and so much more.

Disrupting the publishing industry has always been the ultimate goal and with a team of book enthusiasts to envy they are well on track to develop literary experiences which cater to the contemporary reader, if you love books do feel free to find them on social media, they love to chat endlessly about them! (IANS)

sooner rather than later. The pictures of people swarming public spaces and flouting Covid-19 protocol make frightening viewing and give us a foreboding feeling that the next wave is around the corner. It is quite evident from the irresponsible and reckless behaviour of masses of people that the Covid-19 deaths or the suffering engendered by the pandemic have had no great (or at least not enough) impact on them to modify their behaviour. One is at pains to detect the fear of the pandemic on the faces of most people.

venge tourism' crowds are thronging tourist destinations seeking respite (from heat and Covid-19 fatigue!) and rejuvenation, oblivious of considerable risk to their lives. These Covidiots at tourist resorts and retreats even before the second wave has fully receded show a reckless disregard for their own safety and make the onset of a third wave (or explosion of new cases) a distinct possibility. It is as if they are programmed to court danger. The simple truth that eludes droves of tourists is that their inability or

failure to resist the temptation for merry-making and fun outdoors in this pandemic time could prove fatal. Many people behave as if the pan-

demic is behind them. They are blissfully unaware that it is still very much in our midst or so they feign. The moment the curbs are eased, they start behaving the way they used to before the pandemic. They are certainly not health conscious and do not put health and safety first. The Kerala High Court's caution that if the crowding in front of liquor retail outlets continued, the third wave couldn't be far behind must be taken seriously and heeded. It is imperative that all of us adhere to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour till such time we get the better of the

> G David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

THE Prime Minister Narendra Modi ▲ at a meeting of his council of ministers on Thursday articulated his concern over people at public places and roaming around without wearing masks. After unlocking of lockdown restrictions, it is observed that people are congregating at market places, either without masks or masks pulled down to the chin with no social distancing. It clearly shows that

people have total disregard for Covid protocols despite knowing the consequences of first and brutal second wave of Covid pandemic. People are repeating the mistake of not following the Covid protocols as new cases are still high. This surely, is an open invitation to the third wave, which in the opinion of the health experts, is inevitable. It seems people have forgotten the scenes of devastation caused by the pandemic in April and May

Prime Minister in the meeting emphasised that there should be no space for carelessness or complacency. Covid protocols lapses will have adverse impact and spread of Covid infection. Wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing have been sacrificed in the political and social gatherings. Containing the virus calls for not lockdowns but a combination of rigorous enforcement of Covid appropriate behaviour and intensification of the vaccination drive. In India, masks and their proper use, get little attention compared to expensive options like lockdown and testing. Masks, social distancing and tests represent the sustainable organic and participatory way.

thehansreader@gmail.com

KSRao, Thane

TF religious congregations and election **⊥**rallies resulted in the devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, bustling tourist destinations, hundreds

jorative, devotees of Bacchus) with a craving for the bottle jostling in front of liquor outlets and crowded vaccination centres could invite (and bring on) the third wave of unpredictable proportions In what is called 'revenge travel' or 're-

of alcoholics (or to be kinder and less pe-

Soldier from Bapatla dies fighting terrorists at LoC

HANS NEWS SERVICE **GUNTUR**

A 24-year-old army soldier Maruprolu Jaswant Reddy, who was killed in an encounter with terrorists at Sunderbani Sector at the Line of Control in Jammu-Kashmir on Thursday night, hailed from Darivada Kothapalem village of Bapatla mandal in Guntur district. Army officials informed about the incident to his father Srinivasa Reddy on Friday morning.

According to his family members, Jaswant joined the Army six years ago.

"My son has been dynamic since childhood and sacrificed his life for the country. I always dreamed of my son helping the family during my old age. He came home three months ago before resuming his duties in J-K. All my



dreams came crashing with the news of my son's death. I am most unfortunate that my son died in the encounter with the terrorists. We will get his body on Friday night or Saturday morning," said Srinivas Reddy. When the news spread in the village, a pall of gloom descended on the village. Friends and relatives of Jaswant Reddy visited his home in the village and consoled his father Srinivasa

Govt announces ₹50L ex gratia

AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday condoled the death of a soldier from the state during an encounter with the terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. Jaswanth Reddy died in the encounter at Sunderbani sector in Rajouri district. He hailed from Dariwada Kothapalem village in Guntur district. The martyr had joined the Madras Regiment in 2016.

Harichandan offered heartfelt condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

Commending the valour of Jaswanth Reddy, the Chief Minister declared an ex gratia of Rs 50 lakh to his family recognising the supreme sacrifice.

Jagan praised the bravery of the soldier who laid his life defending the country and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members.

Reddy and his mother Venkateswaramma.

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita expressed grief over the killing of army soldier Jaswant Reddy in an encounter with the terrorists. She conveyed her sympathy to the bereaved family members. She recalled that the Andhra Pradesh government has already announced Rs50lakh ex gratia to Jaswanth Reddy's family.



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy tries his hand at cricket after laying the foundation stone for the flood-lighting system works at Y S Raja Reddy Stadium in Kadapa city on Friday

Give nod for Rayalaseema lift scheme: AP to Centre

Amaravati/New Delhi

RAJYA Sabha member and senior YSRCP leader V Vijayasai Reddy on Friday met with Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekawat and urged him to allow Andhra Pradesh to go ahead with the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS).

"I have requested Shekawat to allow Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation scheme and direct the KRMB board to notify it," said Reddy. He also called for the deployment of CISF security personnel at the common reservoirs and demanded that the law should be followed. He said these are the responsibilities of the Central government.

The MP said he elaborately discussed the alleged illegal

policies of the Telangana government. Reddy termed Telangana's projects such as Palamuru Rangareddy project, Dindi project, expansion of Kalwakurthy and expansion of Srisailam left bank canal as illegal and explained the reasons for the contention of the Andhra government to Shekawat. "I asked for the cooperation of the minister and he responded positively," said the YSRCP leader. The MP said he met Shekawat under the directions of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are engaged in a bitter water war over the projects with both terming them as illegal. Already, Jagan Mohan Reddy has written several letters to the Centre on the issue and its complaints

2 AP Deputy CMs lose key portfolios

AMARAVATI

IN a major development, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy stripped two of his deputies of important portfolios by transferring their subjects from revenue to finance department.

Commercial taxes department, being looked after by Deputy Chief Minister K Narayana Swamy, and registrations and stamps, being looked after by another Deputy CM Dharmana Krishna Das, have been transferred from the revenue department to finance under the charge of minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy.

As things stand, Dy CM Narayana Swamy will now continue to look after prohibition and excise department while the other Dy CM Krishna Das will hold charge of revenue (lands) depart-

Chief secretary Aditya Nath Das issued an order late on Thursday



night effecting the changes "to have more synergy of resource mobilisation with finance depart-

"All the related heads of departments and autonomous organisations like commissioner of commercial taxes, director and inspector general of registrations and stamps and the AP VAT Appellate Tribunal (Visakhapatnam) are also attached to the finance de-



K Narayana Swamy

partment henceforth," the chief secretary said in the order. He said necessary amendments to the second Schedule of AP government Business Rules, 2018, would be issued separately.

The changes were brought into effect based on a file circulated by the Chief Minister's principal secretary Prayeen Prakash.

Commercial taxes and registrations and stamps were so far under

the jurisdiction of a special chief secretary. In the finance department, these subjects have been entrusted to a secretary-rank officer N Gulzar of the 1999 batch. As per the chief secretary's order, the commercial taxes commissioner will now have to report to the finance secretary, who is two years junior to him. The Governor is yet to issue a notification on the change of subjects of the two Deputy Chief Ministers. "Sometimes, the Chief Minister orders for allotment of subjects to a minister and sends (the file) to Governor for post-facto approval. This is as per Rule 5 and 6 of the New Businss Rules," a top bureaucrat said. He said it would be appropriate if the portfolio changes were also done simultaneously. "Otherwise, it will create confusion, and also overlapping, till such modifications are effected," the bureaucrat pointed out.

the revenue department, under

Malabar Gold to recruit **5K staff**

KOZHIKODE

MALABAR Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest gold and diamond retail chains in the country, announced hiring for more than 5,000 staff, both across its retail operations in India and enabling functions at the brand headquarters and regional offices. This is in line with the brand's efforts to further boost its retail presence across the country in the current financial year. At a time when the Covid-19 pandemic and associated recession has affected hiring massively, this move by Malabar Gold and Diamonds aims to create fresh opportunities for job seekers across the country.

Diamonds caters to a

global audience using multiple retail formats high streets, reputed malls, department stores and travel retail supported by a team consisting of 14 nationalities, and are proficient in 50+ different languages. The current vacancies are in retail jewellery sales, store operations and accountants across India. Half of these openings are set aside for deserving female candidates. "This recruitment drive is in line with our vision to become the leading responsible jewellery retail brand in the world in terms of both showroom count and turnover. As a responsible business, we are very mindful of our obligation to our society which has prompted us to create these 5,000 well-paid jobs additionally. Employees remain the cornerstone of our success," said Malabar Group chairman Mr MP Ahammed. Interested candidates are required to apply for open positions via the company's online job portal www.malabargroup.com/c

YSRCP threatens to stall Parliament over Raghurama

against Telangana.

HANS NEWS SERVICE

YSRCP Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy warned that YSRCP members will stall the Parliament proceedings if the Lok Sabha Speaker fails to disqualify Narasapuram MP K Raghurama Krishna Raju. Speaking to media persons in New Delhi on Friday, the MP said that they met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to discuss the disqualifi-

He said that they had submitted a petition to the Speaker one year ago and again filed petition along with changes as suggested by the Speaker for disqualification of the member. He said that YSRCP MPs submitted evidence over the anti-

party activities of Raghurama. Vijayasai Reddy said that the Speaker promised to issue notice to Raghurama and send the issue to privilege committee which the

cation of Raghurama Krishna Raju. YSRCP MPs opposed. He said that they brought to the notice of Speaker the Supreme Court judgement directing the Speaker to announce his decision within six months of disqualification petition. He said that the YSRCP MPs will not tolerate further delay in the matter and if necessary stall the Parliament proceedings. The MP recalled that the expelled JDU members of Rajya Sabha were disqualified within a week in the past.

MLA distributes sheep units

HANS NEWS SERVICE **I**BRAHIMPATNAM

Local legislator Manchireddy units of sheep to 42 beneficiaries in Raipole village and to 10 beneficiaries from Dandumailaram village as part of the ambitious second installment sheep distribution programme undertaken by the Telangana government.

Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said that the government is committed to the welfare of

farmers and caste professionals.

He also said that the State government aims to encourage the crafts of BCs, who are lagging behind and suggested that everyone should take advantage of government schemes and welfare benefits.

Ibrahimpatnam MPP Kripesh, Agriculture official JD Krishnaiah, Sarpanch Balwant Reddy, MPTC Jyoti Bhaskar Reddy and officials from various departments were present.



TS Guy's call to crank up 'catch the rain' drive

She addressed VCs of universities of Telangana and Puducherry along with Indian Red Cross Society functionaries through a video conference on 'Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls' from Raj Bhavan

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

GOVERNOR Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Friday called upon people to take up rain water harvesting activities as a movement.

"Though our country is receiving copious rains, we are lagging behind in conserving rain water, thus staring at a major water crisis," she said.

The Governor was addressing vice-chancellors of different universities of Telangana and Puducherry and the Indian Red Cross Society functionaries through a video conference on the theme "Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls from Raj Bhavan, here.

Dr Tamilisai stated that though the country accounts for 18 per cent of the world's population and 20 per cent of livestock, it has only four per cent of the water resources.

"Most rainwater is going unused. It is high time that we create rainwater harvesting structures to conserve and use it. We must reduce the indiscriminate and over-exploitation of pre-



accelerate the ground water recharge. We need to achieve the water use efficiency by 20 per cent. Water is critical for development," she added.

The Governor expressed concern that 256 out of 700 districts have been identified as 'critical' or 'over exploited ground water levels'. "It is paradoxical that we witness floods due to plenty of rains, on the other hand we experience water scarcity. This is just a result of our failure to harvest rainwater in an effective manner and on a massive scale," she asserted.

Furthermore, she urged all stakeholders to proactively promote the "catch the rain" campaign having a tagline of "where it falls, when it falls," launched as part of the National Water Mission. "Our efforts for the country's growth and prosperity, livelihoods of people, sustainable development for future generations all depend upon our success in effective rain water harvesting and avoiding the over-exploitation of the ground

Dr Tamilisai, who is also the Chancellor of State universities, directed the VCs to transform the university campuses as 'green and water-rich campuses. She suggested to them to create rain water harvesting fa-

water." she said.

cilities like check dams, pits, ponds, re-cycling of waste water, roof-top water harvesting structures.

She called upon the IRC functionaries to involve volunteers to give the catch the rain initiative a momentum at the grassroots level.

Mission director G Ashok Kumar urged VCs to transform their universities in Telangana and Puducherry as model campuses in rainwater harvesting.

Secretary to Governor K Surendra Mohan explained the initiatives implemented in Raj Bhavan to harvest rainwater and generate solar power, and other eco-friendly initiatives.

CPI slams AP CM for opposing TS projects

HANS NEWS SERVICE RANGA REDDY

TELANGANA CPI state secretary Chada Venkat Reddy along with district secretary Palamakula Jangayya held a press conference at a restaurant in Shadnagar of Ranga Reddy district on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, Venkat Reddy said that the water dispute between the two states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh over the use of Krishna waters has become intense. He said Rayalaseema Up liftment Scheme, Rajolibanda right canal constructions undertaken by AP government and Krishna Basin areas of Telangana State, Joint Palamuru, Nalgonda, Khammam and Ranga Reddy districts are at risk of severe injustice in terms of irrigation and drinking water to Hyderabad. The governments were asked to halt the construction immediately. He said the Andhra Pradesh government was arguing that the Telangana government had undertaken the Palamuru-Rangareddy, Dindi, Nettempadu and Kalwakurthy expansion projects without any permission. He alleged that the AP government was conspiring to divert water from the 885-foot-high water capacity of the Srisailam Reservoir by constructing a lift at Sangameshwara and constructing the Rayalaseema Up liftment Project. He explained that if Andhra and Telangana fought, it would be to the benefit of the Central government.

District Secretary Palamakula Jangaiah, State Committee members Tanguturi Narasimha Reddy, Buddula Jangaiah, Local Secretary Srinu, Pawan, Chandrababu, Lingam and others were present.



CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice

areers/

Sr. No.: 01 Name of Work: Re Modelling of Yard including Pool Line, Pocket Line and Long Line of Matunga Workshop. Sr. No.: 02 Approx. Cost of work: ₹ 1,28,38,526,18. Sr. No.: 03 Date of Tender Closing /Opening & Time: Up to 05.08.2021, 12.00 hrs. Sr. No.: 05 Tender details & Tende document is available on the website www.ireps.gov.in. Tenders shall be

E-Tender Notice No.-RR/PR/WC/1590/2021-22/07

NO TAB ON CROWDFUNDING FOR TREATMENT OF RARE DISEASES

Don't want Tom, Dick and Harry to collect money: HC

here has to be some government control over the money being collected via crowdfunding for treatment of rare diseases and every "Tom, Dick and Harry" cannot be permitted to raise funds like this, the Kerala High Court said on Friday

The high court said it was concerned that every "Tom, Dick and Harry" was collecting funds via crowdfunding for treatment of the children suffering from rare diseases and asked the state government whether it has any control over such transactions.

Justice P B Suresh Kumar said the court does not want to interdict the crowdfunding process, but it wants the funds to go to the government instead into the account of some private individuals who may or may not give it to those who require the money.

"I do not want every Tom, Dick and Harry to collect money. Is there any state control over this collection of funds via crowdfunding? We should know where the money is going," the court said and added that if private individuals and entities can collect crores of rupees in a short span of time, why the government

"For providing free vaccines the state government could collect only Rs 68 lakh, while 18 crores was collected in a week (for treatment of a boy suffering from spinal muscular atrophy)," the court said.

"I do not want to interdict the process of crowdfunding, but I want government control over it," Jus-



tice Kumar said during the hearing of an autorickshaw driver's plea seeking free treatment for his sixmonth old infant son who is suffering from spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) as the medicine for it costs around Rs 18 crore and he has no means to raise that kind of money. In his petition, filed through advocate P Chandrasekhar, the father - Arif - has said that while he obtained permission for importing the required medicine - Zolgensma Onasemnogene injection - he cannot afford to buy even one dose as the same costs Rs 18 crore. During the hearing, the Kerala government also expressed apprehensions regarding the source of the money being collected via crowdfunding.

The court also observed during the hearing that

lize the economy. It has on its own also impleaded the Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in the matter. The court said it would be passing a detailed order in the matter. Arif has moved the court, claiming that he cannot ensure his son's treatment without the support of the state government.

The government, in a statement filed in court earlier, had said that neither the Health Department nor the Kerala Social Security Mission (KSSM) was in a position to extend financial support for bearing the huge cost of the treatment/medicine required by Arif's son, who has been admitted in the Kozhikode Medical College Hospital and is on ventilator support.

WINDOWS

12 drown in Ayodhya's Saryu river

AYODHYA: At least 12 peeople were feared drowned while taking a bath in Sarvu river at Guptar Ghat on Friday. A group of 15, belonging to four families, had come from Agra to visit the city, officials said. A team of local police divers are on the spot for rescue operations and three persons have been brought out. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed senior officers to reach the spot and rescue the people as soon as possible, the officials said. The incident took place at the Kutch Ghat of the Guptar Ghat complex. Guptar Ghar is a river-

side complex featuring a series of

19th-century banks, temples and

ED to grill **Vaze today**

MUMBAI: The Enforcement Di-

rectorate (ED) will interrogate

sacked police official Sachin Vaze at the Taloja Jail in connection with the alleged corruption case lodged against former state home minister Anil Deshmukh, officials said here on Friday. A Special Court has granted permission to the ED to visit Vaze and record his statement in the jail. It maybe recalled that on May 19, Vaze had claimed to the ED that he had collected Rs 4.70 crore from bars in Mumbai between December 2020-

February 2021 allegedly on Desh-

Two cases of Kappa variant detected in UP

Sydney tightens lockdown amid record cases

LUCKNOW/DELHI/SYDNEY

Two cases of Kappa variant of Covid-19 have been detected in Uttar Pradesh, according to an official statement issued on Friday.

Genome sequencing of 109 samples was done at King George's medical college here in the past few days. The Delta Plus variant of COVID-19 was found in 107 samples, while the Kappa variant was found in two samples, the statement issued after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's routine review meeting said. "Both the variants are not new for the state. The facility of genome sequencing is being increased in the state." it added.

India's cumulative vaccination coverage has exceeded 36.89 crore, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

Cumulatively, more than 11.18 crore doses have been administered in the age group of 18-44 years, it said. The ministry said over 40 lakh vaccine doses were administered in the last 24 hours.

India logged 43,393 new coronavirus infections taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 3,07,52,950, while the active cases have declined to 4,58,727, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The death toll has climbed to 4,05,939 with 911 fresh fatalities. The active cases comprise 1.49 per



A man falls on the ground as he weeps during the burial of a relative who died of Covid-19 at Rorotan Cemetery in Jakarta. Indonesia is facing a devastating second wave as hospitals grapple with soaring cases amid widespread shortages of oxygen

cent of the total infections and the national COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 97.19 per cent. A decrease of 1,977 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

As many as 17,90,708 tests were conducted on Thursday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 42,70,16,605, while the daily positivity rate was recorded at 2.42 per cent.

A lockdown in Australia's largest city was tightened Friday, as new

Covid-19 infections hit a record and authorities warned an outbreak of the Delta variant was spinning out

"Do not leave your home unless you absolutely have to," state premier Gladys Berejiklian told Sydney's five million residents, as the city recorded 44 new cases in 24 hours.

Sydney is now in its third week of lockdown, but continues to post record new infections among a population that is overwhelmingly unvaccinated.

Fire at food factory kills 52 people in **Bangladesh**

DHAKA

At least 52 people were killed and scores wounded as a massive fire overnight engulfed a multi-storied food and beverage factory on the outskirts of Bangladesh's capital, officials said on Friday. Fire service officials and witnesses said the blaze broke out on Thursday evening and tore through the factory at the Rupganj area of Narayanganj.

Residents in the neighbourhood said most of the factory workers were teenagers. "Fifty two people have been killed so far but we fear more bodies were inside and a search operation is underway," a district administration official told reporters at the scene, nearly 25 kilometres east of Dhaka. Fire service officials said 49 bodies have been recovered from the building while others succumbed to their wounds on way to or at hospitals, where many were being treated for critical wounds.

Television footage showed the fire was still burning at the sixstory structure, emitting thick smoke while fire service officials said their search campaign continued alongside efforts to extinguish the blaze. "The fire originated on the fourth floor where we nearly completed the search operation but we are yet to look for bodies on the fifth and sixth floors," a fire service official told a private TV channel.

Taliban controls 85% of Afghan territory

THE Islam Qala border town, one of the key trade gateways of Afghanistan into Iran, and the Torghundi border town, another trade gateway into Turkmenistan, have fallen to the Taliban, according to local officials.

The Taliban said it now controlled 85 per cent of Aghan territory.

Both the important border towns lie in the country's Herat province. As the security situation continues to deteriorate in the country, the Taliban has overrun areas bordering five countries - Iran, Tajikistan. Turkmenistan, China and Pakistan, Ariana News reported. Nisar Ahmad Naseri, a senior official of Herat customs department said that activities at Islam Qala customs were stopped after it was fallen to the Taliban.

Voicing concern over the spiraling violence in Afghanistan, India said on Friday that the "legitimacy aspect" of who should rule the war-torn country is of importance and should not be ignored as it called for immediate reduction in vio-

"Of course we are concerned at the direction of events in Afghanistan," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said while responding to a question during a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

US President Joe Biden said the military mission in Afghanistan will conclude on August 31, saying speed is safety as the United States seeks to end the nearly 20-year



Members of a political delegation from the Afghan movement arrive for a conference in Moscow on

SC frowns on unnecessary summons to public officers

NEW DELHI: Emphasising that public officers shouldn't be called to court unnecessarily, the Supreme Court on Friday observed judges must know their limits and they must have modesty and humility, and not "behave like emperors".

A bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta said: "A practice has developed in certain High Courts to call officers at the drop of a hat and to exert direct or indirect pres-

The bench noted that the line of separation of powers between judiciary and executive is sought to be crossed by summoning the officers and in a

way, putting pressure on them to pass an order as per the whims and fancies of the court. "Summoning of officers frequently is not appreciable at all. The same is liable to be condemned in the strongest words," it added.

The top court made the strong observation while hearing an appeal, where the Allahabad High Court

had summoned UP's Secretary, Medical Health. The top court further added that summoning of the officer is against the public interest as many important tasks entrusted to them get delayed, creating extra burden on them or delaying the decisions awaiting their opinion.

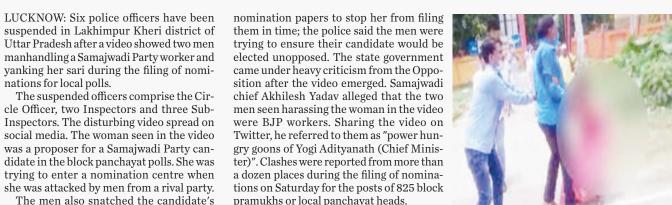
SP worker's sari yanked: 6 UP cops suspended

suspended in Lakhimpur Kheri district of them in time; the police said the men were Uttar Pradesh after a video showed two men manhandling a Samajwadi Party worker and yanking her sari during the filing of nomi-

nations for local polls. The suspended officers comprise the Circle Officer, two Inspectors and three Sub-Inspectors. The disturbing video spread on social media. The woman seen in the video was a proposer for a Samajwadi Party candidate in the block panchayat polls. She was trying to enter a nomination centre when she was attacked by men from a rival party.

The men also snatched the candidate's

trying to ensure their candidate would be elected unopposed. The state government came under heavy criticism from the Opposition after the video emerged. Samajwadi chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that the two men seen harassing the woman in the video were BJP workers. Sharing the video on Twitter, he referred to them as "power hungry goons of Yogi Adityanath (Chief Minister)". Clashes were reported from more than a dozen places during the filing of nominations on Saturday for the posts of 825 block pramukhs or local panchayat heads.







TODAY'S QUOTE

MoRTH to seek Cabinet nod for townships

The Road Transport and Highways Ministry (MoRTH) will seek the Cabinet's approval for allowing construction of smart cities, townships, logistic parks and industrial clusters along the national highways. My aim is to construct world-class highway networks and the road transport and highways ministry has chalked out a plan for monetising existing highways projects for infra capital generation



INVESTMENT Ola raises \$500 mn ahead of IPO

Ola on Friday said that Temasek and Plum Wood Investment Ltd, an affiliate of global private equity fund Warburg Pincus have partnered with Ola founder Bhavish Aggarwal for a \$500 million investment, as the ride-hailing platform plans an IPO. According to the company, this is among the largest investments in the Indian consumer internet space by these funds

			-	Said.
FOREX (b	า₹)			
US Dollar	75.56	South	1	TIA,
Euro	89.46	African Rand	1	5.54
UAE Dirham	20.72	Hong Kong D	Oollar	10.09
Thai Baht	2.41	Japanese Ye	n	0.78
British Pound	104.14	New Zealand	d Dollar	52.52
Australian Dollar	56.2	Saudi Riyal		21.87
Canadian Dollar	60.32	Swedish Kro	na	9.19
Swiss Franc	82.55	Singapore D	ollar	56.07

DELHI SATURDAY 10 JULY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Ficci to hold webinar

The Sultanate of Oman's Sohar Port and Freezone, in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), is launching a fivepart webinar series titled 'accessing industrial and

logistics solutions to maximize your market reach'. The first webinar, on July 13, will highlight the opportunities available at Sohar Port and Freezone, where Indian businesses can take advantage of the excellent infrastructure and strategic location within global trade routes, enabling them to maximize their market reach in the GCC, Africa, and the US.The session will deliver insights into how Sohar Port provides benefits, adding value to businesses through competitive utility prices, attractive incentive packages and rich sources of raw materials.

Amazon unveils movies lineup

Kick-starting this year's Prime Day celebrations, Amazon Prime Video unveiled its exciting and exclusive lineup of Indian and International entertainment, for Prime Day 2021 celebrations. The lineup includes some of the most anticipated movies in six languages, premiering across over 240 countries and territories. Prime Day celebrations will mark the world premiere of the much-anticipated Farhan Akhtar starrer Toofaan, Malayalam thriller Malik with FahadhFaasil, a Kannada comedy drama Ikkat, and Tamil-Telugu feature SarpattaParambarai. Kicking off the Prime Day celebrations on Prime Video will be the India premiere of the globally hit The Prime Day show on July 8, featuring three Grammy winners Billie Eilish, H.E.R. and Kid Cudi, in a first-ofits-kind three-part immersive musical show. In addition to this Amazon Prime Video will also launch the second season of the much-loved Amazon Original Hostel Daze bringing back the endearing characters in an entertaining new-age campus show on July 23.

TCS looks to hire 40k freshers this fiscal yr

The IT giant will go on campus recruitment spree across India

 \mathbf{M} UMBAI

LARGEST software exporter TCS will be hiring more than 40,000 freshers from campuses in the country in the financial year 2021-22, a top executive said on Friday.

The company, the largest employer in the private sector with a base of over 5 lakh employees, had hired 40,000 graduates from campuses last year and will do better on that number, its chief of global human resources Milind Lakkad told reporters here.

He said the Covid pandemic-related restrictions do not pose any difficulties in hiring and added that last year, a total of 3.60 lakh freshers had appeared for an entrance test virtually.

"From the campus in India, we hired 40,000 last year. We will continue to hire and hire 40,000 or more this year in India," Lakkad told reporters, adding that lateral hiring will also be robust this year. Similarly, the company will also do better on the 2,000 trainees hired from American campuses last year, he said, without sharing an exact number. Lakkad said a lot of planning goes into hiring from campuses and it is not 'just-in-time'



HANS BUSINESS

Last year, a total of 3.60 lakh freshers had appeared for an entrance test virtually

- Milind Lakkad, Global HR Head, TCS

hiring when a business deal gets signed up, and typically it takes over three months before a resource gets on a project.

The company's chief operating officer N Ganapathy Subramaniam said there is no dearth of talent supply in India and also disagreed with concerns about its cost. He termed Indian talent as 'phenomenal' given their skill sets and the work culture. Its Chief Executive and Managing Director Rajesh Gopinathan said it often gets asked if the organisation is too large but added that the way it is structured makes it possible from a management and nimble-footedness perspective. TCS has broken the organisation into small, autonomous entities with support from the top which helps take care of challenges, he said, pointing out that several entities like the railways, armed forces and political parties function with large pools of people. Lakkad said the company expects the very low attrition of 8 per cent levels to go up once the situation normalises, adding that the normal levels are between 11-12 per cent. Even if the attrition goes up, the company's operating model can ensure that the work or margins are not impacted, he added. Its newly appointed Chief Financial Officer Samir Seksaria said even though the company expects discretionary spending to normalise by the end of the fiscal, they are a

small subset of its overall expenditure. There are other levers to compress costs as well, he said, stressing that structurally there are no deterrents to the aspired operating profit margin band of 26-28 per cent, which was missed in the first quarter.

Speaking a day after the company announced its June quarter results, which showed a setback on its India business, Gopinathan said the 14 per cent dip in revenues sequentially does not represent any cyclicality in business and was purely out of its businesses like online exams and passport making coming to a "standstill" because of the lockdowns. He said the company had faced similar troubles during the first lockdown as well in the first quarter of the financial year 2020-21 and added that though the announcements were about local lockdowns, they impacted activity across.

Subramaniam hinted that the lost revenues - which were pegged at Rs 350 crore by Gopinathan on Thursday – will be made up in the second and third quarter of the financial year, explaining that these revenues are from tests and exams conducted by its unit Ion.

Economy showing signs of revival, says FinMin



Targeted fiscal relief, rapid vaccination drive leading to **GDP** recovery: **Finance Ministry**

New Delhi

THE Finance Ministry on Friday said the economy has started showing signs of revival from the impact of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic on the back of targeted fiscal relief, monetary policy and a rapid vaccination drive.

"The broad-based economic relief package, extended to mitigate the second wave, amounted to Rs 6.29 lakh crore. RBI continues with its efforts to calm the nerves of the market and revive sectors with both backward and forward linkages and multiplier effects on growth," the ministry said in its monthly economic review.

To stimulate the economy and ease the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman last month announced economic measures amounting to Rs 6.29 lakh crore to provide relief to individuals as well as businesses in the country. Apart from eight relief measures announced in health and other worst affected sectors, Sitharaman announced a stimulus package for

the tourism industry, which in-

cluded five lakh tourist visas to be issued free of charge, once the government resumes issuance.

The total financial implication of the scheme will be Rs 100 crore. Resilient tax collections of the central government in the first two months of FY 2020-21 and sustained momentum in capital expenditure, particularly in the road and rail sector, the report said, augurs well for continued economic recovery driven by capital expenditures. The report further added that the recently announced economic relief package was "expected to further oil the wheels of the Capex cycle via implementation of the PLI scheme and streamlining of processes for PPP Projects and Asset Monetisation".

Consumption sentiment is expected to pick up with further enhancement of employment support under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ANBRY), targeted support to the urban poor through the credit guarantee scheme for on-lending by micro-finance institutions and wider Bharat-Net digitisation coverage, the economic review for June said.

Jio tops 4G download speed chart

NEW DELHI

RELIANCE Jio continues to maintain leadership position in the 4G internet segment with 21.9 megabit per second average download speed in June, while Vodafone Idea topped the chart in upload segment with 6.2 mbps data speed, according to the latest data published by telecom regu-

Reliance Jio's 4G network speed marginally increased and it was over three times higher than that of the nearest competitor Vodafone Idea, which showed an average download speed of 6.5 mbps.

Airtel's average 4G download speed improved marginally and was still the lowest at 5 mbps, according to data published by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) on Thursday.

The download speed helps consumers access content from the internet, while upload speed helps them send or share pictures or videos to their contacts.

Mkt closes in red on lacklustre global cues

MUMBAI

EQUITY indices buckled under selling pressure for the second straight session on Friday as risk appetite remained subdued amid lacklustre global cues and lower-than-expected results from IT major TCS. Banking, finance and IT

counters accounted for most of the losses, while strong demand for metal stocks cushioned the fall.

REAL CORNER

ended 182.75 points or 0.35 per cent lower at 52,386.19. The broader NSE Nifty dropped 38.10 points or 0.24 per cent to close at 15,689.80. Bajaj Auto was the top laggard on the Sensex chart, shedding 1.99 per cent,

followed by TCS which dropped 1.52 per cent post its results. The country's largest

IT firm

day reported a 28.5 per cent jump in June quarter net profit at Rs 9,008 crore, but called out the domestic business as a drag which restricted its overall growth. HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Kotak Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the other losers. On the other hand, Tata Steel led the gainers' list with a jump of 4.16 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Maruti

Zomato eyes online grocery biz

NEW DELHI: Food ordering platform Zomato, whose Rs 9,375 crore IPO opens on July 14, is planning to launch a grocery section on its app soon, a senior company official said.

The company recently invested \$100 million (around Rs 745 crore) for acquiring a minority stake in grocery delivery platform Grofers. "It (grocery) is a large opportunity. The online grocery is nascent right now but is growing rapidly not just in India but across the world," Zomato CFO Akshant Goyal said.

Realty investment hits \$1.35 bn in April-June

ployed \$1.357 billion into the Indian commercial real estate market in the second quarter (April-June) of 2021, representing a ninefold increase year-on-year, according to JLL's 'Capital Markets Update Q2 2021' report. Capital deployments in the April-June period represented the most active second quarter in five years According to JLL, the pace and

volume of investments over the past decade have been supported by the introduction of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) in 2014, the Real estate Regulation and Development Act in 2016 (RERA), Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act and progressive relaxation in foreign direct investment norms over the "Despite the second wave of

Covid hitting India in April this year, the first six months of 2021 saw investments of \$2.7 billion which is 53 per cent of the total investments seen in 2020. Investors are showing resilience and are adapting to the uncertain environment. Relaxing lockdowns during the first three months of 2021 also gave investors a firsthand experience of the post-pandemic world," said Radha Dhir, CEO, JLL. "The first half of 2021 saw broader investor participation and although the economic dent created by the second wave will lead to slower growth in 2021, investments in real estate are expected to maintain momentum," she added.



Outlook

The investment trends for the last three months underline one key trend- Strong investor confidence in the Indian real estate sector. The experience gained over the past year has helped investors to deal with the more severe resurgence of Covid and will guide future course. Though the economic dent created by the second wave will lead to slower growth in 2021, investments in real estate are expected to stay strong through the year.

Defensive sectors like warehousing and data centers are likely to gain center stage, while office assets will gain interest with more visibility on work from office trends. The REITs market is expected to get a further boost as the reduction in lot size of REIT units is expected to drive more retail participation. The growth prospects of the data centers are expected to attract capital at the development stage with ambitious expansion plans by the data center players.

Institutional investors have passed the litmus test of resilience during pandemic resurgence and are expected to commit more capital in 2021.

Piramal Realty launches digitally enabled homes

PIRAMAL Realty, the real estate arm of the Piramal Group, has set a new benchmark in premium living by foraying into digitally enabled apartments with the launch of DigiSelecthomes across its residential portfolio in Mumbai. These digitally enabled homes will boost the convenience/ luxury quotient with advanced technology that will allow homebuyers to control their devices through voice command and app-controlled biometrics. DigiSelect homes are

equipped with advanced energy efficient features that can open and close curtains, customize lights and control room temperatures with app and voice-controlled home assistants. The main lock will have an app-controlled interface, making entering the home keyless, secure and hassle-free. These homes will also have a dual security camera setup that would live stream the interiors (living room) and exteriors (lobby area outside the door) of your home through a secured app and alert if any movement is detected in your

Home security is of extreme importance as it enables homebuyers to keep a keen eye not only on the security of their asset, but also their family. With such cutting-edge technology, future living can be experienced at the convenience of your fingertips!

With lowest inventory overhang, **Hyd leads** in housing sales

Half of sales in Q2 took place in June with States easing lockdown curbs

ARCHANA RAO New Delhi

REALTY estate has been experiencing a tumultuous growth in India in the first quarter of 2021-22financial year, with sales and demand registering a pick-up in the residential segment only in the month of June. According to a report titled Real Insight (Residential)--April-June (Q2) 2021,' half of the sales in the April-June quarter of 2021 took place in June itself as States started to open up

and remove restrictions. "While the impact of the second wave of the virus was universal, some markets were impacted more as they were the hardest hit by the second wave of the pandemic. This has been reflected in the high levels of unsold inventory and higher inventory overhang in markets like the NCR and MMR," says Mani Rangarajan, Group Chief Operating Officer, Housing Dot Com.

In an unprecedented success, Hyderabad has emerged as one of the leading areas in housing sales with the lowest inventory overhang of 27 months. The housing survey was conducted in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Delhi NCR and Mumbai MMR, and Pune for the first quarter of FY 21-22. The re-



gion of Hyderabad, as per the survey re-:he lowest inventor port, has registered overhang of 27 an annual growth of months. The housing five percent with the average price at Rs 5,790 per square foot, second highest after Mumbai MMR with Rs 9,475 per square foot.

Rangarajan said that in an overall national trend, housing sales in sec-

ond quarter showed decline on a year-on-year (YoY) basis. With 15,968 transactions being recorded across these eight markets during the second quarter, home sales during the threemonth period ending June 30 declined 16 percent YoY while registering a 76 percent Quarter on Quarter (QoQ) fall. Experts observed

that the sales took a

hit only during the

second week of April,

once the second wave

of the pandemic be-

pushing home buyers

devastating.

survey was conducted in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai Hyderabad, Kolkata Delhi NCR and Pune for the first quarter of FY22

to hold their plans to invest in property. This is in spite of the fact that home loan interest rate, are at an all-time low in 15 years, making realty as lucrative investment option. The report suggests that 45 percent of homes sold during the threemonth period were priced up to

Rs 45 lakh. Ankita Sood, Head of

Research, Housing Dot Com said

the maximum new supply in the country. The price bracket which has actually emerged more prominent in the new supply again is the Rs 45 lakhs to Rs 75 lakhs price bracket with Hyderabad taking the maximum growth share." The report further indicated that homebuyers were less interested in finished housing with ready-to-move-in properties dropping by 16 percent. According to Rangarajan, the reason behind this decline can be attributed to the fact in the developers have come out with attractive discounts and schemes, in the underconstruction space, to attract buyers. He further noted that approximately five lakh units are likely to be delivered by the end

that "cities like Hyderabad, Ban-

galore and Mumbai have been the

key areas which contributed to

"There has been a very meagre contraction in the unsold inventory of only close to four percent. There has been a lot of influx of new supply but because of the slow sales velocity, the inventory overhang or the number of months to exhaust that inventory has gone up from 35 months in the second quarter of 2020 to 48 months right now which is approximately four years," Sood added.

SL performance analyst too found Covid-19 positive

Согомво

THE India-Sri Lanka ODI series, starting on July 13, suffered a hiccup after Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) performance analyst Shirantha Niroshana tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday, a day after team's batting coach Grant Flower did. Sri Lanka Cricket spokesman said that the entire squad which returned from England on Tuesday, has been kept in isolation.

"He (Niroshan) was found to be positive, following a PCR Test carried out among the national players, coaches, and support staff yesterday, following the identification of Grant Flower as Covid-19 positive," said a statement from SLC. Flower had tested positive on Thursday. The Indian squad is already in the island nation to play three ODIs and three T20 Internationals from July 13 to 25. Another round of PCR tests will be conducted on July 11, two days prior to the start of the series, SLC stated. The financially strapped SLC is planning to earn a whopping \$12 million from the six-match series against India. Sri Lanka Cricket president Shammi Silva had revealed that initially they had only three matches in the series but requested the BCCI to include three more games to ensure they can make the most from the high profile series.

Draw for U-23 Asian Cup qualifiers: India in Group E

TASHKENT

INDIA have been placed in Group E along with host the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Kyrgyz Republic for the under-23 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2022 Qualifiers to be held from October 23 to 31.

In the draw of the qualifiers, held here on Friday, 42 teams were divided into 11 groups with 15 spots available at the AFC U-23 Asian Cup, with Uzbekistan having already confirmed their place as host, the Asian Football Confederation announced.

It is the first time the tournament will be staged in the central zone of the continent, said the AFC. The draw divided the teams into two regions -- the West Region comprising 23 West, South and Central competing teams and the East Region, which consists of 19 East and ASEAN teams. The 11 group winners and four best second-placed teams will qualify for the finals.

While India are in Group E, Jordan will host Group F that also has Palestine and Turkmenistan for company. The other pools in West Region are Group A, which consists of Syria, host



Qatar, Yemen and Sri Lanka, and Group B which comprise the Islamic Republic of Iran, host Tajikistan, Lebanon and Nepal. Iraq, the 2013 champions, headline Group C, which will be hosted by Bahrain with Afghanistan and Maldives also contesting. Saudi Arabia, runners-up in 2013 and 2020, will play in Group D with Bangladesh,

will participate in a friendly capacity and their results will not be included in the standings. The AFC did not provide any reason for this. In the East Region, Australia, who finished third in the 2020 AFC U23 Asian Cup, were drawn in Group G with China, host Indonesia and Brunei

Korea Republic, winners of the 2020 edition, will face ASEAN

opposition in host Singapore, Timor-Leste and Philippines in Group H while 2018 runners-up Vietnam are with Myanmar, Hong Kong and host Chinese Taipei in Group I. Mongolia will host ASEAN sides Thailand, Malaysia and Laos in Group J while DPR Korea, 2016 champions Japan and Cambodia are in Group K, with the host to be named in due course.

Colombia, Peru to play for honour, 3rd place at Copa America

Brasilia

FEW teams want to play a third-place match in any tournament, even less so during the COVID-19 pandemic, but that's not the case for Colombia and Peru at the Copa America. They will square off Friday night at the Man Garrincha Stadium in Brasilia. Both teams have improved their confidence and camaraderie at the South American championship and will return to World Cup qualifiers in September with renewed hopes of going to Qatar next year.

Colombia coach Reinaldo Rueda, who took over after Carlos Queiroz was fired, had only worked with his squad for two matches of World Cup qualifiers before the tournament. He then had to weather the criticism of James Rodriguez, who was left off the squad. "Being third in South America with all the soccer potential we have here must not be irrelevant," Rueda said on Thursday in a news conference. "This should inspire us into being better, into being the number one someday." Colombia is currently fifth in South American World Cup qualifiers, leaving them short of a direct ticket to Qatar. Peru had it

even worse before Copa America, sitting last in qualifiers. Fans feared that coach Ricardo Gareca, a national hero after leading the team to the 2018 World Cup, had lost his magic. But he has directed Peru into the semifinal of the South American championship despite veteran striker Paolo Guerrero's injury. The match gives Colombia a chance to exact revenge for Peru's 2-1 victory over them in the group stage nearly three weeks ago. Colombia will return home knowing they troubled defending champions Brazil in the group stage and Lionel Messi's Argentina in the semifinal, Brazil only beat them 2-1 in the last minute and Argentina needed a penalty shootout. Peru started slow, losing to the hosts 4-0. But then it beat Colombia and Venezuela to advance and eliminated Paraguay on penalties in the quarterfinals. The team lost again to Brazil in the semifinals, but with a much stronger performance, 1-0. Peru also found a relevant striker in Benevento's Gianluca Lapadula, who scored two goals and established productive partnerships with Christian Cueva and Andr Carrillo. Argentina plays Brazil in the final on Sunday at 5.30am IST. (419)

HCA Two-Day & One-Day League selection trials today

SELECTION trials to participate in HCA Two-Day & One-Day Leagues for the season 2021-22 will be held on July 10 and 11 (Saturday & Sunday) between 9 and 10 am at VJ Cricket Academy, Sanghi Vidyaniketan Campus, Besides St. Anns High School, Tarnaka White House, Secunderabad. For registrations contact Ronak on 8074254699 & 7780564479.

Interested players can get registered with a copy of Aadhar Card and one photo at the venue. The participants must also adhere to covid-19 norms.

TS, AP lay ground for enhancement of football skills

host Kuwait and Uzbekistan, who

HYDERABAD

TELANGANA and Andhra Pradesh marked a milestone in the arena of competitive football with the inauguration of the first 11 A-side artificial football ground of FIFA Pro quality. This opens up new horizons and possibilities for football players in both states to enhance their skills. The new ground is made with Field turf from the USA, which provides a natural, enjoyable game for the players with high performance and stability. The turf enables a perfect performance mechanism for the players by adapting to various movements of the ball, and of the same quality used by European top clubs like FC Barcelona First 11-A-side artificial football ground of FIFA Pro quality inaugurated

and Arsenal FC at their training facilities. On the occasion of the official inspection of SDFC by All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Telangana Football Association (TFA), Sunando Dhar, CEO, Leagues, AIFF, said that SDFC is poised to create a ripple effect in Indian Football with its multiple programs and innovative coaching methodologies. He further noted the finest football facilities and player amenities that the club provides to create a nurturing environment for the players to emerge as winners at global tournaments. The TFA president Rafath Ali praised the initiative taken by the club to refine and upgrade the football infrastructure with 11 A-side artificial foot-



Dr.K.T.Mahi, chairman, TFA, Rafath Ali, IAS, president, TFA, Shabir Ali, Former India national team captain and G.P Palguna, Secretary TFA at a press conference

ball grounds, which opens up new avenues for the beautiful game to the next level in the state and the country. Rafath Ali then highlighted the importance of a proactive approach towards the development of football facilities in Telangana to enable and equip the players to be molded into world-class champions. Moreover, SDFC is playing in Hero I-League for the 2021-2022 season. As part of the inauguration ceremony, a friendly match between SDFC vs Abbas Union was held, which ended with a score of 8-1 in SDFC's favour at full-time.

Saqib grabs four as England thrash Pakistan in opening ODI

CARDIFF

A four-wicket haul by right-arm fast bowler Saqib Mahmood helped the new-look Ben Stokes-led England beat Pakistan by nine wickets in the opening One-day International at the Sophia Gardens to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Set at 142-run target, with only Fakhar Zaman (47) and Shadab Khan (30) making decent scores, England romped home in the 22nd over on Thursday, courtesy unbeaten half-centuries from Dawid Malan and debutant Zak Crawley.

The two added 120 runs for the sec-

ond-wicket after Shaheen Afridi had dismissed Malan's opening partner Phil Salt for seven runs. Malan struck eight fours in his 68 off 69 balls. The right-handed Crawley hit seven fours in his 58-run effort off 50 balls. Earlier, Pakistan were bowled out for 141 runs in 35.2 overs after England captain Ben Stokes won the toss and decided to bowl first. Opener Imam-ul-Haq was dismissed lbw by pacer Saqib Mahmood on the first ball of the match. Skipper Babar Azam was also dismissed for a duck two balls later as Pakistan slipped to zero for two after the first three balls of the match. The visitors

lost wickets at regular intervals with Fakhar Zaman the only one to offer some resistance. The left-hander scored 47 off 67 balls (six fours). Shadab Khan contributed 30 off 43 balls. For England Mahmood took four wickets for 42 runs in 10 overs. Craig Overton and Matt Parkinson took two wickets each. The second ODI will be played at Lord's on July 10.

Brief scores: Pakistan 141 in 35.2 overs (F Zaman 47, S Khan 30; S Mahmood 4/42, C Overton 2/23, M Parkinson 2/28) lost to England 142/1 in 21.5 overs (D Malan 68 not out, Z Crawley 58 not out; Shaheen Afridi 1/22) by nine wickets.

bledon this year. She had to cop \$15,000 fine

Women's Grand Slam tennis: A revolving door of champions

Londo

IF Karolina Pliskova, a former world No.1 and a finalist at 2016 US Open, manages to win the women's final against Ashleigh Barty at the Wimbledon Championships on Saturday, she will be the 13th woman winning a singles title over the last Grand Slam 17 events. Women's singles tennis at Grand Slams, unlike men's tennis, has been a revolving door of champions over the last four years. In the corresponding period -- going back to French Open 2017 -- there have been only three male players winning the singles trophies. Roger Federer has clinched three of those, Rafael Nadal six and Novak Diokovic seven, Federer had even won the 2017 Australian Open just before the French Open.

Karolina's opponent Ashleigh is the current world No. 1 but has only Grand Slam singles title to her name. She had won the 2019 French Open. Multiple champions have devoid women's tennis of a player who could acquire legendary status as massive fan following comes with domination at the top level like in the case of men's tennis, where there are either Federer fans or Nadal fans or Djokovic fans since the trio alone has dominated top flight tennis. Japanese tennis star



Japan's Momoko Ohtani plays a return to South Africa's Kgothatso Montjane during the women's wheelchair singles semifinals match on day eleven of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships in London on Friday. Kgothatso Montjane bt Momoko Ohtani (Jpn) 7-6, 4-6, 6-4.

Naomi Osaka, with four titles, and Romanian Simona Halep, with two titles, are the only women players to have won multiple Grand Slam singles titles during the period. Naomi, due to her multiple major titles that pushed Serena Williams to second place and her into first place in the 2020 Forbes list for highest earning female athletes, has looked like one who could dominate the tennis scene for a long time.

But due to her inability to handle media pressure and unwillingness to face them, she pulled out of both the French Open and Wim-

too for skipping a media interaction during the French Open. Her absence, however, has allowed the tournaments to become even more open and competitive. Imran Mirza. who has mentored his daughter Sania into one of India's top woman tennis players, and has observed women's tennis closely for around three decades due to his involvement with her career, said there are two ways to look at it. "Some people say that the quality of women's tennis has gone down. But you can also say that quality and competition has gone up. Back in the 1990s, you would have players like Steffi Graf, Gabriela Sabatini and Monica Seles who would coast to semi-finals, winning sets with 6-0, 6-1, 6-2 margins," said Mirza before explaining that men's tennis has seen an unusual era where the top three have been too good to allow any competition. "Until the semis, they wouldn't face competition. But that is not happening now. You have so many contenders," he said. "Men's tennis has seen a domination of players - Federer, Nadal and Djokovic -- who were exceptionally good. You wouldn't find anyone else coming near them. That is why recent singles Grand Slam titles have been shared among these three only." (IANS

