

SHORT TAKES

2 held for beating man to death

New Delhi: A 22-year-old man was beaten to death allegedly by two brothers who suspected him of stealing mobile phones and cash from their truck, police said on Thursday. The two men — Sandeep (30) and Sanjeev (32) have been arrested by the police. The deceased has been identified as Vishal, a resident of Haiderpur village in northwest Delhi, police said. The incident was reported to police on August 2. The man was caught by the two brothers at the Azadpur Mandi as they suspected that he had stolen cash and mobiles from their truck. After beating him up, they tied his hands and legs, threw him in the truck and started for Himachal Pradesh's Bilaspur district, from where they hail. However, when the truck was stopped by a policeman for traffic violation on northwest GTK road, the tied-up man was found in the back of the vehicle. The local police were informed who in turn rushed the man to the BSA hospital where he was declared brought dead. DCP (Northwest) Vijayanta Arya said, "We have registered a case under relevant sections of IPC at Mahendra Park police station and both the accused drivers have been arrested and sent to jail."

2 men arrested for stabbing man

New Delhi: Two persons have been arrested here for allegedly stabbing a man and looting his bag containing ₹40 lakh cash, police said on Wednesday. Deepak Kumar (35) and Sandeep Kumar (28), both residents of Ashok Vihar were in need of money and planned to commit loot in Old Delhi market where many people come on two-wheelers to collect cash. The duo executed their plan on July 31 and did a recce in Chandni Chowk a day before the incident, police said. They targeted one Vikas (40) after hearing him telling someone on mobile phone that he had collected payment and was on his way. Deepak and Sandeep followed Vikas on their two-wheeler and on reaching Geeta Colony fly-over, they waylaid him and tried to snatch his cash bag, police said. When Vikas resisted, Sandeep allegedly stabbed him multiple times, robbed the bag containing cash and fled from the spot along with Deepak.

Leaders pays tribute to Sushma Swaraj

New Delhi: On the first death anniversary of former Indian external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, a virtual event named Sushmanjali was organised. The event was a joint initiative by Nation First Collective, Sanskar Bharati Northeast, and Sanskriti Ganga Nyas. The programme was presided over by Prakash Javadekar, the minister of information and broadcasting. Bansuri Swaraj, the daughter of Sushmaji, had a special presence in the virtual event. Apart from this, India's famous writers, artists, and filmmakers also participated in the event. Well known personalities such as Mohanlal, Prasoon Joshi, Subhash Ghai, Anoop Jalota, Madhur Bhandarkar, Kavita Krishnamurthy, Kangana Ranaut, Amisha Patel, and Isha Gupta were a part of the event. Sameer Anjan, Kamlesh Pande, Priyadarshan, Kuldeep Singh, Shatrughan Sinha, Gajendra Chauhan, and Mukesh Khanna were the dignitaries from the film industry who were also a part of the event. Director Priyadarshan was the chairman of the organising committee for the event.

Jobless man hangs self in Noida flat

Noida: A 48-year-old man, who lost his job in March, was found dead at his home in Noida on Thursday in an apparent case of suicide, police said. The man lived with his wife and son in a flat in Sector 82 and worked in the administration department of an IT company in Sector 63, the police said. "His body was found hanging through a 'chunni' from the ceiling of a room in his flat in an apparent case of suicide. He had lost his job in March. The body has been sent for post mortem," an officer from the local Phase 2 Police Station said. Police were alerted about the case at around 2 pm when the man's wife and son, who had gone to visit their relatives returned home, another officer said.

12-year-old brutally raped at her home, 1 held

Minor had a fracture on her skull and her intestine was ruptured ■ Girl stable after 2 surgeries: AIIMS

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

A 12-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted in west Delhi's Paschim Vihar area. The accused also hit her face and head with a sharp object at her home, police said. According to the doctors, the girl has a fracture on her skull and her intestine was ruptured, indicating injury by a foreign object. The Delhi Police on Thursday arrested a 33-year-old man in connection with the assault, officials said. The accused, identified as Krishan, was identified on the basis of CCTV footage and has a criminal record, they said.

"On Tuesday, a 12-year-old child was assaulted. A case under POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) was registered. More than 20 teams were formed. The teams scanned hundreds of CCTV footages and interrogated all the suspects who have a similar background. Finally, the accused was arrested on Thursday," joint commissioner of police (west) Shalini Singh said.

"During his interrogation, he has corroborated the sequence of events leading to the assault on the child. Krishan has four criminal cases, including one murder, one attempt to murder as well as burglary, against him. We are further investigating," Mr Singh said.

The victim was taken to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital. After preliminary treatment, she was shifted to AIIMS for further treatment.

Delhi BJP expresses shock, Cong workers wave black flags at CM

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

Delhi Congress workers waived black flags and raised slogans against chief minister Arvind Kejriwal when he arrived at AIIMS on Thursday to meet the 12-year-old girl who was allegedly sexually assaulted while the BJP's city unit expressed shock over the incident and said it will provide financial aid to her family.

The Delhi Congress leaders, including state president Anil Kumar, also submitted a memorandum to the L-G office, demanding a CBI enquiry in the case.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta also said he was "deeply shocked to learn about the 'heinous' assault on the girl."

ther treatment.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who also visited the hospital, said the brutality inflicted on the girl has "shaken its soul" and the government will hire the best lawyers to bring the guilty to justice. He also announced an ex-gratia of ₹10 lakh for the girl's family.

"She has suffered severe injuries but after 2 surgeries her condition is stable now. She was operated upon late on Tuesday night. She is in the ward and on oxygen support,"

"I have talked to the police commissioner and he has assured that the culprits will be caught soon. I also enquired about the health of the girl and AIIMS authorities told me she is stable now," Mr Gupta said.

Delhi BJP will also extend financial help to the family of the victim, he said. The Delhi Congress president met the family members of the girl at AIIMS and assured them of providing help.

"Congress will spare no effort in getting them justice. The condition of the girl's parents is very pathetic as they have neither taken a bath, nor changed their clothes for the past three days, as they have been keeping vigil outside the ICU in AIIMS," Mr Kumar said.

the doctor said.

Besides the sexual assault, the girl was hit on the face and head with a sharp object. She was found lying in a pool of blood by her neighbours at her home in Paschim Vihar on Tuesday evening, according to police.

"The girl has multiple head fractures and bite marks all over her body. She has been brutally assaulted to the extent that there are injury marks on every part of her body," said DCW chief Swati Maliwal.



Congress workers stage a protest demanding justice for a 12-year-old girl, who was sexually assaulted and brutally injured, during chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's visit to AIIMS to meet the survivor in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

Women & child rights activists express outrage

New Delhi, Aug. 6:

Women and child rights activists on Thursday expressed outrage over the sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl at her west Delhi home, saying vulnerability of children has increased during the coronavirus pandemic.

The minor girl was also hit on the face and head with a sharp object. She was found lying in a pool of blood by her neighbours at her home in Paschim Vihar on Tuesday evening, according to police.

One person was arrested in connection with the

incident, officials said.

"A shameful case of rape of the girl has come to light. This incident has again shamed humanity and showed the kind of hatred that exists against women in the society. Those who do it should be hanged," Women rights activist Yogita Bhayana tweeted.

Child rights activists raised concerns over the safety of children during the COVID-19 pandemic and said they have become highly vulnerable during this time.

The safety of people living alone, be it children,

women, elderly or persons with disability is a grave concern and the pandemic has definitely increased vulnerability in several ways, said child rights activist Anant Asthana.

"It is a time when preventive measures are needed like never before. Community vigil and social solidarity will be an effective shield for protection."

"It is timely that state agencies concerned with welfare of these sections gear up fast on prevention and involve police and community in plan-

ning and execution of effective prevention programmes. I feel this incident should prompt us to think of innovative ways of improving our protective safety net," he added.

Activist Sunitha Krishnan concurred with Asthana and said there has also been an increase in child sexual abuse online. She said the economic devastation and the uncertainty brought about by the situation has contributed to the increase in crimes against children who are highly vulnerable.

— PTI

'Allow hotels, gyms, weekly markets to reopen'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

The Delhi government has again sent a proposal to Lt governor Anil Baijal to allow hotels, gymnasium and weekly markets to reopen, saying that the coronavirus situation has been improving in the national capital, sources said on Thursday.

The government said that in accordance with the unlock guidelines issued by the Centre, it has right to take decision

IN ITS proposal, the Aam Aadmi Party government said that the cases of coronavirus have been increasing in several states and situation is frequently deteriorating, but hotels, gyms and weekly have been allowed there

to allow such establishments in Delhi.

In its proposal, the Aam Aadmi Party government said that the Covid cases have been increasing in several states and situa-

tion is frequently deteriorating, but hotels, gyms and weekly have been allowed there.

The sources said that the government also sought to know from the L-G as to why Delhiites are being stopped from earning their livelihood despite the fact that the number of coronavirus cases has been decreasing in the national capital.

"The Delhi government has again sent proposals to the lieutenant governor to allow hotels, gymnasi-

ums and weekly markets in the city," the sources also said.

In its 'Unlock-3' guidelines issued on July 29, the Centre had allowed opening of yoga institutes and gymnasiums from August 5, but no fresh order has been issued by authorities in Delhi to permit functioning of these establishments.

Last week, the Arvind Kejriwal government had decided to allow hotels and weekly markets to reopen in Delhi. However,

Lt governor Anil Baijal had overturned the government's decision.

In his recent letter to Union home minister Amit Shah, deputy chief Minister Manish Sisodia had sought his direction to L-G Baijal to allow hotels and weekly markets in the national capital.

In the letter, Sisodia had also said that the AAP government would again send the proposal to L-G Baijal to allow reopening of such establishments.

Tablighi foreigners can leave India despite pending trials: Centre to SC

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

The Centre, on Thursday, told the court that the foreigners who had attended Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin in March this year, in violation of their visa conditions, can leave the country pending trial.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta told a three judge bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar that various cases pending before different courts can be consolidated and heard by one court.

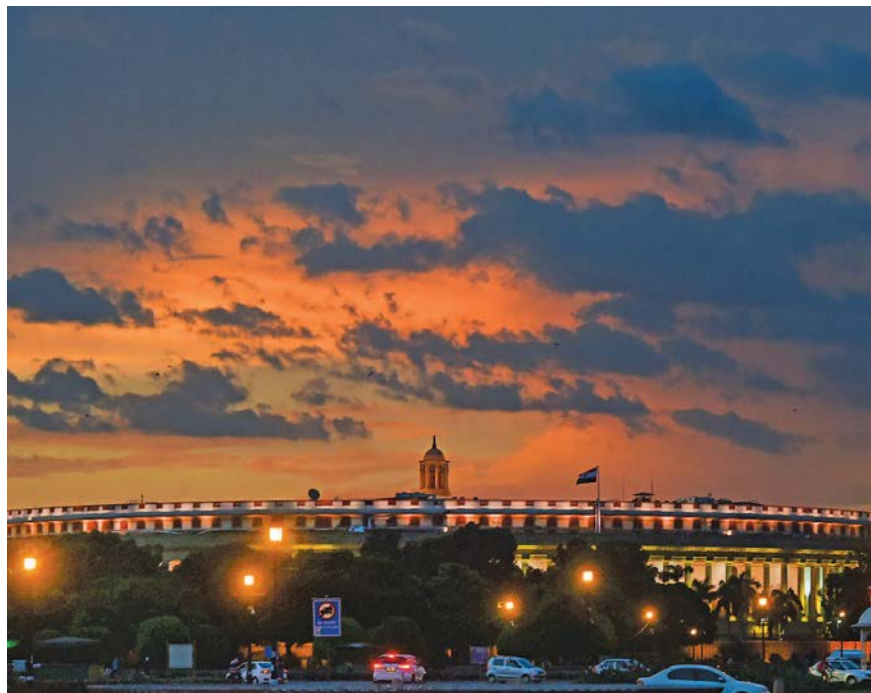
Telling the court that the trial in the cases can be expedited and completed in a month or two, the solicitor general did not accept the suggestion from the petitioners' lawyers for disposing off the cases.

Justice Khanwilkar wondered how could the petitioners leave the country if the trials continue and more charges are added.

The court decided to record the solicitor general's assurances that the foreigners can leave India during the pendency of trials, after filling appropriate affidavits.

"The bench was hearing a plea filed by 34 foreign nationals challenging the decision of the ministry of home affairs (MHA) to blacklist over 3,000 of them from travelling to India for a period of 10 years.

Mr Mehta said that out of 34 petitioners, 24 have opted for plea bargaining by paying fine and they can go home. The lookout notice in their case has been withdrawn.



Monsoon clouds hover over the Parliament House after sunset in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

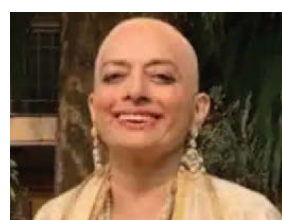
Sadia Dehlvi, Sufi author, activist dies at 63

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Author, activist, food connoisseur and raconteur, Delhi's very own Sadia Dehlvi, whose name itself reflected her bond with the city, has died after a prolonged battle with breast cancer.

Dehlvi, meaning 'one from Delhi', died on Wednesday at her home and is survived by her son Arman Ali Dehlvi. She was 63.

Belonging to a family whose association with the city went back centuries, Dehlvi's Twitter profile read, "Columnist and author Sufism: The Heart of Islam & The Sufi Courtyard: Dargahs of Delhi. I live in Delhi, a city I love."

Dehlvi, who wrote about women, minorities, Islamic spirituality and Delhi's heritage and culture for more than 40 years, was laid to rest on Thursday at the city's Shidipura ceme-



Sadia Dehlvi

tery. A woman of many talents, Dehlvi also produced and scripted documentaries and television programmes, including "Amma and Family" (1995), with veteran actor Zohra Sehgal in the lead.

She was also a close friend and confidante of the late Khushwant Singh, who dedicated his book *Night* to her.

"To Sadia Dehlvi, who gave me more affection and notoriety than I deserve," he wrote. Singh's book *Men and Women in my Life*, which has a chapter dedi-

cated to her, also has Dehlvi's photo on its cover.

"Hers was a very illustrious family... I won't be exaggerating one bit if I tell you that the family was always leading from the front to keep Urdu alive in India," Yasir Abbasi, who used Dehlvi's help for his book *Yeh Un Dinon ki Baat Hai*, told PTI. Dehlvi, who belonged to the royal Shama family, edited the Urdu women's journal Bano. Her grandfather Hafiz Yusuf Dehlvi founded the iconic Urdu film and literary month Shama in 1938.

"Under the Shama group, they launched other periodicals as well, including Bano and Khilona. Today we can't even imagine how popular the magazine Shama was. It was found in every Urdu speaking household," Abbasi said.

Dehlvi was passionate about food, much like her family, which famously hosted Bollywood stars such as Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor and Waheeda Rehman in their palatial 'haveli'.

"The Dehlvis' spacious house Shama Kothi in Delhi's tony diplomatic enclave of Chanakyapuri had become home to many visiting film stars. Their parties were the talk of town. Food was something that the family was very passionate about. Sadia often talked about the many kebabs they used to serve in those parties," said Abbasi. In 1978, Dehlvi founded Al Kausar, the Chanakyapuri restaurant famous for its kebabs, with her mother. At the age of 60, she donned the hat of a chef and tied up with ITC to celebrate the capital's authentic cuisine over a six-day dinner buffet festival - Delhi Table spread.

— PTI

33cr Indian students will keep learning during Covid: Mantri

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank", inaugurating Jindal Global University's first-ever conference on transforming the university in Covid-19 times on Thursday, said: "The world is facing an unprecedented disruption due to Covid-19, especially in the field of education and learning. But we are committed to ensuring access to education to 33 crore Indian students during this challenging time. Through the one-digital platform, we will guarantee every student remains connected to learning, assuring connectivity and access to every scholar."

The minister said teachers and professors are



Ramesh Pokhriyal

indeed "corona warriors" and appreciated the fact that Indian universities turned the Covid-19 challenge into opportunities. Digital learning, online education and the development of several digital platforms, he said, had enabled the higher education institutions to address this crisis. The minister added that the National Education Policy will prove to be a landmark plan for Indians to compete with the best in the world.

The meet was hosted by O.P. Jindal Global University in association with six global education networks.

Welcoming guests, JGU's founding vice-chancellor C. Raj Kumar said: "Today's conference organised by O.P. Jindal Global University underscores the extraordinary potential for the global community of scholars and educationists coming together to reimagine and transform the future of universities. Universities and higher education institutions have a unique role to play not only in terms of helping us overcome this crisis through the work of scientists and researchers around the world, but also to build the economy, polity and society, while building resilience among young people."

SHORT TAKES

Man finds diamonds worth ₹35L in Panna

Panna: A labourer became a millionaire overnight when he unearthed three diamonds worth ₹30 lakh to ₹35 lakh at a diamond mine in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, a senior official said on Thursday. While digging a shallow mine, the labourer, identified only as Subal, found three diamonds with net weight of 7.5 carat, Panna district's diamond officer R.K. Pandey said. Experts have valued the precious stones at anywhere between ₹30 lakh to ₹35 lakh. The labourer has deposited the stones at the district diamond office and they will be auctioned as per government rules. After deducting 12 per cent tax, Subal will get the remaining 88 per cent of the sale proceeds, the official said. A few days ago, another labourer had managed to find a 10.69 carat diamond from one of the mines in Panna. — *PTI*

CPM neta Shyamal dies of Covid-19

Kolkata: Senior CPI(M) leader Shyamal Chakraborty died of Covid-19 at a hospital in Kolkata on Thursday, party sources said. He was 76. Chakraborty, the three-time transport minister of West Bengal from 1982 to 1996, was admitted to the hospital after he tested positive for Covid-19 on July 30. He was also a two-time Rajya Sabha member and a veteran trade unionist. "He died this afternoon. He was on ventilation for the last few days," a party leader said. He is survived by daughter Ushasi Chakraborty, an actor. Chakraborty is the second notable politician from the state to die of Covid-19. Trinamul Congress MLA Tamonash Ghosh succumbed to the contagion in June. On Wednesday, Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation councillor Subhash Bose also died of Covid-19. — *PTI*

Honour killing feared as couple burnt alive

Banda, UP: A 19-year-old woman and her lover were allegedly burnt to death by her family members in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Banda district in a suspected case of honour killing, police said on Thursday. The incident took place on Wednesday evening in Karcha village in Mataundh area when the family members allegedly caught the couple in a compromising position, they said. "They allegedly locked them in a hut and set it on fire," additional SP Mahendra Pratap Singh said. Both of them were rushed to a local hospital in serious condition where Bhola (23) died while the woman, Priyanka, who suffered 80 per cent burns and was referred to another facility in Kanpur, succumbed on the way. — *PTI*

SC seeks report on Palghar lynching

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Maharashtra government to place before it the details of the inquiry conducted against the police personnel and the action taken against them for not intervening when two Sadhus were attacked and lynched by a mob at Palghar. A bench headed by Justice Ashok M Bhushan also directed the Maharashtra government to also place before the two charge-sheets filed by the State police in the case. The court gave Maharashtra government three weeks time to bring on record the inquiry report and action taken against police personnel and the two charge-sheets. The court direction to Maharashtra government came while hearing petitions seeking the probe by the CBI and the NIA.

Court refuses to grant bail to Indrani

Mumbai: A special CBI court rejected bail application filed by Indrani Mukerjea in 2012 Sheena Bora murder case. This is Indrani's fifth bail plea that has been rejected by the court. While arguing for bail, she told the court that the prosecution's case was "false and baseless" and she had nearly 120 documents to prove it. She pointed out inconsistencies in the evidence put forth by the prosecution to prove her role as a conspirator and one of the killers of her daughter Sheena Bora.

Agencies seek satellites to keep eye on China

4-6 dedicated satellites can help them keep a check on PLA's moves

PM congratulates Rajapaksa after landslide win

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Seeking to keep a closer eye on the activities of the Chinese military both near the Indian territory as well as in its depth areas all along the 4,000 kilometre Line of Actual Control (LAC), the Indian security agencies feel there is a requirement of four to six dedicated satellites which can help them keep a check on the adversary's moves.

The need has been felt after the Chinese Army in the garb of an exercise in the Xinjiang region on its side of the LAC mobilised more than 40,000 troops along with heavy weaponry and artillery and started rushing them towards Indian territory and transgressed into Indian territory at multiple locations surprising the Indian formations located in Leh, including the 14 Corps headquarters.

"To improve the coverage of the activities of the Chinese troops and forces in both near Indian territory and in their depth areas, there is a need for four to six dedicated satellites with very high-resolution sensors and cameras giving ability to keep a close watch even on the movement of small objects and individuals," defence sources told ANI.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday congratulated his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa on his party's performance in the parliamentary elections, with early trends showing that Rajapaksa family-run Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) was headed for a landslide win.

He also commended the government and the electoral institutions of Sri Lanka for effectively organising the elections despite the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic, a statement by the Prime

Minister's Office said.

He appreciated Lankan people for their enthusiastic participation in the elections, and said this reflected the strong democratic values shared by both countries. On the "successful conduct of parliamentary elections in Sri Lanka yesterday".

In a tweet, Mr Modi said: "It was a pleasure to speak to you. Once again, many congratulations. We will work together to further advance all areas of bilateral cooperation and to take our special ties to ever newer heights."

Mr Rajapaksa also thanked Mr Modi on Twitter for the congratulatory phone call.

In an emphasis on the Buddhist circuit connectivity amid increasing Chinese assertiveness in the region, PM Modi also informed the Lankan PM about "the establishment of an international airport in the Buddhist pilgrim city of Kushinagar" in India's Uttar Pradesh, adding that "the city looked forward to welcoming visitors from Sri Lanka at an early date".

New Delhi also said, "Recalling their cordial and fruitful previous interactions, the two leaders reiterated their shared commitment to strengthen the age-old and multi-dimensional India-Sri Lanka relationship."

The capability and assets would also help the country to reduce dependence on foreign associates to keep a watch on Chinese and other adversaries, they said.

The Indian Armed Forces already have a few military satellites which are used for keeping a close watch on the adversaries but there is a need to further strengthen that capability, the sources

said. At the moment, Chinese troops have transgressed into Indian territory in Finger area along the Pangang Tso lake where they are refusing to disengage completely and want to create an observation post at Finger-5. In Gogra area also, they are maintaining some elements.

Because of the lack of clarity about the Chinese activities, the Indian side

took time to build up its numbers in Ladakh and additional forces had to be pumped in from adjoining areas and reserve formations were also moved there. The Chinese have created a similar build up all along the LAC opposite Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh but the Chinese troops there are in depth areas.

— *ANI*

Putin expected to visit India in Oct. for bilateral meet

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 6

Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to visit India in October this year for the annual bilateral summit between the two countries, New Delhi said on Thursday.

India said "regional and international issues of interest" are being discussed in exchanges between the two countries, a veiled indication perhaps to the current Sino-India military stand-off. India has time-tested strategic ties with Russia spanning decades especially in the defence sector but Russia also has close ties with China.

It may be recalled that about a month ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had spoken to Russian President Putin and had "conveyed his keenness to welcome President Putin in India" for the (institutionalised annual formal) Bilateral Summit this year.

MEA spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said that in the recent exchanges between the two sides, regional and international issues have also been discussed.

He said Mr Modi and Mr Putin had spoken on July 2 when the PM had congratulated him on the successful national vote on constitutional amendments in Russia.

"Then in the last week of June, Raksha Mantri (Rajnath Singh) had visited Moscow. The Indian military contingent had

India blasts Pak's close ally Turkey

New Delhi: India on Thursday lambasted Pakistan's close friend Turkey and asked it to refrain from interfering in India's internal affairs on the Kashmir issue. Soon after Turkey reportedly said the revoking of Article 370 a year ago was not conducive to peace and security in the region, MEA said, terming Turkey's views as "factually incorrect and biased". Wednesday had seen the first anniversary of India's revoking of Article 370, a Constitutional provision that had granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

participated in the 75th anniversary of the victory in the 2nd world war. "Yesterday when foreign secretary (Harsh Vardhan Shringla) and the (Russian) deputy foreign minister spoke, they took stock of all these recent exchanges and the idea is to keep the momentum of these regular exchanges going on because due to the Covid situation, we have not been able to have visits," he said.

"But there is a full calendar of forthcoming high-level exchanges between the two sides. The SCO and Brics foreign ministers meetings, the NSAs' meeting, the Defence ministers' meeting are scheduled. Of course, we have the annual bilateral summit coming up in October when President Putin is expected to visit India," he said.



Remembering Sushmaji on her first **Punya Tithi**. Her untimely and unfortunate demise left many saddened. She served India selflessly and was an articulate voice for India at the world stage.

— **Narendra Modi, Prime Minister**

time." It was her last tweet and hours later she was rushed to the AIIMS where she breathed her last.

"Remembering Sushmaji on her first **Punya Tithi**. Her untimely and unfortunate demise left many saddened. She served India selflessly and was an articulate voice for India at the world stage," the Prime Minister tweeted. Recalling how Swaraj

used to visit him on every Raksha Bandhan to tie Rakhi, the vice-president said she was seen as "an epitome of Indian culture. She was a blend of modern thinking and traditional values. She was always respectful towards seniors and elders. She was one of the most affable Indian politicians and treated everybody with warmth and affection." He

addressed the first memorial lecture organised by the Panjab University.

External affairs minister S. Jaishankar said Swaraj was "always an inspiration." Paying tributes to her, law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said "will always remember her as a great orator; visionary leaders and above all a compassionate human being."

Union home minister Amit Shah said she was a "towering figure of Indian polity, an outstanding parliamentarian and a brilliant orator who dedicated her entire life in the service of the nation. Her ideals will continue to inspire the generations to come.

Heavy rains, strong winds batter Mumbai

Several roads submerged

AGE CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 6

With rainfall of 300 mm in just four hours, any city in the world would have witnessed flooding. It was a storm-like situation in Mumbai on Wednesday, claimed Iqbal Singh Chahal, the chief of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

"South Mumbai area received a heavy rainfall of 300 mm in just four hours with the wind speed of 100 kmph. Even during the deluge on July 26, 2005, South Mumbai had not come across such a situation. Major areas like Nariman Point, Colaba in South Mumbai witnessed a record rainfall. Due to this, there was waterlogging in these areas," said Mr Chahal.

A retaining wall on BG Kher Marg in South Mumbai caved in on Wednesday night due to heavy rainfall, also causing heavy damage to four underground pipelines.

Meanwhile, Mumbai is slowly limping back to normalcy following the havoc caused due to incessant rains and gusty winds that lashed the city on Wednesday.

For the first time in recent memory, South Mumbai witnessed heavy waterlogging in areas like Nariman Point, Marine Drive, Girgaon Chowpatty etc. The road outside Mantralaya, the secretariat of the Maharashtra government at Nariman Point, was submerged in rainwater. The state government-owned JJ Hospital also witnessed heavy waterlogging on the ground floor, which houses casualty ward and other departments.

Due to strong winds, the signage atop the BSE building was damaged heavily.



People look at uprooted trees fallen on a road near Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai, on Thursday. The Colaba observatory in south Mumbai recorded 330mm rainfall in the 24-hour.

— **RAJESH JADHAV**

Flood threat looms large in several parts of Karnataka

Bengaluru, Aug. 6: Battered by torrential rains, several parts of Karnataka are facing a flood-like situation for the third consecutive year, putting lives and property at risk.

Several districts of the state's coastal, Malnad and north interior regions are receiving heavy rains and the showers are expected to continue, while there are reports of landslides in hilly areas of Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru districts.

With flood-like situation in several parts of the state, chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa, who is currently undergoing treatment for Covid-19 infection at a private hospital here, has ordered immediate release of ₹50 crore for

emergency relief.

"In wake of heavy rains in several parts of the state, I have instructed the chief secretary to review the situation and issued instructions to DCs (deputy commissioners) to closely monitor the situation and take necessary measures. Also ordered immediate release of ₹50 crores for emergency relief purposes," he tweeted last night.

A statement released by the CMO on Thursday said, Yediyurappa has directed the district in-charge ministers to take precautionary measures in the wake of heavy rainfall across the state.

He instructed the ministers to remain in their constituencies and tour the damaged areas and

also directed them to undertake relief distribution and other necessary measures. "₹50 crore has already been released and if necessary more funds would be released. The ministers can take decisions regarding emergency works," he added.

Revenue minister R. Ashoka said he had spoken to deputy commissioners of all the districts and given them necessary instructions to respond immediately to the situation. He has called for a meeting of the disaster management authority later today.

Parts of districts in coastal and Malnad regions are currently under red alert and rains are likely to continue there.

— *PTI*

PM likely to inaugurate Rohtang tunnel by Sept-end: Himachal CM

Dharamshala, Aug. 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate the 8.8-km-long Rohtang tunnel, being built on the Leh-Manali highway, in the last week of September, Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur said.

He said the tunnel will give all-weather connectivity to the remote and border areas of the state.

The strategically important project is being completed at a cost of around ₹3,200 crore, he said.

— *PTI*

Bihar Regiment? Twenty of our soldiers belonging to the regiment were killed in the clashes with Chinese troops. The PM's averment was tantamount to an insult to the martyrs, Mr Gandhi alleged.

Turning his attention towards the Covid-19 pandemic, he remarked sarcastically, I had warned way back in February that the country was going to be hit by a corona tsunami. And we are on our way

to becoming the vishwa guru of the coronavirus.

Today, I am predicting a much bigger storm of unemployment and a sinking economy which may batter Bihar and the rest of the country in about six months or a year. The blame lies on the Modi government and the RSS which are together working towards destroying all institutions, Mr Gandhi was quoted as having told the rally.

Former J&K L-G G.C. Murmu appointed new CAG of India

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The government on Thursday appointed Girish Chandra Murmu as the new Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, a day after he resigned as the lieutenant-governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Murmu will succeed Rajiv Mehrishi, a 1978-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre, who completes his term on August 7. "...the President has been pleased to appoint Shri Girish Chandra Murmu to be the Comptroller and Auditor General of India with effect from the date he assumes



charge of his office," a notification by the department of economic

affairs said. Earlier in the day, President Ram Nath Kovind accepted Mr Murmu's resignation as the first lieutenant-governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Murmu, a 1985-batch IAS officer, had abruptly submitted his resignation on Wednesday.

— *PTI*

Heavy showers lash Kerala, people moved to relief camps

Thiruvananthapuram, Aug. 6: Heavy rains lashed north Kerala on Thursday and a red alert was issued for Idukki and Wayanad districts with Nilambur town getting briefly flooded after the Chaliyar river overflowed.

In its bulletin, the India meteorological department (IMD) said a red alert has been issued to Malappuram district for August 7 and an orange alert in nine districts of Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod till August 9.

The Malappuram district administration has opened nine camps in the district while seven are in Nilambur alone.

"We have opened nine camps in Malappuram with seven of them in Nilambur itself. A total of 410 people are in the seven camps with adherence to Covid-19 protocol," a district disaster management authority said.

Nilambur town was flooded for a few hours earlier in the day but the water subsided, police said, adding that those from the low-lying areas were shifted to the camps. At least 425 people are in various camps in Malappuram.

Meanwhile, Wayanad district administration opened 12 camps and shifted at least 560 people. Extensive damages have been reported from Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargod districts following heavy rain and strong winds.

— *PTI*

THE ASIAN AGE

7 AUGUST 2020

Did PM just discredit India's freedom fight?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has exhorted his fellow citizens to treat August 5 on a par with August 15, India's Independence Day. The call, made after conducting the *bhoomi puja* of the Ram temple at Ayodhya on Wednesday, August 5, defies logic and negates history. Ram's devotees, Mr Modi included, have every right to be joyous when their lord, venerated as *Maryada Purushottam*, or the epitome of honour, gets a proper abode; none has a reason to quarrel with them either. But drawing an impossible parallel with Indian Independence movement and the one for the temple has its risks. For one, the freedom movement was a unifier in itself — Indians of all hues, irrespective of their religion, caste, language, sex, race and region were part of it. Countless people willingly sacrificed their lives for the cause, or suffered in silence, or became martyrs or spent their lives in villages changing their faces. It was a movement to not only liberate this nation from the yoke of foreign rule but also an attempt to unshackle itself from the very many forms of bondages that stopped its citizens from living their lives to the full. And

Equally incomprehensible is the silence or subservience of the opposition, save of the Left, to the politicisation of an essentially religious ceremony. None seems to have an issue with the Prime Minister, accompanied by the chief minister of a state, laying the foundation stone of a place of worship of one religion.

The land on which the temple will now come up is freed through acts of violence, a fact underlined by the Supreme Court, which ordered construction of the temple. Mr Modi's call for seeing the temple as a symbol of India's unity would have better acceptance had he mentioned those innocent victims and begged their pardon. Perhaps, it would have been a true tribute to Lord Ram.

Equally incomprehensible is the silence or subservience of the opposition, save of the Left, to the politicisation of an essentially religious ceremony. None seems to have an issue with the Prime Minister, accompanied by the chief minister of a state, laying the foundation stone of a place of worship of one religion. The Congress, as it has always been on the issue, is a confused lot, speaking in many voices. The Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party expressed no opinion, nor the DMK of Tamil Nadu. Kerala's CPI(M) chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, however, made two points. One, India's secularist ideals would not have suffered this jolt had the Congress chosen to hold on to them. Two, our agenda must be to contain Covid-19 which has already affected 19 lakh people, and then bring succour to the people the pandemic has reduced to penury. That's some semblance of political sanity and sagacity, if you will.

In Beirut, avoidable tragedy

A devastating instance of sheer human incompetence led to the ripping apart of a swath of the Lebanese capital Beirut, destroying its port and two giant grain silos, killing at least 135 people, besides injuring 5,000 and leaving three lakh people homeless while affecting the lives of 7.5 lakh citizens and causing an estimated \$3 billion in damage. Had the leaders of the judicial or executive branches of the tiny West Asian nation been able to sort out the storage of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, confiscated from a financially distressed Russian cargo ship, rather than leave it lying in a port hangar for close to seven years, an explosion powerful enough to record 3.3 on the Richter scale and reverberate miles away in Cyprus would not have taken place.

It might have suited the leaders of Lebanon to have been in a position to blame it on saboteurs, terrorists, aggressors or conquerors, of whom the country, once proud of its label of 'Switzerland of the East', has seen aplenty in its history. It appears, prima facie, that an innocent enough spark from a welding torch set off stored fireworks, which in turn ignited the chemical that would have been far more useful as a base for fertiliser for a country that virtually imports all its food needs. A government, already in debt to the tune of 165 per cent of GDP, has so far offered a piffling \$66 million as relief even as it keeps its port officials under home arrest.

The scale of indecisiveness and lack of clarity on what to do with a chemical that has at least half the explosive power of TNT is risible. The human tragedy caused by such apathy, particularly when it comes to handling the complexity of man's ingenuity in making substances that can blow mankind to pieces, is shockingly revealing of the fecklessness of politicians who aspire for power but have little understanding of their responsibilities in safeguarding people. To them, investment in human safety seems the least priority.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR

THE ASIAN AGE offices are located at:
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Mumbai: Sigma House, # 43, Ground Floor, R. A. Kidwai Marg, Near Wadala Rly Station, Wadala (West), Mumbai - 400 031 Phone (022) 24195301 Fax (022) 24195347

Kolkata: 4th Floor, Chowdhury Building, 8/1A Little Russell Street, Kolkata 700 071. Phone: (033) 2289 0676/77 Fax (033) 2289 0686

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office in the United Kingdom
Air surcharge for Kathmandu and J&K ₹1

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Decan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

Mumbai: Dangat Media Pvt Ltd, Plot No 22, Digha MIDC, TTC Industrial Estate Area, Vishnu Nagar, Digha, Navi Mumbai-400708.

Kolkata: Satyajug Employees Cooperative Industrial Society Ltd, 13/A, Prafulla Sarkar Street, Kolkata 700 072.

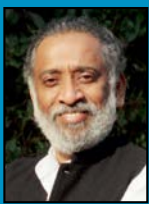
London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Postal registration numbers: DL(S)-05/4189/15-17

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

Officer sent to PMO won laurels in TN



Any appointment in the all-powerful Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is viewed with great interest. So, when P. Amudha, who is a 1994 batch IAS officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, was appointed to the PMO as joint secretary, on a lateral shift basis, for the remainder of her five-year central deputation period, observers are speculating about her talent that can meet the high standards of the PMO. Before this appointment, Amudha was serving as a professor at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie. Interestingly, minutes after the news of her appointment emerged Tamil Nadu chief minister E. Palaniswami congratulated the IAS officer in a tweet and said that she had earned the goodwill of the state government as well as the

affection of the people through her honesty and efficiency. Amudha has earned her reputation as an effective field officer and ability to take swift decisions. Her peers recall her work during the Chennai floods in 2015 when she was special officer for monsoon relief in the state. It's these qualities that may have impressed the PMO to reel her in for what could be the most rewarding and challenging assignments for an IAS officer.

WHO WILL BE NEW RBI DEPUTY GOVERNOR?

A search committee headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba will interview candidates for the post of deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India on August 7, according to sources. This was meant to be held on July 23 but was put off without any explanation. The post

had fallen vacant after senior-most deputy governor N.S. Vishwanathan demitted office three months before the end of his tenure in March due to health reasons.

Besides Gauba, the committee includes RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, financial services secretary Debasish Panda and two independent members.

The selected name from the interview will be sent to the appointments committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister for final approval. Sources say that the panel has shortlisted eight candidates for the posts.

The RBI Act mandates that the central bank should have four deputy governors — two from within the ranks, one commercial banker and another an economist to head the monetary policy depart-

ment. At present, the RBI has three deputy governors — B.P. Kanungo, M.K. Jain and Michael Debabrata Patra.

HALT OR GO TO J&K CADRE CHANGE?

The Centre stopped inducting new officers in the J&K cadre of the All India Services after the re-categorisation of Jammu & Kashmir into two Union territories, J&K and Ladakh, in August last year. The process was recently reinitiated, but sources say, it has been put on hold again after receiving feedback from officers that it would lead to confusion.

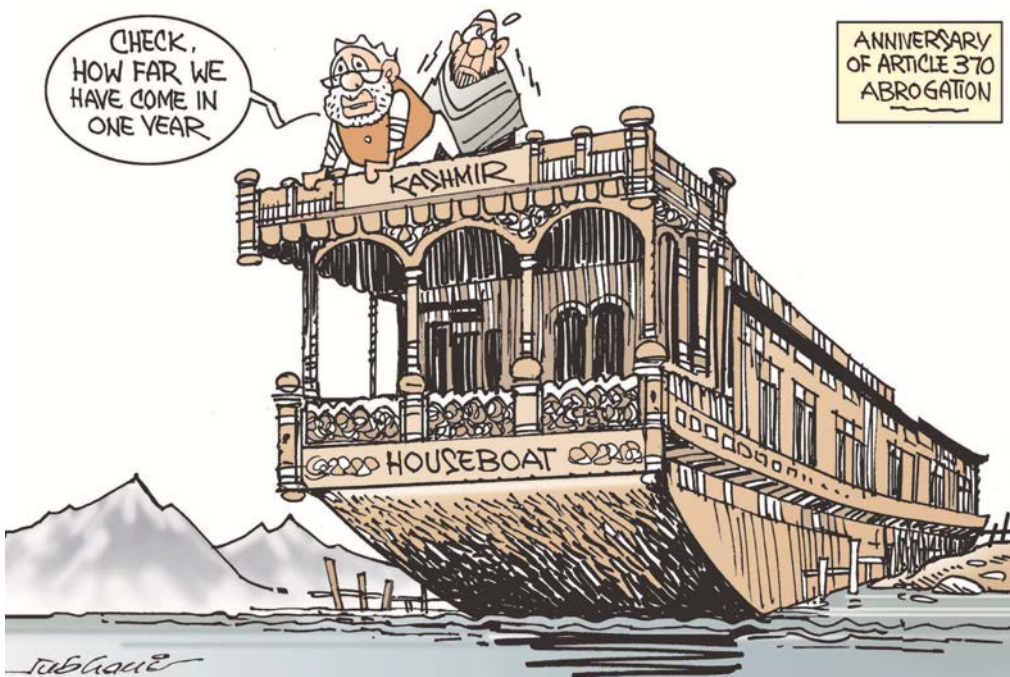
The J&K cadre of IAS, IPS and IOFS officers was to be merged into the AGMUT cadre. However, according to the regulations, officers already serving in the J&K cadre at the time would continue in

the existing cadre. The cadre controlling authority for AGMUT is the ministry of home affairs while the other cadres are controlled by the department of personnel and training (DoPT).

Apparently, some officers approached the Centre saying that two officers of the same batch would end up under different controlling authorities which would lead to "confusion" and "create differences" between the officers. Seeing the resistance from the babus, the Centre has decided, for now, not to proceed with the proposed cadre merger. Some officers believe that any key decision on the merger will likely happen only after August 15.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@Twitter.com](#). Let's multiply the effect.

Subhani



Pandemic on rise: More questions than answers



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Is the coronavirus seeping into every faultline in this country? The honest answer is: We don't know.

Six months into the pandemic, there are more questions than answers about the virus. No one really knows how many Indians have been infected by the new coronavirus, nor how many have died. Perhaps we will never know because so many are asymptomatic and there are cracks in our death registration systems.

This week, a young copywriter told me that his father had died of Covid-19 but the family had managed to persuade the hospital authorities into changing the cause of death into something else because they wished the body to be cremated traditionally.

Meanwhile, India's official Covid-19 tally has crossed the 19-lakh mark; and the death toll is close to 40,000. Currently, India has the largest number of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Asia and the third highest number of confirmed cases in the world, after the United States and Brazil.

There are masses of data swirling around.

According to government data, a cumulative total of 2,14,84,402 samples had been tested till August 4. At 2.10 per cent, India's Covid-19 case fatality rate since the first lockdown is low compared to the global average; 50 per cent of deaths have happened in the age group of 60 and above; 37 per cent deaths belong to the 45-60 age group; 11 per cent deaths belong to the 26-44 years age group; while 68 per cent of people who died were men and 32 per cent were women.

The government says 28 states/Union territories show a Covid positivity rate below 10 per cent, and this indicates that the testing strategy

is on the right track.

But the numbers we have don't tell the whole story.

Dr Hemant Shewade, a Bengaluru-based community medicine expert tracking the discourse around Covid-19 data in India points out that nationally, only 86 per cent deaths are captured by the civil registration system and only 22 per cent are medically certified for cause of death.

The Medical Certification of Cause of Death is not enforced in every state with equal efficiency. So far, it has been implemented only in certain hospitals and mostly in urban areas. This can give a very skewed picture even now, when there is a parallel system of Covid-19 death reporting (which are compiled by the district administration and shared with the state government and then with the Centre).

"There is a high possibility of the official Covid death figures coming from Covid-designated hospitals where only confirmed Covid cases, those suspected of having Covid and who reach the Covid hospital in an extreme condition are factored in," says Dr Shewade.

Not all states are equally equipped in terms of health and diagnostic infrastructure and human resources. Where testing is very low, and where medical certification of cause of death is low, it is likely that there will be a gross under-estimation of Covid-19 deaths. For example, Bihar, which has a population of over 120 million, has the lowest testing rate in the country, a mere four tests per 1,000 persons. This means a large number of cases may be going undetected.

There are other gaps in the data which impede our ability to understand the pandemic's trajectory. The data on Covid-19 tests in India doesn't make clear the distinc-

tion between the number of samples being tested and the number of people tested. There is also no official disaggregated data for every state on the RT-PCR tests (gold standard of coronavirus testing) and rapid antigen tests, says Dr Mohak Gupta, now part of the iCART Covid-19 research team and creator of [www.covidtoday.in](#), an open source project tracking India's state-wise progress against the Covid-19 epidemic.

Only a few states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Delhi share this information publicly but there are no updated national figures. We don't know how many among those who have antigen tests go for a follow-up RT-PCR test and what the results are. We also don't have statewide gender-disaggregated data on Covid deaths in any official portal nor the breakup between deaths in rural areas and those in urban areas. Dr Gupta points out that there is scant contact tracing data so we don't have a granular picture of how and where the virus is spreading, and stresses the need for real-time hospitalisation data and influenza-like illness (ILI) surveillance data in the public domain.

Then there is fear, which prevents insiders from coming forward to tell the truth.

"Unfortunately, there is no law in force that encourages potential whistleblowers in the public sector to bring complaints of corruption and wrongdoing to the attention of the competent authorities. Nor is there any mechanism to protect a whistleblower from reprisals for pointing the finger at wrongdoing. An available recourse is to make complaints to the lokayuktas. Hardly any parent law of such bodies empowers them to protect whistle-

blowers. The only remaining option is to move the courts directly, which few would want to do given the length of time it takes to get a conviction," says Venkatesh Nayak, programme head of the Access to Information Programme of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. As for whistleblowing in the private sector, the extremely limited provisions in the 2013 Companies Act or the Limited Liability Partnerships Act don't inspire much confidence in potential whistleblowers, says Mr Nayak.

There is also no mention of whistleblower provisions in the laws governing societies and trusts, which are of colonial vintage. "It comes as no surprise that doctors and nurses working in entities regulated by any of these laws continue to suffer in silence or at the most make complaints through official channels at considerable risk to themselves and their careers. The only remaining option is to go on mass strike, as is now happening in Zimbabwe. However, the government will clamp down on such legitimate protests by invoking the Essential Services Maintenance Act or draconian provisions of the Disaster Management Act," he adds.

Successive governments have pushed the six-year-old Whistleblowers Protection Act under the carpet without bringing it into force despite repeated reminders from civil society and the media.

Telling the truth has never been easy. However, there are those who persist. As Mr Nayak points out, despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-related lockdowns, citizens are using the Right to Information Act to demand details of action by governments to tackle the epidemic. But delays and refusals are common as are attacks on RTI activists.

The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at [patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com](#).

LETTERS

ALLAH'S 'AVATAR'

Is the RSS/BJP trying to steal the thunder of the Sunni Waqf Board by having its ascetics, specifically one Paramhans Das, go to town advising the board to build a hospital on the land they have got as compensation in the Ram Janma-bhoomi-Babri Masjid case on the presumption that since it is "donated land", the prayers offered there will not be accepted?

Priyanka Mathur
Kolkata

PASSING LIGHT

THE DEATH OF veteran CPI(M) leader and party's central committee member Syamal Chakraborty due to coronavirus on Thursday, August 6, at the age of 78 is shocking. He will be remembered for his struggle for the working class and the left movement in the country. Rest in Peace, Syamal Chakraborty.

Sankar Paul
Chakdaha, West Bengal

SUSHANT'S FOLLY

DID SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT commit any indiscretion with his manager Disha Saliyan which preyed on his mind and lead to his breakup with girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, causing him to take the extreme step of killing himself? His reaction to Ms Saliyan's death and his telephonic silence with regard to Rhea post June 8 point to this conjecture. No one is infallible.

Krittivaas
Ujjain

BALUCH CARD

PAKISTAN has initiated a diplomatic offensive against India by releasing a map showing Kashmir, Ladakh, Junagadh and Sir Creek as its territory. Although the move is bizarre and does not merit a response, the Imran Khan government will make the mistake of bringing it to the international fora. That's when India should raise Gilgit-Baltistan and the Balochistan freedom movement. It has the precedent of success in Bangladesh, so the world will sit up and take note.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

TEMPLE POLITICS

ORDINARY PEOPLE go to work in the morning and return home in the evening. They need not go to the temple, but worship gods and goddesses at home. To them, faith is personal. But now temple politics has arrived to spoil our secular credentials and syncretic culture. Faultlines between communities are being deepened. Good governance is a distant dream.

Uttam Bhowmik
Chandramerh, West Bengal

IN BRIEF

Court indicts Shehbaz, son

SHAFQAT ALI
ISLAMABAD, AUG. 6

A Pakistani accountability court on Thursday indicted Pakistan Muslim League-(Nawaz) President Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shahbaz in Ramzan Sugar Mills reference. During the hearing headed by judge Amjad Nazir Chaudhry, both the accused pleaded not guilty in the reference and their lawyer requested time for case preparation which was rejected by the court. Shehbaz told the judge that he was being dragged into fake case as he has always worked with honesty and served the people of Punjab for 10 years. "I didn't take salary and even money for petrol for 12 years. I brought investment to Pakistan for economic stability," he added. The PML-N leader said he was a public representative with emotions for general masses.

5 dead in Denver home arson fire

Denver: Five people were found dead Wednesday after an early morning fire destroyed a suburban Denver home — a blaze that authorities said they suspect was intentionally set. Three people escaped the fire by jumping from the home's second floor. Investigators believe the victims were a toddler, an older child and three adults, Denver Fire Department Capt. Greg Pixley said. Their bodies were discovered after firefighters extinguished the fire, which was first reported by a Denver police officer at 2:40 a.m., Pixley said. The three survivors were hospitalised with non-life-threatening injuries, Denver police spokesman Jay Casillas said. Pixley spoke outside the charred house in the Green Valley Ranch neighbourhood. A police officer attempting to rescue people on the first floor was pushed back by the fire's heat, and it appears that those who died were all on the first floor.

Bombs damage ATM in NZ mall

Wellington: Would-be thieves apparently detonated two homemade bombs at a New Zealand mall ATM early Thursday and left other unexploded bombs behind, according to police. Authorities closed the Chartwell Shopping Centre in Hamilton and some nearby streets while they searched the area to make sure it was safe.

A military bomb disposal team was called to the site. Police said they found several homemade explosive devices, including two, that appeared to have exploded. They said the bombs had damaged the ATM and the immediate area around it but hadn't injured anybody. The ATM stood at an exterior wall of the shopping centre at an ANZ bank branch. Police initially declined say what the devices were made from or to confirm that no money had been stolen, saying they would release more details later in the day.

NIRAV MODI IN CUSTODY TILL AUGUST 27

London, Aug. 6: Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, fighting extradition to India, was on Thursday further remanded in custody until August 27 after he appeared via videolink at a regular remand hearing before a UK court on charges over the nearly \$2 billion Punjab National Bank fraud and money laundering case.

The 49-year-old jeweller, who has been lodged at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest in March last year, appeared via videolink before District Judge Vanessa Baraitser at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London for a regular 28-day "call-over" hearing. He was told the next hearing in the case will be a case management hearing ahead of a trial set from September 7.

"You will appear via videolink again. Your lawyers may be present in court," said Judge Baraitser, in reference to the part remote setting in operation across UK courts since the Coronavirus lockdown. In May, District Judge Samuel Goozee presided over the first part of Modi's extradition trial, held in a partial remote settings, with the second part scheduled between September 7 and 11. Besides, completing the arguments on establishing a prima facie case against Modi, the trial next month will deal with a second extradition request, made by the Indian authorities and certified by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.

Don's FB post of kids immune to Covid-19 deleted

Houston, Aug. 6: Social media giant Facebook, for the first time, has removed a post from US President Donald Trump in which he claimed that children were "almost immune" to Covid-19, saying it violated its policy against spreading "misinformation" about the Coronavirus. The post in question was a video clip of a Trump interview on Fox News Channel uploaded by the Trump campaign on Wednesday.

The US President claims in the clip that children are "almost immune" to Covid-19. While much remains unknown about the Coronavirus, children are believed to be able to spread it to others, even without symptoms.

"This video includes false claims that a group of people is immune from Covid-19 which is a violation of our policies around harmful Covid misinformation," Andy Stone, a Facebook policy spokesperson said in a statement.

A link to the post now diverts to a page that says, "This Content Isn't Available Right Now." It is the first time that Facebook has removed a post from Trump entirely, rather than labelling it, as it has done in the past, making it a rare instance in which it has been willing to censor the president.

In June, Facebook removed ads that the Trump campaign posted that featured a symbol Nazis used to classify political prisoners during World War II. Twitter also removed a link to the same video

Test travellers from 'risk areas': Germany

Berlin, Aug. 6: Germany will require people arriving from countries deemed high risk, such as the United States, to take Coronavirus tests starting this weekend, the health minister said Thursday, as the country recorded its highest daily tally of new infections in three months. German officials have voiced alarm over a steady upward creep in the number of new infections over recent weeks.

The national disease control centre, the Robert Koch Institute, said 1,045 cases were recorded on Wednesday — the first time since May 7 that it has counted more than 1,000 new cases in a day.

Daily figures can be volatile or distorted by delays in reporting, and

the number is still far short of the peak of more than 6,000 reached in early April.

"What we are seeing is a lot of small outbreaks," Health Minister Jens Spahn told reporters. "People are getting infected at family parties, at their place of work or at community facilities." On top of that, school holidays — the dates of which are staggered across Germany's 16 states — are ending in some regions, increasing concerns that vacationers could bring home the virus. Last Saturday, the government started offering free tests for people returning to the country, a move that Spahn said likely contributed to the increase in recorded cases. — AP

clip, which the official Trump Twitter account @TeamTrump shared earlier on Wednesday.

Links to the tweet now point Twitter users to a message that the tweet violated Twitter's rules and is no longer available. The Trump campaign accused Facebook of "flagrant bias".

"The President was stating a fact that children are less susceptible to the Coronavirus," Courtney Parella, the campaign's deputy national press secretary, said in an emailed

statement.

"Another day, another display of Silicon Valley's flagrant bias against this President, where the rules are only enforced in one direction. Social media companies are not the arbiters of truth," Parella said. A US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study involving 2,500 children published in April found that about one in five infected children were hospitalised versus one in three adults; three children died. — PTI



A digital billboard of Lord Ram and Ram Mandir at Times Square, New York, to mark the Ayodhya 'Bhoomi Pujan', on Wednesday. — PTI

TIMES SQUARE DISPLAYS LORD RAM'S IMAGE

New York, Aug. 6: The image of Lord Ram and the grand Ram Temple to be built in Ayodhya beamed across a giant billboard at the iconic Times Square in New York City where members of the Indian community gathered in large numbers to celebrate the 'Bhoomi Pujan' performed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The bright image of Lord Ram, the grand temple and the Indian Tricolour beamed on a giant wrap-around LED display screen on Wednesday. While the organisers had planned to beam the photos from 8 AM to 10 PM on Wednesday, the image of Lord Ram and the temple was displayed for about four hours till 1 PM.

"Extremist groups can try to stymie us but they cannot silence Hindus. Come celebrate our Ramji in Times Square tonight at 7:30 for a diya lighting!! (there will be no displays in the evening)," the organisers said on the website ramcelebration.org.

Prominent community leader and President of the American India Public Affairs Committee Jagdish Sehani and organisers of the event said that the members of the Indian community gathered in huge numbers to celebrate the historic day when PM Modi performed the 'Bhoomi Pujan' of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Members of the Indian diaspora gathered at Times Square where organisers had planned to light diyas, sing bhajans and distribute sweets. — PTI

Lebanon officials shift blast blame as Macron calls for serious reforms

Beirut, Aug. 6: Lebanese officials targeted in the investigation of the massive blast that tore through Beirut sought to shift blame for the presence of explosives at the city's port, and the visiting French president warned Thursday that without serious reforms the country would "continue to sink".

The blast Tuesday, which appeared to have been caused by an accidental fire that ignited a warehouse full of ammonium nitrate at the city's port, ripped across the Lebanese capital, killing at least 135 people, injuring more than 5,000 and causing widespread destruction.

It also may have accelerated the country's Coronavirus outbreak, as thousands flooded into hospitals in the wake of the blast. Tens of thousands have been forced to move in with relatives and friends after their homes were damaged, further raising the risks of exposure.

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Thursday amid widespread pledges of international aid. But Lebanon, which was already mired in a severe economic crisis, faces a daunting challenge in rebuilding. It's unclear how much support the international community will offer the notoriously corrupt and dysfunctional government. Macron, who viewed the devastated port and was to meet with senior Lebanese officials, said the visit is "an opportunity to have a frank and challenging dialogue with the Lebanese political powers and institutions".

He said France will work to coordinate aid. Losses from the blast are estimated to be between \$10 billion and \$15 billion, Beirut Governor Marwan Aboud told Saudi-owned TV station *Al-Hadath*. — AP



Volunteers clean the rubble and broken glass from the streets in Beirut on Thursday in the aftermath of a massive explosion in the Lebanese capital. — AFP

Explosion likely an attack: Trump

Washington, Aug. 6: President Donald Trump on Wednesday continued to suggest that the massive explosion that killed at least 135 people in Lebanon might have been a deliberate attack, even as officials in Lebanon and his own defence chief said it's believed to have been an accident. "Whatever happened, it's terrible, but they don't really know what it is," Trump insisted. "Nobody knows yet."

Investigators probing the deadly blast that ripped across Beirut on Tuesday are focused on possible negligence in the storage of tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive fertilizer, in a waterfront warehouse. The Lebanese government ordered the house arrest of several

port officials. On Tuesday, Trump called the explosion a "terrible attack" and said American generals told him it was likely caused by a bomb.

"They seem to think it was an attack," Trump said. "It was a bomb of some kind, yes." Defence Secretary Mark Esper contradicted the president Wednesday, saying most people believe the explosion "was an accident, as reported". But later in the day, Trump insisted, nobody knows for sure. "How can you say accident if somebody left some terrible explosive-type devices and things around perhaps — perhaps it was that. Perhaps it was an attack," Trump told reporters during a White House briefing. — AP

OZ PLEDGES \$1.4MN FOR BEIRUT RELIEF

Beirut, Aug. 6: The Australian government has pledged an initial 2 million Australian dollars (\$1.4 million) to the relief effort in Lebanon following the deadly blast that ripped across the capital Beirut on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters Thursday that the aid will be provided to the World Food Programme and to the Red Cross for food, medical care and essential items. He says his country is considering another round of support.

Morrison says some Australian Embassy personnel were injured but "they are safe and accounted for and we wish them a speedy recovery".

He also thanked the US Embassy officials in Beirut for their support. — AP

China sentences 3rd Canadian to death for storing drug at home

Beijing, Aug. 6: China has sentenced a third Canadian citizen to death on drug charges amid a steep decline in relations between the two countries. The Guangzhou Municipal Intermediate Court announced Xu Weihong's penalty on Thursday and said an alleged accomplice, Wen Guanxiang, had been given a life sentence.

Death sentences are automatically referred to China's highest court for review. The brief court statement gave no details but local media in the southern Chinese city at the heart of the country's manufacturing industry said Xu and Wen had gathered ingredients and tools and began making the drug ketamine in October 2016, then stored the final product in Xu's home in Guangzhou's Haizhu district.

Police later confiscated more than 120 kilograms (266 pounds) of the drug from Xu's home and another address, the reports said. Ketamine is a powerful pain killer that has become popular among club goers in China and elsewhere. Relations between China and Canada soured over the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, an executive and the daughter of the founder of Chinese tech giant Huawei, at Vancouver's airport in late 2018. The US wants her ex-

US TALKS TOUGHER ON CHINESE TECH, BUT OFFERS FEW SPECIFICS

New York, Aug. 6: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday called for a big expansion of US government curbs on Chinese technology, saying that it wants to see "untrusted Chinese apps" pulled from the Google and Apple app stores.

Outside experts called Pompeo's proposal vague and possibly illegal. Pompeo called out popular video app TikTok and the messaging app WeChat, which people in the US use to communicate with others in the US and China, as "significant threats to the personal data of American citizens, not to mention tools for CCP content censorship."

CCP refers to the Chinese Communist Party. The US government has

already been cracking down on Chinese technology companies. For instance, it has long singled out telecom equipment provider Huawei, encouraging allies not to use its equipment in their high-speed 5G wireless networks and banning US telecom companies from using government funds for equipment and services from Huawei and ZTE, another Chinese telecom equipment provider.

Citing national security concerns, it has also barred Google from providing its Android apps such as Google Maps for Huawei phones. The Federal Communications Commission is considering barring operations of telecom companies China Telecom and China Unicom. — AP

case. China has also placed restrictions on various Canadian exports to China, including canola seed oil, in an attempt to pressure Ottawa into releasing Meng.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said there was no connection between Xu's sentencing and current China-Canada relations. "I would like to stress that China's judicial authorities handle the relevant case independently in strict accordance with Chinese law and legal procedures," Wang said at a daily briefing Thursday.

"This case should not inflict any impact on China-Canada relations." Like many Asian nations, China deals out stiff penalties for manufacturing and selling illegal drugs, including the death penalty. In December 2009, Pakistani-British businessman Akmal Shaikh was executed after being convicted of smuggling heroin, despite allegations he was mentally disturbed.

"Death sentences for drug-related crimes that are extremely dangerous will help deter and prevent such crimes," Wang said. "China's judicial authorities handle cases involving criminals of different nationalities in accordance with law." — AP

Nepal: Prachanda meets ex-Speaker

Kathmandu, Aug. 6: Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Thursday held talks with former Speaker Subhash Nembang, a close ally of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, to resolve the intra-party rift. As Thursday's proposed one-on-one meeting between Oli and Prachanda could not take place, Nembang met the executive chairman on behalf of the Prime Minister, a party source said.

"The meeting was held in a positive manner," Nembang told reporters, without sharing details. He said it is the responsibility of "all of us to create understanding between the two top leaders to save the party from splitting". Prachanda's office said that Nembang visited him to represent Oli in order to create a positive environment to sort out their differences.

Oli and Prachanda have held at least 10 meetings in recent weeks to sort out the differences between them. But, as the Prime Minister did not accept the condition of a one-man-one-post, the talks failed. Oli has refused to give up his post as prime minister as well as a co-chairman of the NCP. A bitter internal feud has been brewing in the

ruling NCP since the last few weeks after top party leaders, including Prachanda, demanded Oli's resignation, saying his recent anti-India remarks were "neither politically correct nor diplomatically appropriate". They are also against Oli's autocratic style of functioning.

The differences grew further after Oli said that some of the ruling party leaders are aligning with the southern neighbour to remove him from power after his government issued a new political map incorporating three Indian territories of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura. The two leaders are also engaged in tightening their grip within the party with the escalation of intra-party feud. On July 28, Prime Minister Oli postponed the crucial Standing Committee meeting for the ninth time.

While Oli wants to call the Secretariat meeting to resolve the differences, Prachanda says it would be inappropriate to call the Secretariat meeting as the Standing Committee meeting that was put off on July 28 is yet to be over. Oli wants the Secretariat meeting to resolve the key issues of intra-party dispute as he now commands a majority in the nine-member body. — PTI

PEACE | CEREMONY

Attack witnesses urge world leaders to commit to nuclear disarmament

Survivors mark 75th anniv of 1st atomic attack

Hiroshima, Aug. 6: The dwindling witnesses to the world's first atomic bombing marked its 75th anniversary Thursday, with Hiroshima's mayor and others noting as hypocritical the Japanese government's refusal to sign a nuclear weapons ban treaty. Mayor Kazumi Matsui urged world leaders to more seriously commit to nuclear disarmament, pointing out Japan's failures.

"I ask the Japanese government to heed the appeal of the (bombing survivors) to sign, ratify and become a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons," Matsui said in his peace declaration.

"As the only nation to suffer a nuclear attack, Japan must persuade the global public to unite with the spirit of Hiroshima." His speech highlights what survivors feel is the hypocrisy of Japan's government, which hosts 50,000 American troops and is protected by the US nuclear umbrella. Tokyo has not signed the nuclear weapons ban treaty adopted in 2017, despite its non-nuclear pledge, a failure to act that atomic bombing survivors and pacifist groups call insincere.

The US dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. The US dropped a second bomb three days later on Nagasaki, killing another 70,000. Japan surrendered August 15, ending World War II and its nearly half-century of aggression in Asia. Survivors, their relatives and other participants marked the 8:15 am blast anniversary with a minute of silence. Thursday's peace ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was scaled down because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

● **SURVIVORS, THEIR relatives and other participants marked the 8:15 am blast anniversary with a minute of silence. Thursday's peace ceremony at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park was scaled down because of the Coronavirus pandemic.**

The fewer than 1,000 attendees was one-tenth of those attending in past years. Some survivors and their relatives prayed at the park's cenotaph before the

ceremony. The registry of the atomic bombing victims is stored at the cenotaph, whose inscription reads "Let all the souls here rest in peace for we shall not repeat the mistake."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his speech at the ceremony, said Japan is committed to nuclear weapons ban but a nuclear free world cannot be achieved overnight and that it has to start from dialogue between opposite sides.

"Japan's position is to serve as a bridge between different sides and patiently promote their dialogue and actions to achieve a

world without nuclear weapons," Abe said. Nuclear policies are divided amid a harsh security environment, so it is necessary to create common ground first, he said.

An aging group of survivors, known as hibakusha, feel a growing urgency to tell their stories to the youth. Elderly survivors, mostly over 83, lamented the slow progress of nuclear disarmament. They expressed anger over what they said was the Japanese government's reluctance to help and listen to those who suffered from the atomic bombing. — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	38,025.45	0.96
Nifty 50	11,200.15	0.89
S&P 500*	3,326.43	-0.04
Dollar (₹)	74.92	0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.64	-0.81
Euro (₹)	88.78	-0.35
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	55,850.752	1.36
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	45.60	0.43
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.862	0.035
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.515	-0.028

* As of 10:30 PM IST

IDBI Bank in deal to sell 27% stake in insurance JV

IDBI Bank on Thursday said it has entered into a share purchase agreement (SPA) with the other two joint venture partners in IDBI Federal Life Insurance Company (IFLIC), to divest 27 per cent of its stake for ₹595.30 crore. In June, the private sector lender had informed about the stake sale-purchase proposal among the three JV partners. Currently, LIC-promoted IDBI Bank holds 48 per cent in IFLIC.

Gold and silver prices touch new record high



Gold and silver prices touched record levels in the national capital on Thursday and the yellow metal rose by ₹225 to ₹56,590 per 10 grams amid strong rally in the international market, according to HDFC Securities. Silver price surged by ₹1,932 to ₹75,755 per kilogram. On Wednesday, it had closed at ₹73,823 per kg. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹56,365 per 10 grams.

LIC acquires 5% stake in Yes Bank from mart

Yes Bank on Thursday said LIC has acquired close to 5 per cent shareholding in the bank by purchasing shares from the open market. With the fresh acquisition, the hold of LIC has increased from 0.75 per cent to 4.98 per cent, Yes Bank said in a regulatory filing to stock exchanges. LIC purchased 105.98 crore shares, reflecting 4.23 per cent stake, of the bank from the open market, the filing said.

Adani reports consolidated loss of ₹65.67cr

Adani Enterprises on Thursday reported a consolidated loss of ₹65.67 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, impacted by Covid-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns. The company had clocked a consolidated profit of ₹570 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago, the company said in a BSE filing. Its consolidated income for the quarter declined to ₹5,502 crore, as against ₹10,685 crore during the year-ago period.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

RBI expects higher inflation, negative economic growth

■ Pauses rate cuts for now; maintains accommodative monetary stance

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, AUG. 6

Belying expectations, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday kept rates unchanged on Thursday owing to uncertainty around inflation despite signs of growth faltering further. The MPC voted to maintain an accommodative stance, thus opening up possibilities for more future rate cuts.

“While economic activity had started to recover from the lows of April-May, a surge in fresh infections have forced re-clamping of lockdowns in several cities and states to “level-off” various high-frequency indicators,” RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in his monetary policy address.

The MPC expects headline inflation to remain elevated in Q2FY21 and sees it easing in the second half of the financial year. For 2021, the real GDP growth is expected to be negative.

It refrained from providing growth-inflation forecasts while sticking to the direction based guidance.


“Real GDP growth in the first half of the year is estimated to remain in the contraction zone. For the year 2020-21 as a whole, real GDP growth is also estimated to be negative,” Das said.

He said that the RBI will do whatever is required to revive the economy in the wake of the pandemic.

“With Covid-19 infections rising under fragile micro-economic and financial conditions, we propose to take regulatory and developmental measures, enhance liquidity support for financial markets, ease financial stress while strengthening credit discipline, improve the flow of credit, deepen digital payment systems and facilitate innovations by leveraging technology.”


He said there is enough liquidity at present and that the RBI is using several other monetary operations to boost liquidity in the banking system.

All the six members of the MPC voted for a status quo in rates.



RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Review




Highlights

- Policy rate unchanged at 4%, reverse repo at 3.35%
- Loans against gold enhanced to 90% of the value from current 75% to mitigate COVID-19 impact on households
- To continue with the accommodative stance to revive growth
- Supporting economic recovery assumes primacy in conduct of monetary policy in uncertain global environment
- Sees upside risk to inflation, projects moderation in Oct-Mar
- GDP growth to be negative in current fiscal
- Stressed MSME borrowers eligible for loan restructuring if their accounts were classified standard

- Allows lenders to provide window to restructure loans of corporate, individual borrowers to ease COVID-19 impact
- A new resolution window for corporate and personal loans to be framed
- To put in place safeguards for opening of current accounts and overdraft accounts for customers availing credit facilities from multiple banks
- Priority Sector Lending (PSL) to include startups
- Increased limits for renewable energy, including solar power, and small and marginal farmers and 'Weaker Sections' under PSL
- To allow a pilot scheme for small value payments in offline mode while safeguarding interest of users, liability protection

Proposes Online Dispute Resolution for digital payments

- Rs 5,000 crore additional liquidity facility to be provided by the National Housing Bank to boost liquidity in housing sector
- Rs 5,000 crore liquidity support to NABARD to aid agri sector
- Economic activity had started to recover, but surge in infection has forced imposition of lockdowns
- Monetary Policy Committee conscious of primary mandate to achieve inflation target of 4% within a band of +/- 2%



Startups get RBI's priority tag

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 6

In a major boost to startups, now their loans will come under priority sector lending. RBI will also look into regional disparities in priority sector lending (PSL).

The PSL guidelines were last reviewed in April 2015. In these five years, the country has seen a lot of activity in the start-up space. Acknowledging the potential of start-ups

in boosting the economy, RBI has broadened the scope of PSL to include start-ups.

As per PSL norms, RBI mandates banks to lend a certain portion of their funds to specified sectors like agriculture, micro, small and medium enterprises, export credit, education, housing, social infrastructure, renewable energy, etc.

Further, RBI has also increased the PSL limits for renewable energy.

As part of reviewing the PSL guidelines, an incentive framework is also being put in place for banks to address the regional disparities in the flow of priority sector credit. While higher weightage will be assigned for incremental priority sector credit in the identified districts having lower credit flow, a lower weightage would be assigned in identified districts where the credit flow is higher.

Don't focus overly on ratings: Rajan

Mumbai, Aug. 6: India's policymakers should focus on protecting the economy as businesses struggle amid the coronavirus pandemic instead of being overly focused on what ratings agencies think, former Reserve Bank of India governor Raghuram Rajan said on Thursday.

"It is also important to convince both domestic and international investors that after the crisis associated with the pandemic is over, we will return to fiscal responsibility over the medium term, and the government should do more to convince them of that," Rajan told the Global Markets Forum.

The government has announced several initiatives to help the poor and small- and medium-size businesses, but actual

cash outgo from the government's measures has been estimated at just about one per cent of GDP.

Several attribute the fiscal prudence to fear of a downgrade after Moody's cut India's rating and outlook in early June followed closely by a change in outlook from Fitch.

"The RBI and government have certainly been cooperating, but it seems like it is elsewhere, the

ball is in the government's court to do more," Rajan said.

He said the RBI needs to focus on whether credit is reaching the stressed areas of the economy and also if the viable firms were able to access credit and not the unviable ones.

"And I think that's where it has to focus its attentions, because resources, as you well know, are limited in India." — Reuters

Biz optimism slips to record low in Q2

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Business optimism for the July-September quarter slumped to a record low due to sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and staggered easing of restrictions, according to a report.

Dun & Bradstreet Composite Business Optimism Index for the July-September quarter fell to a record low of 29.4. The index registered a decline of 40.6 per cent over the last quarter. The BOI covered about 350 senior executives in June this year.

"The spike in the number of positive Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and the staggered easing of restrictions affected the business optimism levels," said Arun

Singh, Global Chief Economist, Dun & Bradstreet.

All six optimism indices — volume of sales, net profits, selling prices, new orders, inventories and employees — have registered a decline as compared to the previous quarter, the report said.

"The plethora of containment and non-containment zones, which are near-impossible to track in real time, and the rapid change in guidelines adopted by the various local governments have led to considerable uncertainty amongst businesses that are planning to resume their operations," Singh said, adding that outlook remained subdued in spite of measures taken to support the flow of capital. — PTI

Positive Pay, offline card payment soon

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 6

Enhancing the security of cheque payments, RBI will introduce Positive Pay for all cheques of ₹50,000 and above.

As for digital payments, RBI also wants offline payments through cards, mobile wallets and devices to become possible for remote areas with low internet connectivity.

In order to check increasing cheque frauds, RBI has decided to introduce a mechanism of Positive Pay for all cheques of value ₹50,000 and above, RBI said.

This measure will cover approximately 20 per cent of all cheques issued in the country in volume terms and 80 per cent of cheques in terms of value.

RBI also wants to make offline payment through cards, wallets and mobile devices possible. "There has been considerable growth in digital payments using mobile phones, cards, wallets, etc. Lack of internet connectivity or low speed of internet, especially in remote areas, is a major impediment in adoption of digital payments," the central bank said in its statement.

Gold can get you 90% of its value as loan

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, AUG. 6

In order to provide higher liquidity to households and small businesses, RBI has increased the Loan-To-Value (LTV) ratio of gold loans offered by banks from 75 per cent to 90 per cent. However, the higher LTV will not be available for non-banking finance companies.

As per the current guidelines, gold loans sanctioned by banks for non-agricultural purposes should not exceed 75 per cent of the value of gold ornaments and jewellery.

"With a view to mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on households, it has been decided to increase the permissible loan to value ratio (LTV) for such loans to 90 per cent. This relaxation shall be available till March 31, 2021," said RBI.

Higher LTV will put more money in the hands of the customer for the same volume of gold pledged. Gold prices have appreciated more than 40 per cent since the beginning of the year. Due to the price appreciation, the loan amount has naturally increased by 40 per cent even at an LTV of 75 per cent. Once the LTV is increased to 90 per cent, this will increase the loan

amount by another 15 per cent. This will solve the liquidity issues of small scale business persons and traders, who account for the largest chunk of the customer base, as well as individuals to a great extent.

The new LTV will be available for a window of eight months. Fresh loans issued post March 31, 2021 will come under 75 per cent LTV.

"THE NEW LTV will be available for a window of eight months. Fresh loans issued post March 31, 2021 will come under 75 per cent LTV.

"THE HIGHER LTV will not be available for non-banking finance companies, including those operating in exclusive gold loan business.

"LTV of 90 per cent in an increasing gold price scenario is fine. Only we must keep an eye on the margin because 10 per cent is a small cushion. This is still manageable. This will help the small businesses, micro and small units who avail gold loans for business needs as well," said Padmaja Chunduru, MD and CEO of Indian Bank.

Sensex heaves a sigh of relief

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 6

The Sensex and the Nifty-50 gained close to one per cent as RBI announced several measures to provide relief to borrowers and others hit badly by Covid-19 pandemic and kept it's policy stance as accommodative, raising hopes of further interest rate easing in future.

The Sensex gained 362.12 points or 0.96 per cent and regained 38,000 levels closing at 38,025.45. The Nifty-50 index closed at 11,200.15

up 98.50 or 0.89 per cent. Banks and real estate stocks gained as RBI didn't extend loan moratorium period, announced earlier till August 31.

Deepak Jasani, head, Retail Research, HDFC Securities said, "Banking stocks have reacted positively despite no rate cut as the feared extension of moratorium has not happened and they will be spared of the requirement of high provisions if by Septem-ber 30, the new committee's recommendations are implemented."

Byju's acquires coding startup co for \$300m

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 6

Leading ed-tech company Byju's has acquired Mumbai-based ed-tech start-up, WhiteHat Jr for \$300 million. With the National Education Policy pushing for skills such as coding, this will provide Byju's a major boost.

Founded in November 2018, WhiteHat Jr specializes in coding. With coding fast emerging as a key skill for the future, this integration will help Byju's to further expand its offerings. This partnership is timely with the government pushing skills such as coding from early classes with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Byju's said in a release.

WhiteHat Jr has pres-

ence in India and the US. It had recently announced plans to expand to other global markets like Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand.

According to sources, the coding platform was acquired in an all-cash deal of \$300 million.

After the acquisition, Byju's will make significant investments in WhiteHat Jr's technology platform, product innovation while expanding the

teacher base to cater to demand from new markets. WhiteHat Jr founder Karan Bajaj will continue to lead and scale this business in India and the US.

WhiteHat Jr. helps kids aged 6 to 14 years build commercial-ready games, animations and apps online using the fundamentals of coding. WhiteHat Jr. offers four levels of courses — beginner, intermediate, advanced and professional — for students in grades 1-9. Kids create complex games, animations and apps using logic, structure, sequence, commands and algorithmic thinking. Early graduates of the course have created professional-ready apps downloadable on the App Store at ages as young as seven years old, claims Byju's.

US EMI firm plans to enter India by yearend

Bengaluru, Aug. 6: Sezzle Inc is testing its buy-now-pay-later service in India for a potential launch at the end of the year, its chief executive officer said, capitalising on rapid global growth in online shopping as competition intensifies in the sector.

Moving into India would mark an ambitious plan for the firm as the second-most populous country gravitates more toward a cash-less society and more people purchase goods on the internet during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Minneapolis-based

fintech, which offers interest-free instalment loans at certain online stores, undertook an A\$86.3 million (\$61.99 million) equity raise in July, out of which nearly a fifth was earmarked to test international markets.

Sezzle currently only operates in the United States and Canada.

"If this works, we have a massive opportunity in India ... We think it's well worth the opportunity," chief executive officer Charlie Youakim said, pointing to a digital boom in India that presents a

● **IN THE THREE** months from March, Sezzle Inc added more than 300,000 new customers in India, highlighting the growing appeal of Buy-Now-Pay-Later (BNPL) firms.

● **THE COMPANY'S CEO** said it has started the pilot in July and is integrating with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). Sezzle currently only operates in the United States and Canada.

billion dollar-plus gold mine and could follow the success of firms like SoftBank-backed Paytm.

Youakim said Sezzle started the pilot in July, but was still integrating with the Unified Payments Interface — a system that would power

multiple bank accounts into a mobile application — and is evaluating repayment data.

"Assuming expectations are met, we launch UPI sometime this month and then we'll have some sort of sense come end of October and then we can

turn on ahead of the holiday season," Youakim added.

In the three months from March, Sezzle added more than 300,000 new customers, highlighting the growing appeal of BNPLs. Spurred by recent growth, more players are moving into the industry, which first took off in Australia.

Tencent's investment in Afterpay this year was seen by analysts as a possible entry point into China for the BNPL leader.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Camps for junior athletes from Oct.

New Delhi: The national training camps for junior athletes will begin in a phased manner from October 1, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Wednesday. It was decided in SAI's Mission Olympic Cell review meeting that training of junior athletes at its National Centres of Excellence (NCOE), shut since March due to the COVID-19 outbreak, will start in a phased manner from October. The SAI, however, said that the respective state governments where the NCOEs are situated will take the final call, keeping in mind the health and safety of athletes and coaches amid the pandemic. In view of the preparation for Olympics and to ensure that athletes have world-class infrastructure and equipment to train with, the SAI has also decided to enhance the funds at all its NCOEs. To ensure a safe environment for all the athletes, especially those joining the camps in their teenage years, a series of sensitisation workshops will be held in these NCOEs. — PTI

258 juniors make TOPS scheme

New Delhi: The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Wednesday shortlisted 258 athletes from across 12 sporting disciplines for support through Target Olympic Podium Scheme Developmental Group, also known as Junior TOPS. The support will be extended through a group/systems approach and a monthly out of pocket allowance of ₹25,000 will be given to every athlete. Of the 12 disciplines, 16 athletes have been shortlisted in athletics, 34 in archery, 27 in badminton, four in cycling, seven in table tennis, 70 in shooting, 14 in swimming, 11 in judo, 36 in boxing, 16 in weightlifting, five in rowing and 18 in wrestling. The SAI's Mission Olympic Cell shortlisted the athletes, including the 85 named before the Covid-19 lockdown. They will be groomed for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics. A SAI statement further said the formal induction of the athletes in the development group would be undertaken after setting an effective monitoring mechanism. — PTI

Yuvraj's house flooded in Mumbai

New Delhi: Out-of-favour India hockey striker Yuvraj Walmiki on Wednesday faced a peculiar problem as he tried to drain out water which flowed into his house in the wake of the heavy rains in Mumbai. Yuvraj posted a video on his Twitter handle, where he was seen trying to drain out ankle-level water from the drawing room of his flat. In the 28-second video, Yuvraj sought help from Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation as well as Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray. A red alert has been issued for 'extremely heavy' rainfall for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region as heavy showers continued for over 24 hours, crippling the city's lifelines. The IMD has forecast spells of more heavy to very heavy rainfall for Wednesday and Thursday. Yuvraj, 30, was part of the Indian team that played in the 2014 World Cup at The Hague in the Netherlands. — PTI

ZIDANE LEAVES OUT BALE FOR CITY CLASH

Madrid: Gareth Bale has not been included in the Real Madrid squad for the Champions League match against Manchester City. Coach Zinedine Zidane left the Wales forward out of the list of 24 players who will travel for the round-of-16 match in England on Friday. Bale didn't get many playing minutes under Zidane in the final stage of the Spanish league, a competition Madrid won. His last appearance was on June 24. Colombian midfielder James Rodriguez also won't make the trip. — AP

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector-III, Noida-201301. Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

TIGHT ROPE WALK

BCCI sets strict guidelines for IPL teams

New Delhi, Aug. 6: Eight different hotels for the eight participating teams, two mandatory negative Covid-19 test reports before flying to the UAE and punishment for any breach of the bio-secure protocol are part of the BCCI's SOP for the IPL that was handed over to the franchises on Wednesday. The document, accessed states that every franchisee's medical team should obtain the "medical and travel history of all players and support staff" since March 1 this year.

"All Indian players and team support staff must undergo two Covid-19 PCR tests, 24 hours apart, in the week before assembling in the franchises' city of choice," it states.

"This will help reduce the risk of cross infection within the group before flying to the UAE."

"Breach of any Bio-Secure Environment protocols by players and team support staff will be punishable under the IPL Code of Conduct Rules."

Anyone testing positive for Covid-19 will be quarantined and after completion of a 14-day period, the individual will have to undergo two Covid-19 tests, 24 hours apart. "...if both test reports are negative, he/she may be allowed to fly out to the UAE."

"After arrival in UAE, there will be tests on Day 1, 3 and 6 with testing every fifth day throughout the tournament."

The SOP states that all "franchise teams will be put up in different hotels." "Team members must be allotted rooms in a separate wing of the hotel that has a separate centralised air conditioning (AC) unit than the rest of the hotel," it adds.

"After the third negative test, team members may be allowed to meet each other within the Bio-Secure Environment. However, wearing a face mask and social distancing protocols must be followed at all times."

The SOP also requires teams to order food in individual rooms and avoid use of common dining areas "to prevent cross infection and coming in contact with other hotel guests."

— PTI

● **Eight different participating teams will be put in eight different hotels.**

● **Team members must be allotted rooms in a separate wing of the hotel.**

● **Every player, staff and family members will have to get two mandatory negative Covid-19 test reports before flying to the UAE.**

● **Punishment for any breach of the bio-secure protocol.**



Royal Challengers Bangalore's captain Virat Kohli (left) and coach Gary Kirsten look on during a training session in this file photo.

Empty stands extended room

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The BCCI's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the upcoming IPL recommends that teams use "empty stands" as extended dressing rooms for training and matches while strategy meetings can now be held outdoors in order to maintain social distancing.

The IPL, to be held from September 19 in the UAE, won't feature any toss mascot this year which means the BCCI will lose out on another avenue of earning sponsorship money.

While players and support staff's families can join them, they won't be allowed to travel in the team bus and can't leave the bio bubble. According to the SOP which was handed to the franchises the teams will be encouraged to use the stands for dressing room purpose which helps in maintaining social distancing.

The Bio-Secure Environment means only essential staff will be on site and no members of the public will be allowed. Therefore there will be more vacant areas at the stadium and hence the dressing room does not have to remain within the traditional area.

"Venue Cricket Operation teams should consider using appropriate areas beyond the normal dressing room," the SOP states. Also, the teams have been asked to use electronic team sheets rather than captains carrying hard copies of their playing XI list.

The SOP also states that

BCCI, vivo OFFICIALLY PUT OFF DEAL FOR THE SEASON

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The BCCI on Thursday suspended the IPL title sponsorship deal with Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for the event's upcoming edition amid the Sino-India border face-off.

The BCCI sent out a one-line statement, without giving any details, to say that Vivo will not be associated with the IPL this year.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have decided to suspend their partnership for Indian Premier League in 2020," the press release stated.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have mutually decided to pause their partnership for the 2020 season of Indian Premier League," it stated.

— PTI

BOARDS OF OZ, INDIA TO MEET ON WORLD CUP

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The heads of BCCI and Cricket Australia will be connecting virtually to discuss the hosting of two T20 World Cups in the next two years when the ICC's all-powerful board meets on Friday.

The decision will also be impacted by the stand of the two boards on the next ICC chairman, the nomination process of which is yet to be announced.

It is expected that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah along with CA's Earl Eddings and Nick Hockley will reach a consensus on the hosting of 2021 and 2022 editions.

It is expected that Cricket Australia will like to host the T20 World Cup in October 2021 as it had already started preparations and but BCCI also doesn't want to forego its right to host the tournament in 2021.

— PTI

WOMEN'S | TENNIS

Errani rallies for win at Palermo

Palermo, Aug. 6: Former French Open finalist Sara Errani showed signs of reviving her clay-court prowess by rallying past Kristina Pliskova 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 Wednesday to reach the Palermo Ladies Open quarterfinals.

It was the second consecutive three-set win for Errani, who received a wild-card entry for the first four-level tournament — for men or women — following a five-month break due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Errani will next face rising French player Fiona Ferro, who beat eighth-seeded Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-5, 6-2.

Also, qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich eased past Jasmine Paolini 6-0, 6-2 for her fifth win in five days; and 19-year-old Italian wild-card entry Elisabetta Cocciaretto eliminated sixth-seeded Donna Vekic in straight sets 6-2, 6-4.

Players and officials for the tournament are being tested every four days for Covid-19 and one player who tested positive withdrew over the weekend.

— AP

● **Italian Sara Errani showed signs of reviving her clay-court prowess by rallying past Kristina Pliskova in a hard-fought 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 match to make the quarterfinals.**

New protocols include fewer ball kids, a limited number of fans and no post-match handshakes between opponents.

Errani, who lost the 2012 French Open final to Maria Sharapova, had struggled to regain her form after serving a two-month ban in 2017 due to an anti-doping violation. Her ranking is down from a career-high of No. 5 in 2013 to No. 169.

Palermo brings back good memories for Errani, who won the Sicilian tournament twice and also finished runner-up twice — to go with three titles in the doubles event.

It was Errani's 180th career win on clay — more than any other active player.



Sara Errani returns to Kristina Pliskova during their women's singles quarterfinal match at the Palermo Open tennis tournament on Thursday. Errani won 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Kyrgios may nick off French Open

Sydney, Aug. 6: Nick Kyrgios dropped a huge hint Thursday that he will skip the French Open, saying the chances of him travelling to Europe this year were "slim to none".

The Australian last week pulled out of the upcoming US Open in New York due to the pandemic, with world number two Rafael Nadal following suit. Kyrgios, ranked just 40 but a big drawcard, said he wasn't surprised by the Spaniard's decision, noting that the clay court king was likely "eyeing the French Open" in late September.

"And if I was to play I'd probably definitely rather go to Europe (than America) at this time of year for sure with everything going on," he added to Channel Nine television from his Canberra base. But Kyrgios suggested

It's a very slim chance I'll play in Europe. Almost slim to none to be honest. I'm going to use this (time) to stay home, train, be with my family.

— NICK KYRGIOS Australian tennis player

that was also unlikely, casting serious doubt over his presence at Roland Garros. "It's a very slim chance I'll play in Europe. Almost slim to none to be honest," he said.

"I'm going to use this (time) to stay home, train, be with my family, be with my friends and I'm just going to act responsibly, and wait till I think there's better circumstances to play," he added.

Kyrgios also cast doubt on the future of next year's Australian Open in January.

— AFP

Pakistan on top

Manchester, Aug. 6: Shan Masood joined a select group of Pakistan batsmen to have scored hundreds in three successive Test innings as his excellent century led the tourists to 326 all out against England on the second day of the series opener at Old Trafford.

Left-handed opener Masood batted for nearly eight hours in largely bowler-friendly conditions for a Test-best 156. He received excellent support from Shadab Khan

(45) in a sixth-wicket stand of 105 that turned the tide after Pakistan had been struggling at 176-5.

The pair ran England ragged, with even defensive shots producing well-taken runs. Pakistan had managed just 48 runs for the loss of three wickets in Thursday's first session to reach 187-5 at lunch.

— PTI **Brief scores:** Pakistan 326 in 109.3 overs (B. Azam 69, Shan Masood 150, S. Khan 45, S. Board 3/54, J. Archer 3/59) vs England.



England fast bowler James Anderson (centre) celebrates taking the wicket of Pakistan's Babar Azam on the second day of the first Test cricket at Old Trafford in Manchester on Thursday.

— AFP

Focused Apurvi sets sights on Olympics

DEEPIKA DAS
NEW DELHI, JULY 6

The Tokyo Olympics have been pushed back by a year, but ace shooter Apurvi Chandel is all focussed and ready to give her best shot whenever it takes place. Recently Apurvi has been nominated by her state Rajasthan for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award.

One of the medal prospects for India at the Olympics, the world No. 5 shooter is utilising the break to hone her skills even better. "I'm preparing myself for any kind of situation that can arise, as conditions are a bit uncertain at the moment. But I am focused on my training and preparations and I hope for the best," Apurvi told this paper from Jaipur.

The 27-year-old 10m air rifle shooter, who won two gold medals at the ISSF

World Cup in 2019, was not disappointed with the postponement of the Olympics, but was worried about the possible future effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

She has donated ₹3 lakh towards the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) and ₹2 lakh to Rajasthan relief fund set up to support the battle against COVID-19.

"I have a shooting range at home, so I've been training at home. So there's not much change in my preparations apart from the fact that our international competitions like World Cups have been cancelled, but that's the need of the hour as it's important for everyone to just stay at home and avoid going out anywhere," she said.

"I shoot for about three hours in the morning and I exercise in the evenings.



My days at home are quite packed. I practice yoga regularly and it helps me stay calm and also fresh. I've been working on specific exercises to strengthen certain muscles," she added.

Apurvi, who trains under former national champion and mentor Rakesh Manpet in Bengaluru, had a disappointing outing at the Rio Olympics, but this time she was determined to come up with better results.

for what can come your way," added 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games gold medalist.

So what are the grey areas that she is working upon? "Well as a sportsperson I have to work upon all kinds of elements like the technical and mental aspect, along with my nutrition and physio therapy. I have a support team who's working with me very closely," Apurvi said.

Asked on the pressure of expectations as a record number of shooters qualified for the Olympics? She said, "Expectations have always been there, that's what makes us think that we are capable of achieving greater heights and that we also have the faith of people with us. We have a strong Indian shooting team, and each and every shooter is preparing to perform well on the given day. We all want to make the country proud."

"I think the experience at the Rio Games is already coming in handy, as there are a lot of changes in my lead up to Tokyo, compared to Rio. So any kind of experience is good as it prepares you