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The Daily Guardian
SHARPEST KID ON THE BLOCK

THIS IS THE INITIAL STEP IN THE PATH TOWARDS THE COUNTRY'S FINEST DAILY NEWSPAPER.

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

COVID INFECTIONS RISE AGAIN, CASES UP BY 50% SINCE MID-FEB

Maharashtra accounts for 13,659 fresh Covid-19 cases out 17,921 infections reported in the country in the last 24 hours; 2.52 crore people vaccinated so far.

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 tally rose to 1,12,62,707 with 17,921 fresh cases being reported in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday. Of the new

cases, 13,659 cases were reported from Maharashtra, which marked the state's highest one-day spike this year and took its caseload to 22,52,057.

Data has shown that daily cases in India have risen by over 50 percent since mid-

February.

The death toll also increased with 133 new fatalities, according to the ministry's data. The 133 new fatalities include 56 from Maharashtra, 20 from Punjab and 16 from Kerala. A total of 1,58,063 deaths

have been reported so far in the country, which includes 52,556 from Maharashtra, followed by 12,525 from Tamil Nadu, 12,373 from Karnataka, 10,928 from Delhi and 10,281 from West Bengal.

The Health Ministry

stressed that more than 70 percent of the deaths were caused due to comorbidities.

However, according to data, the death rate has, in fact, registered a sharp drop with the case fatality rate coming down to less than half of what it was since the

start of the pandemic.

The case fatality rate for India stands at 1.40 percent currently, the data stated, adding that the number of people who have recuperated from the disease has also surged to 1,09,20,046,

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MYSTERY DEATH

Dadra UT administrator among 9 booked for 'role' in MP's suicide

PREETI SOMPURA
MUMBAI

In what could turn into a Centre versus state issue yet again, Mumbai Police has registered an FIR into the death of seven-time Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar. Praful Khoda Patel, the Administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, with 8 others, has been named in the FIR.

The FIR was lodged in the Marine Drive police station. The suicide of Mohan Delkar Patel has been booked under the provisions of Indian

Penal Code and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

On 22 February, Delkar (58), a seven-time MP, was found hanging from the ceiling fan in a room of the Sea Green Hotel in Marine Drive in Mumbai. The Mumbai Police had initially registered an Accidental Death Report (ADR), which has now been converted into an FIR. The development comes a day after Delkar's wife Kalaben Delkar, son Abhinav Delkar and daughter had requested

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TOP OF THE DAY

US DEFENCE SECRETARY TO TRAVEL TO INDIA ON 19 MARCH

Washington: US Defence Secretary Lloyd J Austin III will visit India later this month to meet with his counterpart Rajnath Singh and other senior Indian national security leaders and will discuss "deepening" major defence partnership between the two nations, Pentagon announced on Wednesday. It will be the first in-person visit by an official of the Biden administration to India. Secretary Austin will visit India from March 19-21, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement. The Indian defence ministry said that Secretary Austin's visit to India as part of his first overseas travel emphasizes the strength of the India-US strategic partnership. In a statement, Pentagon announced Austin III will embark on his first overseas trip on March 13 to Hawaii, India, Japan and South Korea.

DAYS AFTER JOINING BJP, MITHUN GETS Y+ SECURITY

New Delhi: Days after he joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections, the Union Home Ministry on Wednesday provided Y-plus security cover to veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty. Sources say, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will provide security cover to the veteran actor. Usually, in a Y-plus security, the protectee gets an elaborate security cover comprising 11 commandos while a team of more than 55 security personnel is deployed at and around the residence of the VIP. Mithun Chakraborty joined the BJP on 7 March.

DENIED TICKETS, 2 ASSAM BJP MLAS RESIGN FROM PARTY

Guwahati: Two BJP MLAs of Assam on Wednesday said that they resigned from the party after they were denied tickets to contest the forthcoming assembly elections in the state. The two legislators, former Deputy Speaker Dilip Kumar Paul and Shiladitya Dev, also alleged that conspiracies were hatched against them by some leaders in the saffron party. On Sunday, BJP leader and cabinet minister Sum Ronghang joined the opposition Congress after he was denied ticket from the Diphu constituency.

'A CONSPIRACY'

'Pushed by 4-5 men' in Nandigram, Mamata hurt, taken to Kolkata hospital

Election Commission asks for a detailed report by Friday on the attack; BJP calls it 'drama'.

CORRESPONDENT
PURBA MEDINIPUR/NEW DELHI/
KOLKATA

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said that she has suffered an injury in her leg after she was pushed by four or five people at a time when there was no police personnel around her. "I suffered an injury in my leg," Banerjee said pointing at her leg: "See how it is swelling up."

Earlier today, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo filed her nomination from the Nandigram seat for the Assembly elections in the state. Following this, she visited the Durga Mandir in Shibrapur village.

The "pushing" incident took place near Reyapara when Banerjee was on the way back from the temple visit. Asked if it was a planned attack, she said, "No police official was present. Four-five people intentionally manhandled me in presence of the public.

There were no police officials for four-five hours in such a huge public gathering, not even the SP. It was definitely a conspiracy."

However, according to the police, Banerjee was meeting local voters at the bazaar when there was an altercation and the Chief Minister fell down, injuring her leg. She also sustained a slight injury on her head, they said.

Banerjee returned to Kolkata, around 130 km away, where she was taken to the state-run SSKM Hospital.

Meanwhile, a report from Kolkata said West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar reached the SSKM hospital on Wednesday night to see an injured CM Banerjee, amid "go back" slogans shouted by TMC supporters gathered there.

The BJP, however, alleged that the CM was trying to turn a "simple accident" into a "pre-planned conspiracy", and demanded a CBI investigation. "It can happen that

she met with an accident but to claim that she was deliberately pushed is not acceptable. She has a lot of security personnel guarding her round the clock," BJP's national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya said.

Union Railways Minister Piyush Goyal said, "Our didi is perturbed. These are signs of a defeated party and a defeated candidate. She'll lose from Nandigram and there'll be a change in West Bengal"

Another BJP leader Arjun Singh said, "She is doing drama only. Three hundred police personnel are providing security to the CM. She is doing this to get sympathy. If she was really attacked, why didn't the police arrest the person who did it?"

Even Congress' Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury called it a "siyasi pakhand" (political hypocrisy) to gain sympathy.

West Bengal will witness eight-phased Assembly polls beginning 27 March. The tenure of the 16th Assembly will end on 30 May.

CHANGE OF GUARD

UTTARAKHAND GETS NEW CM WHO WAS DENIED BJP TICKET IN 2017

CORRESPONDENT
DEHRADUN

Tirath Singh Rawat, BJP's Lok Sabha MP from Garhwal, took oath as the new chief minister of Uttarakhand on Wednesday. He was administering the oath of office by Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya. He replaces Trivendra Singh Rawat, who stepped down from the post on Tuesday.

The 56-year-old was elected as leader of the BJP legis-

lature, with the party paving the way for him to take over as the state chief minister. Interestingly, Tirath Singh Rawat had been denied the BJP ticket to contest the Uttarakhand Assembly polls in 2017, but four years later, the party picked him for the top job in the state.

Though a first-time MP, Rawat has held key organisational positions with the party, both in the state and at the Centre.

In the early days of his po-

litical career, he was part of the Uttar Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the BJP's youth wing, where he served as the state vice-president before being elected to the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council in 1997.

He then served as the state's first education minister, as a part of the interim government when Uttarakhand was carved out of Uttar Pradesh. He went on to become the state BJP president, holding that position



Seeking Shiva's blessings

Artist Laxmi Gaud creates a sand sculpture of Lord Shiva on the occasion of the Shivratri, at Juhu in Mumbai on Wednesday. ANI

FARM LAWS

Farmer unions call for 'Bharat Bandh' on 26 March

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Farmer unions on Wednesday issued a call for Bharat bandh on 26 March, when their protest at Delhi's borders against the Centre's

three new farm laws completes four months.

Farmer leader Buta Singh Burjigill said that farmers along with trade unions will protest the hike in fuel prices and privatisation of railways on 15 March. "We

will observe a complete Bharat bandh on March 26, when our protest against the three farm laws completes four months. The peaceful bandh will remain effective from morning till evening," he told reporters at the Sin-

ghu border.

On 19 March, the farmers will observe 'Mandi Bachao-Kheti Bachao' day, he said.

The farmer unions have also decided to celebrate 'Shaheed divas' of Bhagat

P2

IN PARLIAMENT

Many terrorist training camps still active in POK: MoS Home

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Pakistan is running many terrorist training camps in occupied Kashmir and using them to push terrorists into Indian territories, the government informed Parliament on Thursday.

Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Home G. Kishan Reddy said that the government has consistently pressed Pakistan to put an end to cross-border infiltration

of terrorists and dismantle the infrastructure supporting terrorism on a permanent basis. "According to reports, there are several terrorist training camps in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK), which are used for training and subsequently infiltrating trained militants and terrorists into Jammu and Kashmir for carrying out terrorist activities. Some of these training camps are still active, which are imparting training to the militants," he said.

The MoS added that the government has repeatedly raised the issue of Pakistan's continued support to cross-border terrorism and terrorist infiltration in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora.

In 2019, India had carried out the Balakot air strike in order to decimate one such terror camp. On 26 February 2019, 12 Mirage 2000 fighter jets crossed the Line of Control and destroyed a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist camp in Balakot.

ANTILIA BOMB SCARE

SUV OWNER DEATH CASE: MUMBAI COP REMOVED FROM CRIME BRANCH

BJP members shouted slogans as the state home minister announced the transfer of Sachin Vaze from Crime Branch and demanded his arrest.

PREETI SOMPURA
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh on Wednesday said that controversial police officer Sachin Vaze will be removed from the Crime Branch and posted to some other department.

Speaking in the Vidhan Sabha, Deshmukh said the move was taken so that an impartial investigation could be done in the Mansukh Hiren death case. Meanwhile, BJP members shouted slogans as the home minister announced the transfer of Sachin Vaze from the Crime Branch and demanded his suspension and arrest. Amid the ruckus, proceedings of the Maharashtra Legislative Council were adjourned till 12 noon.



Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis also moved a motion of breach of privilege against Anil Deshmukh. "As demanded by Opposition yesterday, Sachin Vaze is being removed from CIU and will be transferred to

other department," said senior Cabinet minister Eknath Shinde.

A car carrying unassembled explosive materials was found abandoned at Carmichael Road in South Mumbai on February 25, near the house of Reli-

ance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani. The owner of the vehicle, Mansukh Hiren, was found dead in a creek in the Thane district on Friday.

Now, ATS Maharashtra is investigating the case. Sachin Vaze's name has

been embroiled in the Mansukh Hiren death case. The move to transfer Sachin Vaze to a different department was taken days after Fadnavis read a statement given by Vimla Hiren, the wife of Mansukh Hiren, in the Maharashtra Assembly. In the statement, she had suspected that Mumbai Police Crime Branch officer and "encounter specialist" Sachin Vaze had killed her husband.

She alleged that Sachin Vaze had used the Scorpio car for several months, from November 2020 till February 5. She also added that Vaze had told her husband to get arrested in the case, and had assured him that he will be bailed out in a few days. Vimla Hiren mentioned in her statement that she suspects that Sachin Vaze was involved in the murder of her husband.

AHEAD OF KERALA POLLS

Chacko resigns from Cong, blames top leaders

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In a setback to the Congress ahead of Kerala Assembly elections, senior leader P.C. Chacko on Wednesday announced his resignation from the party, alleging that groupism is being practised by top leaders of the Congress.

"I have quit Congress and sent my resignation to party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi. I had been deliberating upon this decision for the past many days. I come from Kerala where there's no Congress party as such. There are 2 parties—Congress (I) and Congress (A). It's a coordination committee of 2 parties functioning

as KPCC," Chacko said at a press conference here.

"Kerala is facing a crucial election. People want Congress to come back but there's groupism practiced by top leaders of Congress. I have been arguing with a high command that this should be ended. But the high command is also agreeing to the proposal given by both groups," he said.

Chacko is a former Member of Parliament from Thrissur Lok Sabha seat in Kerala. The election for 140-member Kerala Assembly will be held on April 6, the Election Commission of India (ECI) had announced. For Assembly poll 2021, the number of polling booths in Kerala has been extended from 21,498 to

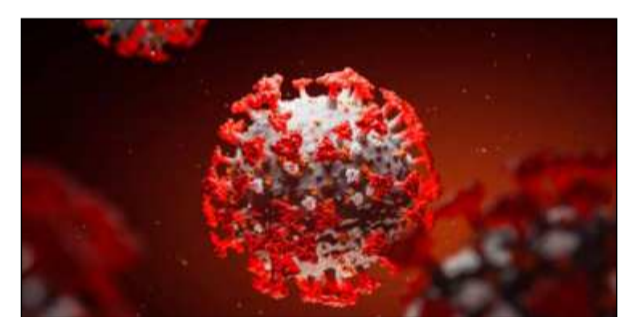
40,771. The counting of votes will be held on May 2. The tenure of the 14th Kerala legislative assembly will come to an end on June 1, 2021. (ANI)

Reacting to the development, Congress MP Hibi Eden said that Chacko's decision to resign was not wise at a crucial juncture when the party is facing an important election. "He (P.C. Chacko) is a very senior Congress leader who has been given ample opportunities by the central leadership. Chacko was part of the highest decision-making body of Congress which is the working committee. I don't think it was a wise decision at this crucial juncture where Congress is going into an important election," Eden told ANI.

RISING NUMBERS

90% COVID CASES IN MUMBAI IN PAST 2 MONTHS REPORTED FROM HOUSING SOCIETIES: BMC

MUMBAI: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Wednesday informed that out of 23 thousand new COVID-19 cases reported in Mumbai during January and February, 90 percent cases were registered from housing societies and rest 10 percent from slums. "BMC has decided to strictly implement the measure against COVID-19 in housing societies of Mumbai after it has been observed that over 23 thousand new COVID cases were found in Mumbai during January and February, out of these 90 percent cases were from housing societies and rest 10 percent were from slums," the BMC said in an official release. According to the statement, the BMC has decided to strictly implement the COVID guidelines and protocols for the



residential housing societies. "All housing societies to keep a close watch on home isolation for COVID patients and their close contacts. If they are found roaming outside their houses, BMC must be informed immediately," BMC said. "Those who do not have separate rooms and washrooms for COVID positive patients will not be allowed for home quarantine. "The building with more than five patients will be sealed for any movement and

buildings having less than five patients will be sealed only on the floors which have positive COVID patients," the statement added. As of March 9, 2,762 floors have been sealed with 4,183 positive patients. Maharashtra reported 9,927 new COVID-19 cases and 56 deaths in the last 24 hours, the union health ministry informed on Wednesday morning. With this, the cumulative count of the cases in the state reached 22,38,398. ANI

IN KASHMIR

DDC member defer agitation as LG Sinha agrees to meet them

NOOR-UL-QAMRAIN
SRINAGAR

Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha has decided to meet the protesting DDC members after they blamed the bureaucracy for trying to curtail their powers by issuing the warrant of precedence for their protocol and perks.

The protesting DDC members told the media on Wednesday that they have called off their two day protest as the Lt. Governor has decided to intervene and meet them on Friday.

However, DDC members said that they have only deferred the protests and they will wait for the outcome of the meeting with Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha. Meanwhile mainstream political parties of Jammu and Kashmir including J&K BJP unit have provided their support to the protesting DDC members and have asked the government to give them all the promised powers.

JK Apni Party President Altaf Bukhari on Wednesday said the protocol powers and honorarium an-



J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha

nounced for the elected District Development Council (DDC) chairpersons and its members has "exposed the mindset of bureaucratic set-up that has never wanted democracy to flourish in Jammu and Kashmir for its ulterior motives".

It is in place to mention that the warrant of precedence issued by the JK administration, places DDC chairpersons on the same level as administrative secretaries and inspector-generals of police. Their deputies will have to follow the protocol that is followed by vice-chancellors of universities. The councilors, who have been placed at the bottom of the hierarchy,

will have to follow the same protocol that is followed by block development council chairpersons, presidents of municipal councils.

According to the warrant, the chairperson of DDC will be provided with a remuneration of Rs 35,000 per month while vice-chairpersons and councilors will receive Rs 25,000 and Rs 15,000 per month, respectively, says the government order.

The protesting DDC members are demanding cabinet rank status for the Chairpersons and MoS rank for the Deputy Chairpersons besides asking for higher perks and security.

IN LOK SABHA

INDIA EXPORTING DEFENCE EQUIPMENT TO OVER 84 COUNTRIES: GOVT

NEW DELHI: Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik on Wednesday shared the details of the important defence equipment exported during the last five years. In a written reply in the Lok Sabha in response to a question asked by Kaushal Kishore and P.P. Chaudhary, Naik informed that presently defence items from India are being exported to more than 84 countries but the "names of the countries cannot be divulged due to strategic reasons", stated a PIB press release stated. The important defence equipment exported include weapon simulators, tear gas launcher, torpedo loading mechanism, alarm monitoring and control, night vision monocular and binocular, lightweight torpedo, and fire control systems. The press release also stated that many reforms and steps were taken to boost defence exports in the last six years, which included special chemicals, organisms, materials, equipment, and technologies (SCOMET) has been populated, standard operating procedure (SOP) for the export of munitions list items has been modified and placed on the website of the DDP. A completely end-to-end online portal for receiving and processing export authorisation permission has been developed. The legitimate export of the parts and components of small arms and body armour for civil use is now being permitted after prior consultation with MEA, said Naik in his written reply. The government has notified the Open General Export License (OGEL)—a one-time export license, which permits the industry to export specified items to specified destinations, enumerated in the OGEL, without seeking export authorisation during the validity of the OGEL, the PIB release further stated. ANI



Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik

CHANGE OF GUARD

UTTARAKHAND GETS NEW CM WHO WAS DENIED BJP TICKET IN 2017

CONTINUED FROM P1

In that poll battle, he was pitted against BJP veteran and former chief minister Bhuvan Chandra Khanduri's son Manish Khanduri, who was the Congress nominee. The senior Khanduri appeared to maintain distance as both his son and Rawat, who was considered his protégé, tried to dig into his support base.

Rawat, who had described himself as the true heir to Khanduri's political legacy, won by 3,02,669 votes, one of the biggest margins in the state, to become a Member of Parliament.

Rawat has a reputation of being a down-to-earth leader, with his wife, Rashmi, a professor of psychology, vouching for his "sim-

licity". "He is simple and unassuming despite having occupied several organisational positions and a long political experience. He is a serious man and does not speak much. These are his virtues," she told reporters after Rawat was elected leader of the state legislature party.

The new Uttarakhand CM was sworn in after Trivendra Singh's resignation on Tuesday. Sources say that Trivendra Singh's ouster came after BJP general secretary in-charge of Uttarakhand Dushyant Kumar Gautam and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Dr Raman Singh submitted a report to the BJP's central leadership, detailing the rebellion in the state unit of the party.

FARM LAWS

FARMER UNIONS CALL FOR 'BHARAT BANDH' ON 26 MARCH

CONTINUED FROM P1

Singh, Rajguru and Sakhdev, Burjgill added.

Farmer union leaders also said that copies of the new farm laws will be burnt during 'Holiika Dahan' on 28 March.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at the Delhi border points—Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border—for over four months, demanding the repeal of farm laws.

FIGHTING PANDEMIC

COVID INFECTIONS RISE AGAIN, CASES UP BY 50% SINCE MID-FEB

CONTINUED FROM P1

which translates to a national Covid-19 recovery rate of 96.96 percent.

The number of active cases have also reduced to 1,84,598, which now comprises 1.64 percent of the infection count.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 22,34,79,877 samples have been tested up

to March 9 for the viral disease, including 7,63,081 on Tuesday.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

The Health Ministry also stated that a total of 2,52,89,693 vaccine doses have been given so far as

part of the nationwide immunisation programme. Of these, as many as 71,70,519 healthcare workers have received the first dose and 39,77,407 the second.

Meanwhile, 70,31,147 frontline workers have taken the first shot and 5,82,118 have received the second shot against the virus.

In the second phase, which began on 1 March, as many as 9,29,359 beneficiaries

aged 45 and above with specific comorbidities and 55,99,143 beneficiaries more than 60 years old were given their first dose.

Even after a sluggish start, India's Covid-19 vaccination drive, which is among the world's biggest, has jumped nearly four-fold in the second phase.

As many as 20,19,723 Covid-19 vaccine shots were administered to beneficiaries

in India between Monday and Tuesday. This is the most number of vaccinations that have been carried out in the country in 24 hours.

With over nine lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses being administered on Wednesday, as many as 2.52 crore beneficiaries have now received their doses against the virus since the vaccination drive was rolled out on 16 January.

MYSTERY DEATH

Dadra UT administrator among 9 booked for 'role' in MP's suicide

CONTINUED FROM P1

the Maharashtra government for thorough investigation.

An advocate for tribal rights, Delkar began his career as a trade union

leader in Silvassa. Later, he started Adivasi Vikas Sangathan for the tribals in 1985. He had represented the seat seven times—the earlier being in 1989 as an Independent, 1991 and 1996 from the Congress, 1998 as

a BJP candidate, 1999 as an Independent and in 2004 representing Bharatiya Navshakti Party, a political outfit floated by him. The Delkar family has accused Patel of harassing and humiliating Mohan Delkar.

IN ASSEMBLY

BJP-JJP GOVT DEFEATS CONG'S NO-TRUST MOTION IN HARYANA

Three JJP legislators backing farmers also vote against the motion; Chief Minister Manohar Lal says criticism made him better.

RAVINDER MALIK
CHANDIGARH

The no-confidence motion moved up by the main Opposition Congress in Haryana against the BJP-JJP-led government was defeated on Wednesday as 55 legislators cast their vote against the motion, while 32 MLAs voted in support of the motion. It is worth mentioning that out of the seven independent legislators, five came up in support of the ruling faction and used their vote against the motion. Among the independent legislators, Balraj Kundu and Somveer Sangawan polled in support of the motion, saying that the state government has left no stone unturned to increase the problems of the farmers. In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, the ruling BJP and its alliance partner JJP proved their strength as both succeeded in getting

the support of 55 legislators, while requirement for the same was 46. It is worth mentioning that two Assembly seats are lying vacate as INLD legislator Abhay Singh Chautala resigned from the post on 27 February in support of the farmers and against the three contentions agricultural laws, while another Congress MLA Pardeep Chaudhary's (Kalka seat) membership was cancelled after he was sentenced to three-year imprisonment in a case in Himachal Pradesh recently. The no-confidence motion was moved up by Congress leader and Leader of Opposition (LOP) Bhupinder Singh Hooda after the Speaker Gyan Chand Gupta started the Assembly proceeding. The requirement for moving the motion was the consent of 18 Congress legislators which was provided by the party. An issue which has become



Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, while speaking against no-confidence motion on Wednesday.

the talk of town is that the three JJP leaders who were supporting the farmers continuously also cast their vote against the Congress' no-confidence motion. Earlier, all the three legislators had come up in full support of the agrarian community, saying that the farmers' issue is of utmost importance and in the wake of this, the ruling faction is required to take necessary steps to sort out their problem. Several

times, they had reportedly criticised their own government with regard to the farmers' issues. That had led to added worries for the JJP. However, the three legislators voting against the no-trust vote may be considered a setback to the farmers' union who were expecting them to go against the government, but that did not materialize. Chief Minister Manohar Lal said: "The Congress knew that the BJP-JJP government had sufficient majority; even then, the Opposition moved the no-confidence motion for the party's political vendetta, not for the farmers." He added that knowing the whole scenario, the Congress presented the motion which fell flat, and this clearly indicates that the people and farmers of the state are relying upon the ruling government. "We know that we will not win the confidence of the Opposition, but we will take this opportunity to

win the confidence of the masses," Manohar Lal said while replying to the no-confidence motion. Reciting a couplet by poet Bashir Badr, the CM said, «Mukhal-fat se meri shakhsyat sawarti hai, main dushmano ka bada aitram karta hun (criticism makes my personality shine, I respect my enemies a lot)." He also thanked the Opposition for providing him with an opportunity to recall the works done by his government in the last six years. Attacking the Opposition, especially Congress for «never showing the confidence in any development work done by the government», the CM said, «The Opposition has been out of power for long and they are now seeing a mirage in the desert, but what they'll receive is just sand.» Reacting to the same, Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that a few of the legislators

and even Cabinet ministers were willing to cast their vote in support of the no-confidence motion, but they were under heavy pressure from the government and forcibly made to vote against the motion. The whole scenario clearly reveals that the government is standing with the support of 55 legislators, he said. In the Assembly, Hooda commented on the ongoing farmers' protests and said: "More than 250 farmers died on the border." It is pertinent to mention that the no-confidence motion was moved up by the Congress over the issues of the three agricultural laws, hike in fuel price and issues related to the agrarian community etc. Apart from this, the verbal spat between the Chief Minister and the Leader of Opposition led to funny situations on several occasions. (With agency inputs)

RESOLUTION PASSED

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY CONDEMNS ED RAID AT MLA KHAIRA'S HOUSE

ANIL BHARDWAJ
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Assembly on Wednesday condemned unanimously the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raid at MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira's house during its ongoing Budget Session, calling it "unconstitutional and unwarranted".



MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Brham Mohindra said that the House expressed its concern in one voice against the use of central agencies such as CBI, ED, NIA, etc. to harass innocent people including the farmers, politically elected representatives, and even some government officials whereas these were meant to ensure transparency in public life. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister further said that during the ongoing session of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, a Member of this House, Sukhpal Singh Khaira, has been compelled to remain absent from participating in the proceedings of the House and disabled him

from discharging his constitutional obligations as an elected representative of his constituency due to the unwarranted and unconstitutional interference by the Enforcement Directorate, which has been noticed and condemned by the August House, unanimously. The House urged upon the Government of India to refrain from infringing upon the rights of the elected representatives of the people by subverting the due process of law and uphold the tenets of the democratic set up in the country.

DOUBLESPEAK

AKHILESH HAD OPPOSED 'BJP'S VACCINES', BUT HIS RELATIVES GET COVID-19 JAB

KAMNA HAJELA
LUCKNOW

Relatives of Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who had shown his reluctance to take «BJP's vaccine» against Covid-19, have got themselves vaccinated against coronavirus. Kamla Devi—sister of Samajwadi Party veteran Mulayam Singh Yadav, and her husband Dr Anjat Singh -- received the first jab of COVID-19 vaccines at the district hospital in Etawah on Tuesday. Dr Ashok, in-



Relatives of Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav receive the first jab of Covid-19 vaccines at the district hospital, in Etawah on Tuesday.

charge of the district Covid-19 vaccination centre, said: «Dr Anjat and his wife Kamla came around 3 pm on Tuesday for the vaccination. The couple was kept

under observation for some time after they received the vaccines. Both of them fall into the senior citizen category.» Samajwadi Party Anurag Bhadouria said that Akhilesh was against the «BJPnisation» of the vaccine, not of the vaccine itself. "We completely trust the vaccine developed by our scientists. Taking the vaccine shot is one's personal wish and we cannot tell an individual whether they should take the vaccine or not," Bhadouria said.

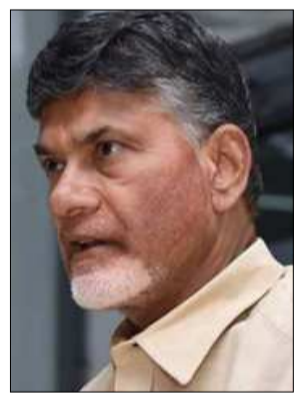
ANDHRA CIVIC POLLS

YSRCP MOBS ATTACKED TDP LEADERS, ALLEGES CHANDRABABU NAIDU

LOKESWARA RAO
AMRAVATI

TDP president and former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has accused YCP leaders of resorting to deliberate attacks on the TDP cadres as they were losing confidence of getting victory if the municipal polls were held in a free and fair manner in the state. Naidu said that the ruling party leaders were issuing threats to the TDP contesting candidates and voters in order to win the civic elections in an unfair manner. TNSF president Pranav Gopal and MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu visited AU High School polling booth on hearing about rigging. However, the police arrested them without valid reasons. In a statement here, the

TDP chief decried the misuse of the official machinery and the police force in a very indiscriminate manner by the YCP leaders. They were doing this to create a fear psychosis among the rival parties and the candidates. In the 13th division in Machilipatnam, the YCP activists brandished knives and attacked TDP sympathiser Dinakar. It was only out of fear of facing defeat in the polls that the YCP was resorting to such cowardly attacks. Naidu said that after seeing the blatant election violations, the people were getting doubts whether democracy was still alive in the state. All these election related attacks were being made with direct support from the YCP MLAs and ministers. The ruling party local leaders were crossing



N. Chandrababu Naidu.

taking any action and just watching like silent spectators when the YCP leaders were resorting to the election violations without any fear of the code or the law. Naidu appealed to the State Election Commission to take stringent action against the conniving officials and the erring YCP leaders. It was the duty of the SEC to punish the culprits responsible for the election violations and ensure a democratic polling process. Earlier, the TDP chief stressed the need for the people to cast their votes for the right candidates in order to give their total support for the development of the state. Only by taking an active part in the election process would the citizens be able to carve out a good future for themselves and for their future generations.

all limits and becoming a huge threat to the law-and-order situation. The TDP chief wanted the police to explain how they could prevent a TDP activist from entering the polling booth in Nayudupeta in Nellore district just because he was wearing the party yellow shirt. At the same time, the police were not

LOSS TO EXCHEQUER

Vigilance Bureau unearths scam worth crores under Ayushman Bharat

ANIL BHARDWAJ
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Vigilance Bureau has exposed a big scam worth crores of rupees under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (Ayushman Bharat scheme) in which private hospitals have obtained health insurance claims from insurance company named IFFCO TOKIO on the basis of fake bills for treatment of beneficiary patients possessing smart health cards. Contrary to this, the IFFCO TOKIO had rejected hundreds of insurance claims pertaining to government hospitals causing a huge loss to the state exchequer.



Disclosing this on Wednesday, DGP-cum-Chief Director Vigilance Bureau B.K. Uppal said on the basis of inputs received from credible sources, it has come to light that several well known private hospitals based in Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala districts have prepared

hefty fake bills on the names of smart card holders for their treatment under Ayushman Bharat scheme and took insurance claims from IFFCO TOKIO. "A regular vigilance enquiry have been registered by the bureau to investigate this scam worth crores of rupees in the state", he added. Giving details of the preliminary findings he informed that SSP vigilance range Jalandhar Daljinder Singh Dhillon have unearthed this fraud in which several fake medical bills of private hospitals had been cleared by the insurance company but on the contrary reimbursement bills forwarded by government hospitals were rejected.

AMID AGITATION

Lack of captive mines pushed Vizag Steel Plant into debt: Pradhan

LOKESWARA RAO
HYDERABAD

Union Minister of Steel Dharmendra Pradhan has admitted that lack of captive mines for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant made it debt ridden. He answered the question of YSRCP Parliamentary Party leader Vijay Sai Reddy on his request to allocate captive mines to the steel plant. Pradhan said, "RINL procures iron ore from open market at the market price in the absence of allocation of any captive mine. This is one of the factors among other reasons for losses incurred by RINL. RINL has requested various state governments like Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh for recommending reservation of iron ore deposit under Section 17A(2A) of MMDR Act, 2015 to the Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India. Ministry of Steel has also requested the Government of Odisha for reservation of an iron ore block in favour of RINL." Vijay Sai Reddy said, "VSP is an emotional and sentimental issue and the en-



Union Minister of Steel Dharmendra Pradhan.

tire state has been opposing the move. It is a matter of great concern for the people of AP, employees of RINL and other stakeholders, where 32 lives were laid down to get VSP. Apart from adopting a resolution in the state Assembly, they will continue their fight till the Centre reverts its decision in this regard. The Chief Minister has shown alternative ways and proposed to allocate captive mines and explore equity options, where the public can make a purchase instead of a private organisation." Going into the details, he stated that the plant performed well between 2002

to 2015, earning profits, but suddenly there was a downfall due to the economic crisis from 2015 onwards, resulting in a pile of debt and losses. Recalling the suggestions put by the Chief Minister, he said that the plant is dependent on NMDC mines and due to the lack of captive mines, Rs 3,470 crore is being burdened on RINL; allotting captive mines would reduce input costs. On the other hand, agitations for the protection of the Vizag Steel Plant from the disinvestment move by the Central government have intensified after Union Minister for Finance Nirmala Sitharaman's statement of total privatisation of the steel plant. Workers unions served a strike notice on March 11 and strike may take place on any day after March 25. Thousands of workers and displaced persons of the steel plant led by trade unions laid siege on the steel plant administrative building. It may be recalled that plant workers under the banner of Visakha Utku Parirakshana Committee have been conducting agitation for the past 26 days, including relay hunger strikes.

ASSEMBLY POLLS

BJP WILL FORM GOVTS IN BENGAL, ASSAM; PRE-POLL SURVEYS NOT TRUE: JUAL ORAM

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former minister and BJP leader Jual Oram has claimed that irrespective of pre-poll surveys conducted by media, the Bharatiya Janata Party is poised to form governments in Assam and West Bengal after the forthcoming Assembly elections. Reacting to a pre-poll survey and trends of the survey, the



Jual Oram.

former Union Minister said that such surveys are not

necessarily true. "Such predictions might become true one or two times but I do not believe in such surveys. The BJP will form the government in Bengal. I belong to the state bordering Bengal and I have seen the atmosphere of Kharagpur, Midnapore I can say that the BJP government will come to power in the state," he said. Regarding Assam, the senior BJP leader said: "We are working very hard

in both the states and our assessment is that in both of them, we will form our governments." "I cannot say anything about the predictions of the survey. In the election, we are not paying attention to media projections but are working hard and focusing on work only. When the result will be counted on the last day then we will watch TV and read what the newspapers are writing," he added.

ANALYSIS

HOW MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z ARE INFLUENCING CHANGE

With youngsters making up the majority of the Indian population, there is a need to observe closely and understand how their digital lives, habits and interpersonal relationships are bringing noticeable shifts in the norms of society and culture.



SRINATH SRIDHARAN AND RUPALI KAPOOR

More than 65% of India's population is under 35 years of age. This essentially means that the biggest productive workforce in the decades to come will be the ones who are youngsters today, showcasing their "influence" across society, social media, polity, etc.

In order to effectively understand them, communicate with them and work along with them, we need to understand the life-world of Gen Z and millennials. As many of us lead an increasingly digital life, social media and other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp provide a great opportunity to learn more about GEMZ (Gig Economy, Millennials & Gen-Z). For instance, data shows that Gen Z in India spends about 8 hours per day online on an average. Thus, these platforms offer a huge potential to learn more about them.

More comfortable with text messages than calls

Social media platforms provide a variety of ways to engage, share and communicate. Millennials and Gen-Z members are constantly interacting with their networks through platforms

such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp.

The one underlying commonality that these platforms provide is that they allow for asynchronous communication. Unlike calls, such communication provides the flexibility to engage with people at one's own convenience, through texts, audio or video messages.

However, it is important to reflect on how such forms of interaction might start to affect socialisation habits in general. As we get more used to conversing with our friends and family through such mediums it will begin to (and already has) change the way we prefer to communicate with our networks.

Over time, GEMZ might interact less through formats that demand synchronous communication such as calls as it would seem more demanding!

SHARING WITH THE WORLD IN ONE GO

Social media platforms are constantly innovating and providing people with new means to communicate. For instance, Instagram allows its users to share 'stories'. Millennials and Gen-Z individuals often share multiple 'stories' on Instagram in a day to share the various happenings in their lives.

This provides them complete control over what they want to share with their communities. Moreover, to a certain degree, it is one-way communication. Although their networks do have the option to react to their 'stories' and respond to them privately as well.



The other significant attribute of such a format is that it allows them to converse with their community together as a whole. However, this format of communication needs to be seen more as "a way to inform people of the various happenings in their life", rather than a form of interaction. What we would earlier share with a few friends, family or colleagues, now can be shared with everyone in one go, but without engaging with anyone at all.

REVALUATING PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

In the last couple of years, we have all been a witness to not only the emergence of new social media platforms but also how several platforms have evolved to provide us with a variety of ways to interact. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and others provide millennials and Gen-Z

members with the opportunity to express themselves in creative ways.

Further, some social media platforms have created opportunities for millennials and Gen-Z members to earn as well. This has led many to start earning even before they graduate from schools and colleges (which was the conventional idea of employment post-education). There are many stories in the media of teenagers and young adults who have acquired a celebrity-like status through such platforms and are earning way more than the average income of someone with even a postgraduate degree.

With such platforms becoming a more mainstream and acceptable means to earn an income, we need to reflect upon the various ways in which they might affect our social fabric. One of the im-

mediate effects that we would have to take cognizance of is the effect it might have on the parent-child relationship.

In India, parents often have a considerable say in a child's educational and professional decisions. Education continues to be given a lot of significance and is considered as a means to create a better lifestyle (both financially and socially). Generally, even if kids want to pursue sports/entertainment or other alternative careers, parents ideally expect their children to have a university degree, with the assumption that it would bring financial stability. Further, parents often financially support their children's education and continue to provide such support even after the child starts earning. Thus, a parent often has a considerable say in a child's professional and personal decisions.

Thus, as such GEMZ begin to earn a lot more than their parents at the young age of 19 or 20 years, in jobs that their parents understand very little, it would definitely start affecting the parent-child dynamic.

CHANGING NON-FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND DYNAMICS

Over the last 3-4 years, we have witnessed several individuals gain immense popularity from social media platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram, YouTube, etc. We observed many who started individually and formed online and offline friendships with other content creators. Often, as their audience, we also got to watch these friendships and relationships evolve in real time as many of these individuals share a huge part of their lives on social media platforms.

Occasionally, such friendships lead to the members forming a group as they realise that together they can create a stronger brand value, which increases their monetary value.

Further, it allows them to collaborate and spend more time planning and creating content which helps them to pursue their goals. What needs to be highlighted here that such friendships/relationships would be a lot more complex, as they are entwined not only between the digital and physical worlds but also involve a professional/economic engagement.

It would be vital to observe the various ways in which it changes GEMZ's approach to non-famil-

ial relationships. As such professionals become more mainstream, it would be important to understand if GEMZ's expectations from friendship/relationships are changing in a way that changes the current social fabric.

Increasing relevance of the digital

Another shift that we have been observing is the growing comfort that people are developing with digital spaces. We are all constantly capturing aspects of our lives for social media. Clicking images for Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook during any social occasion has become a ritual for many. For some, uploading stories and posts on social media platforms is almost like a sacred act that is as significant as the social occasion itself.

Such a varied range of digital interactions have led to an increase in the time we spend engaging with the digital world. One of the direct consequences of this will be that it is increasing the relevance of the digital in our lives. The binary between the physical and the digital world is becoming blurred and we are constantly navigating both the worlds simultaneously. For instance, sometimes an entire occasion is being constructed just to create a digital moment.

Thus, GEMZ might understand the physical and the digital world quite differently from non-digital natives!

Srinath Sridharan is an independent markets commentator. Rupali Kapoor is a social and cultural anthropologist. Views in this article are personal.

SPIRITUALITY

The real message of Shivratri



AMMA, SRI MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI

Shivratri is observed all over India. For those immersed in myriad thoughts of material life, holy days are occasions to remember God and to become more aware of the true goal of life. When hundreds of thousands of people remember the divine with a one-pointed focus, dedicate their actions to God, and worship God, then the very environment becomes pure. Thereafter, thinking of God becomes effortless for others, too.

One way in which Shivratri is different from other festivals that give importance to prayer and worship is that it emphasises self-sacrifice and austerity. It is also a day to remind ourselves of the goal of life and examine our spiritual progress. Currently, most of us give considerable importance to food and sleep. Shivratri teaches us to set such preferences and enshrine God in our heart. If we can dedicate at least one day a year to giving God foremost importance in our life—treating that as a sacred vow—the resulting *samskara* (impression) will make our lives more God-oriented. Shivratri, which is cele-



brated at the end of winter, is a harbinger of spring. There is an inner meaning in this. When the light and warmth of knowledge thaw the mind benumbed by inertia and ignorance, the flowers of joy and peace begin to blossom. The change of seasons is characteristic of the outer world. However, if we try, we can control our inner weather and temperature—even making it unchanging. To do so, spiritual knowledge is required.

When we are steeped in pain and pleasure, we fail to think of God, the one who bestows everything upon us. When we experience creation, we fail to remember the Creator. While enjoying a sweet, we should be able to remember the person who made it. However, we primarily just enjoy the sweet. We are bewitched by *maya*—the superficial changing aspects of creation. As a result, we are unable to experience supreme bliss.

It is difficult for someone predominantly *tamasic* (dull) or *rajasic* (extroverted) to discover the divine prin-

ciple hidden in creation. Such minds pursue creation as if it were an inexhaustible mine of material pleasure. On the contrary, the person who is predominantly *sattvic* (peaceful) turns God-ward. By observing the vows associated with Shivratri, we are able to foster such *sattvic* qualities.

Lord Shiva is Gangadhara—the one who holds the Ganges. He eternally holds Ganga, which is of the nature of immortality, on his head. Ganga is synonymous with gentle coolness. No matter how turbulent the situation, the Lord's head and inner realm remain peaceful. Though his head is cool, his heart is always warm with compassion. In order to save the world from the all-destructive *kalakuta* poison, the Supreme Lord drank it. Through his example, Lord Shiva teaches us that what we need is a cool head and a warm heart. But what we see in the world today is the opposite: Most people are hot-headed and cold-hearted. Everyone's head is heated up with worldly desires, and

the heart has become frosty with selfishness. When our head is cool, we can face the most adverse circumstance peacefully and turn them to our advantage.

Not only on Shivratri, but on every day, let us remind ourselves, "I am not this limited, changing body. I am Shiva. My ultimate nature is the supreme consciousness." Let us revel in this thought and experience. Just as the world of plurality disappears at night, may we be able to transcend our thoughts and the mind and perceive Lord Shiva—the Shiva principle, the True Self—everywhere.

May the light of knowledge put an end to the darkness of ignorance. May my children be able to see everything in themselves and themselves in everything. This is the real message of Shivratri. May my children have the strength and grace to realise this. Amma offers this prayer to the Paramatma.

The writer is a spiritual leader, guru and humanitarian who is revered as the bugging saint by her followers.

HEALTH

A panel discussion highlights issues rare disease patients face

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Organization of Rare Diseases India (ORDI) recently presented a session on Rare Diseases on NewsX. There were four power-packed panels of experts that joined in the session that was divided into four segments covering various aspects concerning the topic. The four segments were: Rare Diseases: The Untold & Unheard Saga; Rare Diseases: The Indian Scenario; RaceFor7: Walk/ Run/ Ride; Rare Diseases: Hopes from the government.

RARE DISEASES: THE UNTOLD AND UNHEARD SAGA

Dr Meenakshi Bhatt, Consultant, Clinical Genetics, CHG, Bengaluru kick-started the first segment. Dr Bhatt said, "Rare diseases happen very infrequently in the population. In countries other than ours, there is a definition, sometimes it is defined in certain countries as something that happens less than once in a population of two lakh. In some other countries, there is a definition that one in 2,500 or less of the population is affected by a disease."

This segment was also joined by Prasanna Shirol, Co-founder & Executive Director, ORDI, Sangeeta Barde, Co-founder Direc-

tor, ORDI & father of kids with Sanfilippo syndrome, Arouba Kabir, Counselor & Mental Health therapist, Dr Sujatha Jagdeesh, Head of Clinical Genetics, Mediscan, Chennai, Dr Ann Agnes Mathew, Pediatric Neurologist, Baptist Hospital, Bangalore, Dr Shubha Phadke, Professor & HOD, Medical Genetics, SGPGL.

RARE DISEASES: THE INDIAN SCENARIO
Giving an introduction of ORDI, Prasanna Shirol, Co-founder & Executive Director, ORDI said in his inaugural address, "ORDI is an umbrella organization which represents 7,000 plus Rare Diseases. We work in the area of advocacy, awareness and patient support." Shirol's quest to finding answers to multiple questions in the area of rare diseases led him to find the organization. He struggled through his life as his 22-year-old daughter is India's first Pompe patient which is a rare genetic and neuromuscular disease.

Other contributors of this segment of discussion were Dr Sumita Danda, Professor & Head, Department of Clinical Genetics, CMC, Vellore, T.S. Singh Deo, Health Minister, Chhattisgarh, Ashutosh, parent of a child of IEM, Samir Sethi, President at Indian Rett Syndrome Foundation, Dr Sarthak Kamath, MD, Psychiatry and is living with DMD, Vaishali Pai,

Occupational Therapist & Founder, Tamahar Trust, Bengaluru, Manjeet Singh, President, LSDSS and he also lost his child to MPS, Dr Ratna Puri, Professor and Chairperson, Institute of Medical Genetics, Sri Ganga Ram Hospital, Dr Sanjeeva G.N., Associate Professor, Pediatrics, IGICH, Bangalore, Anil Raina, General Manager, Sanofi Genzyme, Gitanjali Sehgal, Co-founder, FSMA and is an aunt to an SMA girl and Sunila Thatte, Vice President & Head- R&D Solutions India at IQVIA.

RACEFOR7: WALK/ RUN/ RIDE

Racefor7 is a yearly event that ORDI conducts for the past six years. It symbolically represents the 7,000 rare diseases with 7,000 people running for seven kilometres. Shirol said that it is a mass awareness run/walk/ ride. He added that it is a unique and largest such program in the world where so many people join to create awareness who are unaffected for causes like rare diseases. This year, this event was held virtually on 28 February.

Segment 3 panellists were Shirol, Barde, Dr Bhatt, Kabir, Sirisha, OI Warrior, President awardee, Anand Shah, Trustee of PPMI India, Uttam Sahoo, teacher & parent of Progeria child Aditya from Uttarakhand, Dr Suresh Hanagawadi, President, Karnataka He-

mophilia Society & Professor of Pathology, JMM Medical College, Davanagere, Dr Prakash Gambhir, Chief Medical Scientist, Lifecell & Fetomed, and Thatte.

RARE DISEASES: HOPES FROM THE GOVERNMENT

In the last segment of the session on rare diseases, the panellists shared the challenges that the government perhaps needs to take account of. Taking the same conversation ahead, Dr Puri said, "Being a doctor who has been working half lifetime with patients with rare diseases, I think we deal with a very large population and the priorities from the health administration side are probably different. We see our priorities as the most vital, I do agree with the parent community, they are vital because every child has a right to life but we are moving ahead and I hope that with all this, with the noise that is being created, with the platforms that are coming forward to take the voice and the importance of treating children with rare disorders, we are all waiting for a good rare disease policy."

The power-packed panel that joined this segment included Shirol, Barde, Dr Bhatt, Dr Puri, Sehgal, Sethi, Dr G.N., Raina, Thatte, Dr Mathew, and Pai.

TRANSFORMATIVE MOVE

India turns towards marketplace capitalism for rapid growth

If the ultimate goal of the Modi government is to enable the rise of a manufacturing and muscular India, then a new form of cooperative partnership between the Centre, states and the private sector is necessary.

OPINION

NARAIN BATRA



The recently announced privatisation plan would lead to a radical power shift and greater decentralisation of economic activities, necessitating a new form of generative mechanism and cooperative partnership between the Centre, states, and the private sector.

From Jawaharlal Nehru's socialistic vision of controlling the commanding heights of the economy to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new paradigm that the government should not be in the business owning and running enterprises, India is taking definitive steps towards privatisation and marketplace economy. In 1951 India was overwhelmingly an agrarian economy; there were only 5 public sector enterprises; and the government's role in establishing the industrial base was a compelling necessity.

Today there are 348 Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) with a total investment of Rs 16.41 lakh crore and more than a million employees, according to the Department of Public Enterprises. Privatising

them would open up huge space for the private sector to expand and innovate as well as create tremendous investment opportunities for Indian and global players. The government, however, announced that four strategic sectors including atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services, would be still under the state control. Despite the proviso that each strategic sector would have no more than four public sector units, there would be, nevertheless, 332 PSUs up for privatisation.

Privatisation at such a massive scale amounts to a radical power shift, both political and economic. Such a fundamental transformation occurred in 1969 when Indira Gandhi nationalised banks, followed by other industries, which resulted in tremendous concentration of power at the Centre. Prime Minister Modi on the other hand is decentralising economic power without diminishing his political power.

Therefore, keeping the stakeholders in mind including the bureaucratic establishment, labour unions, and the political parties committed to state control of the economy, as well as the bogey of crony capitalism, smooth transition would be a humongous task. Not least there will be the loss of political patronage for political bosses.

In the first term, the Modi administration, in spite of the promises of privatisation, did not take serious steps in this direction. In fact, the first term was a continuation of the welfare schemes of the previous administration. Though, with the addition of massive nationwide toilet building programme, housing construction, gas connection, direct benefit transfer, PM-Kisan income support scheme, among others, the welfare programmes were enhanced and speeded up through digital technology. But the welfare state—a political constant in India—cannot continue without a rapid pace of wealth creation for which the state is not well equipped, looking at the performance of the public sector since Independence.

One does not have to count the virtues of the private sector, which in its own self-interest for profit-making and staying competitive in a global environment, takes calculated risks, innovates through investment in R&D, employs highly trained professionals, and uses best practices to raise productivity and improve efficiencies.

One consequence of shifting more than 300 PSUs to the private domain would be that entire private sector would go through creative destruction leading to continuous product and process innovation replacing the old production technologies with the new ones. The challenge is how to do it so that the process and the outcome create public trust. In the case of Maruti, for example, as some analysts have observed, the devolution process happened so successfully that today it is one of the most competitive auto companies in the world.

If India were an authoritarian state a la China, it



Privatisation at such a massive scale amounts to a radical power shift, both political and economic. Such a fundamental transformation occurred in 1969 when Indira Gandhi nationalised banks, followed by other industries, which resulted in tremendous concentration of power at the Centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the other hand, is decentralising economic power without diminishing his political power.

would have been easy to say, to borrow a trope from *Star Trek*, that: Resistance is futile. But as we see in the continuing farmers' protest against the government efforts to improve farm economy through exposure to market forces, and the romancing of the farmer by pop culture and youth activist icons such as Rihanna and Greta Thunberg, it is unthinkable that such a massive transfer of economic power and political patronage from the state to private companies would go unchallenged.

Last December the farmers' attacks on the Reliance Jio's towers in Punjab showed how deep the resistance is against the rising marketplace and manufacturing culture in India. This needs to be overcome.

Since the privatisation process cannot be a turnkey project and would take a number of years to accomplish, the government would need to adopt a two-pronged strategy.

First, the government needs to launch a massive public relations campaign to explain, educate, and

persuade people as to how the privatisation of PSUs would have a multiplier effect on the job market by creating thousands and thousands of small and medium enterprises necessary to build up new supply chains to feed the expanding private sector.

A regular programme like Prime Minister Modi's "Mann Ki Baat", if done by noteworthy and trustworthy public intellectuals and believers in free enterprise, aimed at explaining as to how privatisation and wealth creation would lift

all boats, would go a long way in public persuasion. There's a widespread suspicion about the business community in India as tax dodgers and greedy profiteers. The business community must step forward and create a positive image through transparency in hiring and business practices.

Second, in order to accomplish the task successfully the government must adopt pragmatic approaches. Divesting such a large and diverse categories of PSUs is a complex undertaking

that necessitates approaching each unit with open-mindedness and flexibility, however, focusing on the expected outcomes. What worked in the past as in the case of Maruti disinvestment may or may not work for other PSUs, depending upon the stakeholders' expectations.

Most importantly, if the ultimate goal of the Modi government is to enable the rise of a manufacturing and muscular India based on "aatmanirbharta" (self-reliance), without which India wouldn't have a seat at the global table, a new form of generative mechanism and cooperative partnership between the Centre, states, and the private sector is absolutely vital.

Narain Batra is the author of the forthcoming book, 'Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi'. He is professor of communications and diplomacy at Norwich University, Vermont. The views expressed are personal.

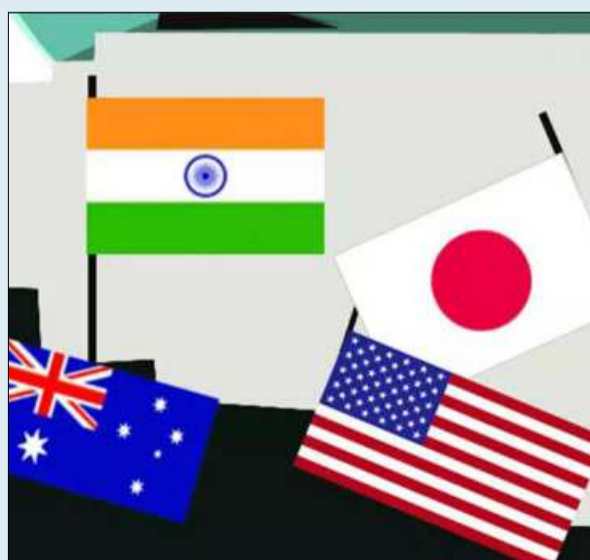
PERSPECTIVE

NOT A FRIEND FOR LIFE

INDIA MUST NOT DRAG ITS FEET ON QUAD

A "peace conference" for Afghanistan is scheduled to be held in Moscow on 18 March from where India has been elbowed out by "friend for life", Russia. This was done apparently at the insistence of Pakistan and its "iron brother" China. Russia has invited "stakeholders" such as the Taliban, Russia, United States, Pakistan, Iran, China and "honoured guest" Qatar. When this news became public, the Russian embassy in New Delhi issued a statement saying that India plays a "very important role" in Afghanistan, and it is but "natural" that India will have "eventual deeper involvement in dedicated dialogue format" in the peace process. There was, however, no mention of the time frame

of such an eventuality. It is not yet clear if the US will participate in the Russia-hosted peace meeting, but it is now public that the US has suggested two proposals for holding such peace meetings under UN auspices. The first proposal has Afghanistan, US, Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran and India participating in the peace process, while the second proposal is about holding peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Turkey. In other words, if the first US proposal is accepted, India, which wants a place on the table for the Afghan talks, will be a part of the peace process—and why not? Afghanistan is of immense strategic importance to India, which has invested billions of dollars



for the development of that country. Also, India cannot have Pakistan and China make Afghanistan their playing field.

However, the larger point is about Russia. Despite knowing India's interests

in Afghanistan, it went with China and Pakistan to keep India out of Afghanistan. If this is a message to India, disapproving New Delhi's increasing closeness to the US and its participation in the Quad, it should be

The first proposal has Afghanistan, US, Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran and India participating in the peace process, while the second proposal is about holding peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Turkey. In other words, if the first US proposal is accepted, India, which wants a place on the table for the Afghan talks, will be a part of the peace process—and why not?

regarded as a lesson by India—that in geopolitics, it's self-interest that counts and not sentiments. India cannot afford to look to the past with rose-tinted glasses, remember its once close association with Soviet Rus-

sia, or the fact that Moscow gave it technology which the Western countries did not. It cannot hope to continue with that "love story" at a time when Russia is too close to China. The Quad should be India's primary

focus now. India cannot afford to be a reluctant partner and be an impediment to the quick formalisation of the Quad into a security alliance. In fact it's good that the Quad countries will be conducting two naval exercises along with France and UAE. One of the exercises will be a trilateral exercise among the Navies of India, France and the UAE, while the other one will have Quad plus France. If this is India's way of proving to the world that its foreign policy is firmly based on multilateralism, so be it—as long as India recognizes that China is the threat and it does not make any sense to have one foot in the camp where Beijing is calling the shots. In spite of all the talk about multilateralism, it's time to choose a side. It

is rather ironic that while on Friday, 12 March, four heads of state and government will participate in the Quad meeting, later this year, India will host the BRICS summit for which Chinese President Xi Jinping may even visit India. It is hoped that by that time the Quad would have taken major steps towards becoming a security alliance and that India will not drag its feet, unable to distinguish between friend and foe. A message must be sent to the Chinese that its hegemony will not be accepted. Also, even if BRICS can continue because of reasons of trade, it is hoped India will be realistic about Russia at least. That ship has sailed. India needs to wake up to that fact.

JOYEETA BASU

CLOSE TIES

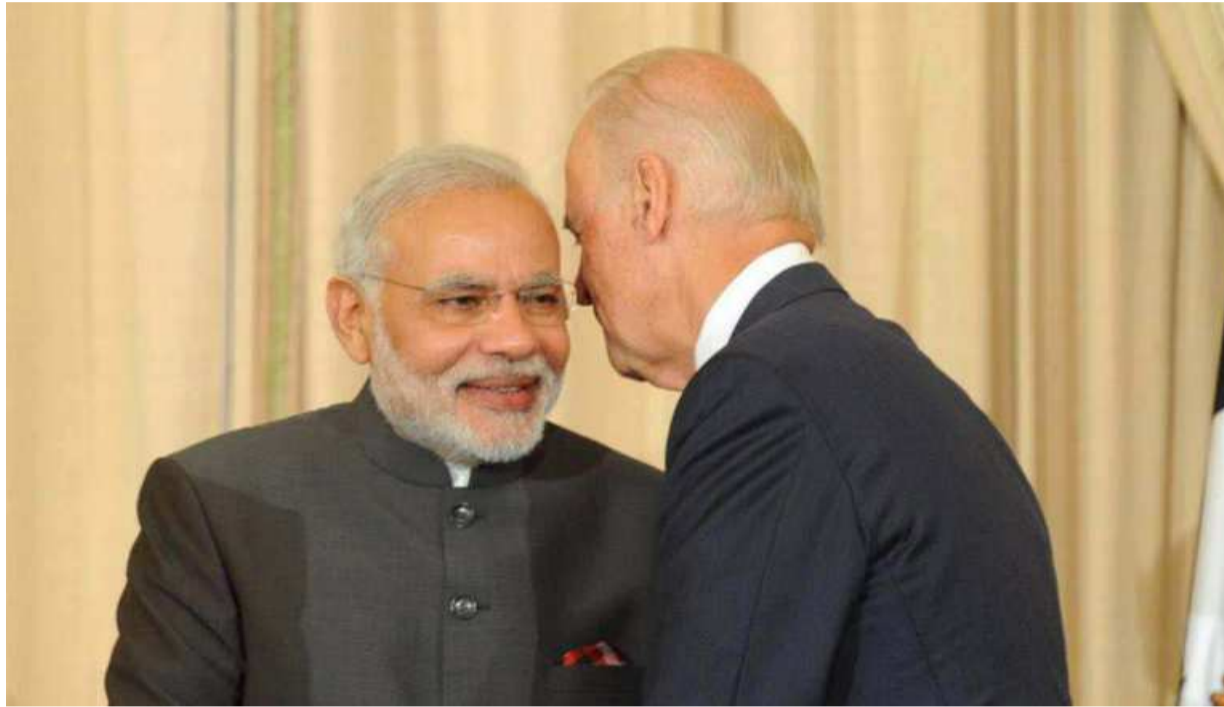
MODI, BIDEN AT THE SAME PLATFORM FOR QUAD LEADERS' VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be participating, along with Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga and US President Joseph Biden, in the first Leaders' Summit of the Quadrilateral Framework, being held virtually on 12 March.

ASHISH SINGH
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be participating, along with Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison and Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihide Suga and US President Joseph R. Biden, in the first Leaders' Summit of the Quadrilateral Framework, being held virtually on 12 March. With focus on China, the leaders will discuss regional and global issues of shared interest, and exchange views on practical areas of cooperation towards maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The Summit will also provide an opportunity to exchange views on contemporary challenges such as resilient supply chains, emerging and critical technologies, maritime security, and climate change. The leaders are also scheduled to discuss the ongoing efforts to combat Covid-19 pandemic and explore opportunities for collaboration in ensuring



safe, equitable and affordable vaccines in the Indo-Pacific region.

DEFENCE SECRETARY AUSTIN TRAVELS

Secretary of Defence Lloyd J. Austin III embarks on his first overseas trip Saturday, March 13, to visit US Indo-Pacific Command Headquarters in Hawaii, U.S.

troops and senior government leaders in Japan and the Republic of Korea, and senior government leaders in India. Secretary Austin will meet with his counterparts and other senior officials to discuss the importance of international defence relationships, and reinforce the United States' commitment

to a free and open Indo-Pacific region—founded on respect for international rules, laws, and norms.

Secretary Austin will visit US Indo-Pacific Command Headquarters in Hawaii to meet with U.S. troops and senior commanders and highlight his vision for the Indo-Pacific region as a pri-

ority theater for the Department. In Japan, Austin will join US Department of State Secretary Antony Blinken, for the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee ("2+2"), hosted by Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi and Minister of Defense Nobuo Kishi, to emphasise that the U.S.-Ja-

pan Alliance has never been more resolute and resilient—the cornerstone of peace and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific in the face of long-term competition with China. In the Republic of Korea, Austin and Blinken will attend a US-ROK Foreign and Defense Ministerial ("2+2"), hosted by the ROK's Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong and Minister of Defense Suh Wook, to reaffirm the United States' ironclad commitment to the security of the Republic of Korea, and emphasize that the US-ROK alliance remains a linchpin of peace, security, and prosperity in Northeast Asia, a free and open Indo-Pacific, and around the world.

In India, Secretary Austin will meet with his counterpart, Minister of Defence Rajnath Singh, and other senior national security leaders to discuss deepening the US-India Major Defense Partnership and advancing cooperation between our countries for a free, prosperous and open Indo-Pacific and Western Indian Ocean Region.

OPERATIONAL READINESS

Southern Army Commander visits Jaisalmer Military Station

ASHISH SINGH
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant General J.S. Nain, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Southern Command visited Jaisalmer Military Station and carried out a comprehensive review of their operational preparedness. The GOC-in-C took stock of the operational readiness of the Formation

Lieutenant General JS Nain laid emphasis on maintaining a high state of operational readiness, synergy and cooperation with sister services to gain information ascendancy for giving a cohesive and befitting response during all contingencies. He further complimented the formation for the initiatives undertaken to enhance synergy in the



and was briefed on various operational initiatives being undertaken by Battle Axe Division to meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities in a tech enabled network centric battlefield environment.

planning and conduct of joint training with Air Force to enhance operational capabilities. He also motivated all ranks to continue and to improve the operational effectiveness of their respective Formations.

FY 2020-21

HAL PAYS SECOND INTERIM DIVIDEND OF RS 376.93 CRORE TO GOVT

ASHISH SINGH
NEW DELHI

Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU) Hindustan Aeronautics Limited

of Secretary-Defence Production Raj Kumar in New Delhi on Wednesday.

The company had declared the second interim dividend of Rs15 per equity share of



(HAL) paid the second interim dividend of Rs 376.93 crore for the Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 to the government. The dividend cheque was handed over to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh by the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of HAL R. Madhavan and Director (Finance), HAL C.B. Ananthkrishnan in the presence

Rs10 each amounting to Rs 501.58 crore on February 26, 2021, in addition to the first interim dividend of Rs15 per equity share of Rs 10 each amounting to Rs 501.58 crore already declared on December 09, 2020, totalling Rs 1,003.16 crore which included Government share of Rs 753.88 crore.

IN PUNE

Lamp-lighting ceremony of nursing cadets of AFMC

ASHISH SINGH
NEW DELHI

Lamp-lighting ceremony of 40 nursing cadets of 55th batch of college of nursing, Armed Forces Medical College, Pune was conducted on Wednesday at AFMC on virtual platform. Senior officers, MNS Officers, faculty members, trainee officers, parents and students of College of Nursing, AFMC were virtually present during the Ceremony. Lt Gen Nardeep Naithani, Director & Commandant, AFMC graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Brig P. Gandhimathy, Brig MNS Southern Command was the Guest of Honour. Brig Amita Devrani, Principal College of Nursing, AFMC presented a



brief report of the college.

Light is the universal symbol of truth, knowledge and understanding and as per the tradition the ceremony started with kindling the lamp by the dignitaries. Brig Amita Devrani passed the light to faculty members who in turn passed it to the Nursing Cadets. Passing of light symbolizes the dissemination of knowledge, skill, wisdom, dedication and dignity from the learned to the learners, from the teachers to the taught. Nurse's pledge was administered to the students by Brig P. Gandhimathy, Brig MNS Southern Command to enshrine the ethos and values of nursing as a noble profession.

The Chief Guest addressed

the students and motivated them for upholding the professional standards set forth by Florence Nightingale who was the epitome of dedication and founder of Modern nursing. The Chief Guest felicitated the meritorious students who were awarded the Lt General KS Masters Memorial Silver Medal and Rashi Memorial Medal for academic excellence. Lt Col Bindu A.K. was awarded the Silver Jubilee Rolling Trophy, The Brig Shukla Trust Award and Lt Col S D Kale Silver Medal for the best all round and best outgoing PBBSc(N) trainee officer and for securing first position in Maharashtra University of Health Sciences PBBSc (N) exam held in 2019-2020.

PROJECT 75

INS Karanj commissioned at Mumbai Naval Dockyard

ASHISH SINGH
NEW DELHI

Indian Navy's third stealth Scorpene class Submarine INS Karanj has been commissioned at the Naval Dockyard Mumbai through a formal commissioning ceremony. Admiral V.S. Shekhawat (Retd), former Chief of the Naval Staff, who was part of the commissioning crew of the old Karanj and later the Commanding officer during the 1971 India-Pakistan war, was the Chief Guest for the ceremony. Six Scorpene Class submarines are being built in India by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai, under collaboration with M/s Naval Group, France. INS Karanj would form part of the Western Naval Command's Submarine fleet and would be another potent part of the Command's arsenal.



Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of the Naval Staff, and other senior officers from the Indian Navy and MoD were amongst the several dignitaries who witnessed the commissioning ceremony. Crew of the erstwhile 'Karanj', a Russian origin Foxtrot Class Submarine which was decommissioned in 2003

were also special invitees for the ceremony. During his address, the CNS said, "this impetus to indigenisation and Aatmanirbhar Bharat is a fundamental tenet of Indian Navy's growth story and future operational capabilities".

Chief Guest Admiral Shekhawat also highlighted

India's push towards "aatmanirbharta" by saying "we live in an India launching numerous satellites, building nuclear submarines, manufacturing vaccines for the world—the new Karanj is another example of it"

This year is being celebrated as the 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh' which marks



50 years of 1971 Indo - Pak war. Old INS Karanj, commissioned on 4 Sep 1969 at Riga in the erstwhile USSR, also took active part in the conflict under the Command

of then Cdr V.S. Shekhawat. In recognition of the valiant action of her officers and crew, a number of personnel were decorated, including award of Vir Chakra to the



then Commanding Officer Cdr Shekhawat. Interestingly, the commissioning Commanding Officer of the old INS Karanj Cdr MNR Samant later on became the first Chief of The Naval Staff of the newly formed Bangladesh Navy in the year 1971.

It is a major milestone for Indian Navy's Project 75 as India achieves "aatmanirbharta" with indigenous submarine construction at Mazagon Dock. The Scorpene Submarines are one of the most advanced conventional submarines in the world. These platforms are equipped with the latest

technologies in the world. More deadly and stealthier than their predecessors, these submarines are equipped with potent weapons and sensors to neutralise any threat above or below the sea surface. The induction of Karanj is another step towards the Indian Navy, consolidating its position as a builder's Navy, as also is a reflection of MDL's capabilities as a premier ship and submarine building yard of the world. Project 75 also marks a critical milestone in the Yard's continued importance in the field of Defence Production.

TRADE

Fourth Industrial Revolution will be shaped by India; FinTech to play important role: IFSCA chairman Injeti Srinivas

The IFSCA, Srinivas emphasised, attaches huge importance to developing a FinTech hub in India. "We want to be the frontrunners in this. Under the IFSCA, you (the industry) have a unified regulator who regulates all the segments of the financial sector. For FinTech to have an international presence, this is another viable option," he added.

ANALYSIS

TARUN NANGIA



of the Indian economy. It can be the external engine that will not only channelize global capital flow into India but also provide international jurisdiction to companies wanting to explore global markets." He was addressing the virtual 'FICCI Fintech Expo 2021' and Conference - Showcasing Indian FinTechs to the World

Injeti Srinivas, Chairman, IFSCA today said India can be the front-runner in the fourth Industrial revolution. India did not play a large role in the first three revolutions. "We already have with us all the ingredients to lead the way. Potential for fintechs is enormous and the Fourth Industrial revolution will be shaped by India," he added.

Mr Srinivas said that creation of a world class fintech hub, as announced in the budget recently, also highlights the importance of fintech in India. "IFSCA can act as the second engine

The IFSCA, he emphasized, attaches huge importance to developing a fintech hub in India. "We want to be the frontrunners in this. Under the IFSCA, you (the industry) have a unified regulator who regulates all the segments of the financial sector. For fintech to have an international presence, this is another viable option," added Mr Srinivas.

Technology is transcending the limitations of time, space, and cost and by nature it is democratic. There is no use of a technology if it is not easily accessible and affordable. "We are at

the epicentre of making technology available, accessible and affordable and finance is the lifeblood of an economy. Technology and finance are common to all services," Srinivas said

He further emphasized that there is enormous potential in India but only a fraction of the economic transactions happens digitally. The government's Direct Benefit Transfer scheme, Digital India, Start-up India, UPI initiatives have been a great trigger to this process combined with the talent at the grassroots level that made use of this opportunity. "With government's announcements and IFSCAs pro-active initiatives it is the right time that this opportunity should be tapped," said Mr Srinivas.

Mr K Rajaraman, Additional Secretary (Investment and IER), Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Govt of India said that India's digital infrastructure has played an important role in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 by facilitating access to finance at remote locations and by aiding the effective deployment of government measures like DBT.

He added that the journey of financial inclusion started with the launch of



Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in 2014. Powered by India Stack and the JAM trinity, today, nearly 400 million people benefit from it.

"UPI-led innovations are clocking in an astounding two billion transactions a month. The two new frameworks ready to add more value and vibrancy to the India Stack Powered Digital Ecosystem include OCEN (Open Credit Enablement Network) and Account Aggregation Framework. The entire idea is to democratise ac-

cess to credit," added Rajaraman.

He further said that several countries around the world are facing challenges of governance and providing services to the citizens is accentuated by the lack of digital infrastructure. India can be a lead model, he emphasized.

Sunil Mehta, Chief Executive, IBA said that the banking industry is undergoing a transformation. Today we are moving towards phygital and the future will witness digital banking system. "Today, more than

70 per cent of the banking transactions are happening via digital mode," he added. Rashesh Shah, Past President, FICCI and Chairman and CEO, Edelweiss Group said that financial services in India is not about demand and supply, it is about the cost of supply. India has become the fifth largest fintech investment destination in 2020. Competition along with technology is changing the financial scenario in India, he added.

Sudhakar Ramasubramanian, Advisor, FICCI



IFSCA chairman Injeti Srinivas.

Fintech Committee said that with a strong regulatory vision followed by successful implementation of various initiatives, a digitally friendly market, strong STEM talent base and a great investor and institutional support have all come together in a synchronized manner to establish one of the world's most successful fintech industries in India.

V Govindarajan, Co-Chair, FICCI Fintech Committee and Co-Founder and Director, Perfios said, "Some form of handhold-

ing and help by the government through the IFSCA towards the smaller fintech companies will be highly appreciated."

Dilip Chenoy, Secretary General, FICCI said fintech start-ups are taking initiatives, innovating, and looking at integrating into the financial system. We must enable inclusion and take it international, he added.

Ruchin Goyal, MD & Senior Partner, BCG also shared his perspective on factors that aid successful forays into the global market by fintechs.

INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

\$20 billion opportunity for Indian man-made fibre garments

'MMF globally is a \$200 billion opportunity. If we come together as a country and create a supply chain that starts with design, product development, fabric development, and, of course, garmenting, we can target 10% of the \$200 billion. We are talking of a \$20 billion opportunity sitting right there,' said Sanjay Shukla from Triburg Apparel.

ANALYSIS

TARUN NANGIA

Buying houses believe that Indian manmade fibre (MMF) garment exporters can aspire to grab \$20 billion business in global MMF garment trade even as the domestic apparel industry works at resolving its limitations. This was among the key takeaways from a virtual B2B meeting on 'Improving MMF Fabric Options for Indian Apparel Exporters' held between MMF garment exporters, buying houses and fabric suppliers organized by Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) on Tuesday. "MMF globally is a \$200 billion opportunity. If we

come together as a country and create a supply chain that starts with design, product development, fabric development, and, of course, garmenting, we can target 10% of the \$200 billion. We are talking of a \$20 billion opportunity sitting right there," said Mr Sanjay Shukla from Triburg Apparel.

Other buying houses like Impulse also shared that there was a huge opportunity for MMF garments and that they have already identified major buyers and markets, and will make sure that MMF garments from India get more importance. AEPCC Chairman Dr A

Sakthivel said that the MMF garment industry in India is poised for fast growth as the government has agreed to promote the sector.

"The government has announced Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for MMF segment and creation of seven mega textile parks in the country. These measures will increase production and export of MMF garments from India," he said, adding that the AEPCC has created a separate cell to promote MMF garments.

Speaking at the meeting attended and actively participated by about 100 major players from the three key segments, MMF garment exporters said that while they have huge orders they found it difficult to get proper fabrics, and were forced to import these.

They said that long delivery time and issues of quality consistency of MMF fabric were the main constraints in increasing apparel exports from India. The country has



sufficient supply of MMF fibre and yarn, but is in short supply of quality fabric.

Replying to the concerns of the exporters in the meeting that held three sessions, fabric producers assured

that they have ample machinery and technology to produce fabric of international standard, and that they are already supplying to the exporters in a big way. They said that the exporters

need to ask for their needs and they will facilitate.

Mr Ajay Sardana from Birla Group of Companies said that his company, which is mainly into viscose staple fibre (VSF), will do everything

possible to produce all types of viscose fabric, and that he has got a special team to take care of exporters' needs.

"We have a complete supply chain team which helps to get the fabrics if it is not

available. If anybody is facing any problem, they can contact our team and we will make sure that the right quality is available at the right time. If AEPCC agrees, we can jointly create a fabric library for those fabrics that are not regularly available but are required in small lots. We are ready to invest," he said.

Mr Sardana also said that his company has a lot of technical expertise and is willing to further hire global consultants if certain viscose based fabric with the required finish is not available in India. He said he is willing to invest to remove any processing limitation.

Mr Sudhir Sekhri, Chairman (Export Promotion), AEPCC, in his concluding remarks said, "The government's PLI scheme and the mega parks will expand the MMF weaving and processing sector. Many units in China and South Korea are willing to move their machinery and equipment into India."

MARUTI SWIFT GETS NEW FEATURES, MORE POWERFUL ENGINE



SHAMS NAQVI
NEW DELHI

The Maruti Suzuki Swift has been one of India's most popular cars ever since it was first launched in the country back in 2005. In fact, in the last few months its success has scaled new heights as it has become the highest selling car in the country, beating many other popular cars even from within the Maruti brand. Three years ago, the country's leading car maker had launched a brand-new generation of the Swift in the market and now the hot hatch has been given a facelift that apart from exterior and interior changes also gets an updated and cleaner engine.

LOOKS

The most significant change on the car is the new mesh grille that comes with a horizontal chrome slat running across it. This has definitely made the car look sportier than earlier. All other elements remain the same on the car, including the projector headlamps, bumpers and alloy wheels. But yes, the front wheels now come with bigger brakes. Maruti has now introduced 3 dual tone colour options on the car but they are available only on the top Zxi+ variant of the car. These are pearl arctic white with pearl midnight black roof, solid fire red with pearl midnight black roof and pearl metallic midnight blue with pearl arctic white roof.

INTERIORS

The big change inside the cabin is the revised twin-pod instrument cluster which gets 4.2 a coloured TFT display. It provides a



lot of useful information that aids the driver in many ways. But once again the feature is available only on the top variant. The car now also gets features like cruise control and key synchronized auto foldable ORVMs. The 7-inch touchscreen system gets the updated Smartplay studio and is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. It also gets voice recognition and can be controlled via an app which also gets the navigation feature. The second row provides good space, and the seat comes with a 60:40 split on the higher variants.

ENGINE

It might be a facelift but there are changes on the heart as well. The new Swift is

equipped with 'Next Gen K-Series dualjet dual VVT Petrol engine that now churns out 88 bhp and 113 Nm. This has made the hot hatch more powerful than before. The company had discontinued the diesel version of the car before the BS6 emissions kicked in last year. Like earlier the car is available in both Manual and Automatic Gear Shift (AGS) variants. The latter offers easy drivability in the urban chaos at a slightly higher cost. All but the base LXi variant of the car get this Automated Manual transmission option.

FUEL EFFICIENCY AND SAFETY

One of the fortes of Maruti cars has always been good fuel efficiency. The Swift

now comes with the brand's Idle Start Stop (ISS) technology that promises higher fuel efficiency with lower emissions. According to Maruti, the Swift now gives a best-in-class fuel efficiency of 23.20 km/l in MT and an even better 23.76 km/l in AGS variants. The latter also gets Electronic Stability Program (ESP) with hill-hold which detects vehicle skid movement and restrains the same. It does not allow the vehicle to roll-back on inclined slopes in stop-start traffic condition, ensuring better control and peace of mind. The car also comes with safety features like dual airbags, ABS with EBD, Pre-tensioner and force limiter seat belts, driver, and co-driver seat belt reminder,

ISOFIX child seat mounts and reverse parking sensors with a rear-view camera.

PRICES

Owing to the new additions the Swift has become pricier than before. The manual variants now start at Rs 5.73 lakh (ex-showroom) and go up to Rs 7.91 lakh for the dual tone model. The AGS variants are priced between Rs 6.86 and Rs 8.41 lakh (ex-showroom). The difference between similar Manual and AGS variants is Rs 50,000. Maruti has made India's bestselling car even more attractive with some worthy changes and the despite the increased prices there is little that might keep the buyers away from lapping up this hot hatch.

TECH&You



RICHA KAPOOR

LG TONE FREE FN-7: LOOKS GOOD, SOUNDS BETTER, AND EVEN KILLS BACTERIA

Between manufacturers and consumers, wireless earbuds have gained a large market now. A new edition pops up every couple of months. This time around, the addition to the list is from LG with the first-of-its-kind Tone Free FN7 which comes with a UV charging case which can kill bacteria, according to the company's claims.

DESIGN

The Tone Free looks like a premium product. It is designed like a pod and is circular in shape, also making

In the box you get two extra silicon covers, which might look ordinary but they have a lining inside which makes them comfortable to wear and gives them a good grip. Using them while running or during a workout felt very easy and comfortable.

THE TONE FREE APP

What makes the experience better for any device is the ecosystem attached to it. LG provides an app for these earphones. The app helps you select an EQ preset, customise the EQ according to your needs,

ing, there is no fatigue too, which helped a lot.

The most important aspect of a pair of earphones is its sound quality, especially for people who enjoy listening to music. And if you are spending close to Rs 20k on a device, you would want the best out of it. With Tone Free we get a partnership with Meridian for higher sound quality and performance. Listening to music with high bass and treble was delightful and felt easy on the ear. Of course, the app can also be used to adjust the sound the way you want.



it easy to carry. It is available in two colours, white and black. My review unit, which is a black one, came in a matte finish, but the white gets a glossy look.

The case is light and houses an LED indicator for charging, a UV indicator that lights up when the case is on charge, and a USB Type-C charging port. Sterilization happens when the lid is shut and on charge. You can see the UV blue light when you open it. There's also a pairing button on the left side of the case.

The earphones are fitted in well with a magnet. They are easy to plug in and out. The top of each stem has a touch button that allows users to control music playback and calls. The LG Tone Free FN7 packs in IPX4 water-resistant certification, so it can withstand some sweat and light splashes. Design-wise the earphones are not different from the stuff we have seen. They are just glossy looking which gives them a premium feel.



BATTERY

This is probably the only downside of this product. You get around seven hours of playtime on the device and an additional two in the box but as you switch on ANC, you lose two hours. You do get fast charging but for people who are always on the go and wish to use it regularly, this might be a deal breaker.

VERDICT

The LG Tone Free FN7, priced at Rs 18,990, is as premium as it can get in the earphone segment. It is a strong competitor in the ANC or all-exclusive UV ray department. The only disappointment is its battery life. With a product in this range, we were expecting better. However, besides that, you would love everything else about the Tone Free, right from its premium design, good sound quality, engaging app, ANC and the bacteria-killing UV technology.

control ANC and ambient sound, customise controls, etc.

ANC AND SOUND

Tone Free has a great ANC. It can be easily compared to market leaders for its performance. I felt the noise cancellation levels were just right; 95% of the usual noises were muted completely. With the silicon ear cover-

IN BRIEFS

XIAOMI MAY LAUNCH SMARTPHONE WITH 200W CHARGING LATER THIS YEAR

Xiaomi is believed to be working on a smartphone with support for 200W charging. The solution was spotted earlier this year by a tipster who claimed that Xiaomi might be working on a flagship-level smartphone which will come with a combination of 200W charging. Now, another well-known tipster Digital Chat Station (translated) on Weibo has spotted the same. The tipster claims that the smartphone maker is working on a phone which brings 200W fast charging with a combination of wired, wireless and reverse wireless charging. The tipster also claims that the technology will be introduced on a Xiaomi smartphone in the second half of this year. This could be introduced on the Mi 11 Ultra which is also expected to launch later this year. There is also a chance that Xiaomi might reserve it for the next Mi MIX smartphone.



IPHONE 12 TO BE MADE IN INDIA SOON, FIFTH ONE FROM APPLE TO DO SO

iPhone 12 to soon sport Made-in-India branding on the retail package as Apple confirmed that it would start production of 5G-enabled iPhone model in the country. Launched in October last year alongside other 5G-ready models iPhone 12 Pro, iPhone 12 Pro Max, and iPhone 12 mini. This will be the fifth iPhone model manufactured locally after the company started producing iPhone SE, iPhone XR, iPhone SE 2020, and iPhone 11 in India some time ago. The Made in India iPhone 12 was on the cards for a long time and we reported about in August last year. Confirming the development, in a statement, Apple said, "We are proud to be starting production of iPhone 12 in India for our local customers. Apple is dedicated to making the best products and services in the world to delight our customers."



ASUS ROG PHONE 5 INDIA LAUNCHED, HERE ARE PRICE DETAILS AND MORE

Asus ROG Phone 5 India launch is done. The fourth edition in the ROG Phone family is believed to be the most powerful device and this will entice gamers who need more than just a smartphone. The Asus ROG Phone 5 is sort of an epitome when it comes to software and hardware customisations, done exclusively for gaming. Last year's ROG Phone 3 ticked the right boxes while keeping it a little low on the design part. This year's ROG Phone 5 is going for a different approach with not one but two screens, the second and smaller one given on the back. Although Asus will take the lid off from the specifications and features of the ROG Phone 5 at the event today, some of the crucial details are already known, thanks to the grapevine. The Asus ROG Phone 5 will be powered by the Qualcomm Snapdragon 888 processor and come with up to 18GB of RAM. There could be 8GB, 12GB, and 16GB RAM options available. The phone will have the second dot matrix display on the back that can display alerts, welcome messages, and reminders among other things.



APPLE TO STOP SALE OF IMAC PRO BASE MODELS

The American multinational technology company, Apple will stop selling older iMac Pro base models soon in lieu to launch a new range of iMacs. According to The Verge, the company is on its way out to stop selling its currently available iMac models as the official website of the Apple store is showing the product price tagged as USD 4,999 with a configuration, "while supplies last". Apple confirmed to The Verge that once the supplies of the base model will run out, iMac Pro will no longer be available in the market. However, third parties like Amazon may still be left with the product. The company is anticipated to introduce a redesigned iMac model which will be a revamp of the Mac Pro sometime this year.



NUSHRRATT EXCITED TO SHOOT WITH AKSHAY FOR 'RAM SETU'

NEW DELHI: Nushrratt Bharuccha is all set to star with Akshay Kumar for the first time in 'Ram Setu'. Recently, the actress took to her social media to give a glimpse of a reading session from the film alongside Akshay and Jacqueline Fernandez. A source close to the actress reveals, "Nushrratt is excited and pumped for the project and to share the screen space with Akshay sir. She has been a huge fan of Akshay sir's work and now she is extremely grateful to share screen space with him." The source further adds, "Nushrratt has been working on 'Ram Setu' with full force and has been working on her character personally. She is fully immersing herself in work and putting out her 'A' game forward." It will surely be refreshing to watch Nushrratt and Akshay gracing the silver screen together for the first time. Basking in the glory of her much-loved avatar from 'Chhalaang', her character from 'Ram Setu' is much awaited. The actress will also be seen in 'Hurdang' opposite Sunny Kaushal and Vijay Varma, Omung Kumar's 'Janhit Mein Jaari', and horror drama 'Chhorri'.

—Correspondent

AAMIR WISHES 'LAGAAN' CO-ACTOR AMIN HAJEE ON HIS DIRECTORIAL DEBUT

CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

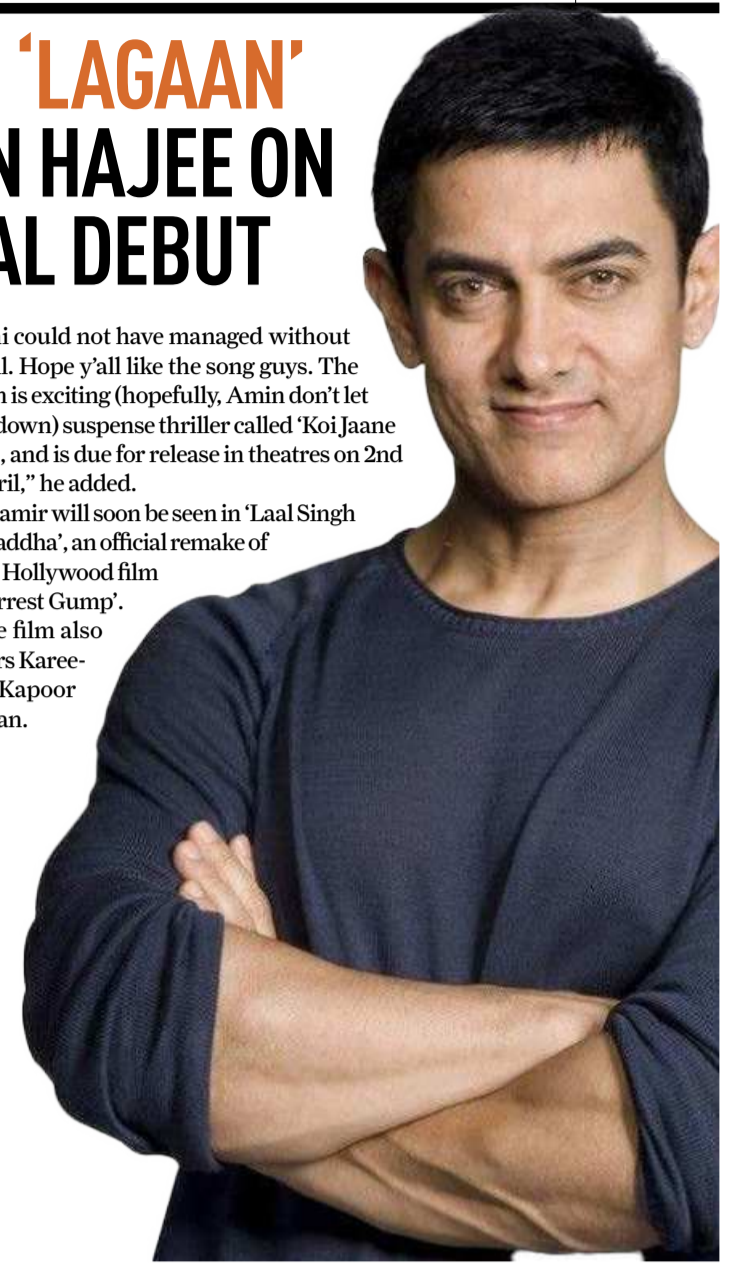
Aamir Khan, who will be seen grooving in the special dance number 'Har Funn Maula' in his friend Amin Hajee's upcoming directorial 'Koi Jaane Na', on Wednesday congratulated and thanked all those who were involved in the making of the song. In the dance number, Aamir features alongside Elli Avram. Hajee is best recalled as Bagha, the mute 'dhol' player in Aamir's 2001 blockbuster "Lagaan".

Aamir shared a still from the song on Instagram and wrote: "Amin, my friend, you have come a long way since 'Lagaan'. Wishing Bhushan, T-Series and you, all the very best for 'Koi Jaane Na'."

"Really enjoyed shooting for this song, what an awesome team you have. Ceaser, Bosco, Manoj, Dipankar, Avan, Nanao, Rushi, Manoshi, Ballu, Adele, Tanishk, Vishaal, Zara, and above all Elli who hides all the flaws in my dancing. And thank you Sneha, Vivek, and

Juhi could not have managed without y'all. Hope y'all like the song guys. The film is exciting (hopefully, Amin don't let us down) suspense thriller called 'Koi Jaane Na', and is due for release in theatres on 2nd April," he added.

Aamir will soon be seen in 'Laal Singh Chaddha', an official remake of the Hollywood film 'Forrest Gump'. The film also stars Kareena Kapoor Khan.



Tiger's only aim in life is to make Jackie proud

NEW DELHI: Jackie Shroff was a guest on the singing reality show 'Indian Idol' recently, and a pleasant surprise awaited him. The veteran actor was treated to a special video made by his family where his wife Ayesha Shroff and son Tiger Shroff shared special messages for the actor.

Tiger said that all he wants in life is to make his father proud. "I love you very much dad and zindagi main mera ek he maqsad hai (my only aim in life is) -- to make you proud every day. I hope, I am managing to do it," he said.

Talking about when Ayesha had met him for the first time and their life together, she said: "It will be fun for all of you to know that the first time I met him, I was 13 years old. I actually met him at a record shop where we spoke for two minutes and then I went home. I said to my mom that I met the man whom I would marry. Then, I saw him after three years



and we started talking and went out a couple of times. I feel the best decision of my life has been to marry him, and I am very lucky to find a wonderful man like him. He has been a great husband and the best father in the whole world."

—Correspondent

ALIA AND VARUN CELEBRATE 4 YEARS OF 'BADRINATH KI DULHANIA'

NEW DELHI: Filmmaker Shashank Khaitan's Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan starrer 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania' completed four glorious years on Wednesday. On the occasion, the trio came together over a video call and mentioned how they were secretly planning for part 3.

Alia took to Instagram and shared a screenshot of the video chat that she had with her co-star and director. In it, she dropped a major hint that part three of the series is being planned. Alia wrote, "Here we are four years later secretly discussing part 3! Love you guys! Happy 4 Years to us."

A similar post was shared by her co-star in the film on his Instagram stories. Along with that Varun wrote, "It's four years of bkd. Discussing dulhania 3."

From their posts, it seems that the makers of 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania' are planning a third instalment of the film and much like the first two parts, Alia and Varun will be the lead actors.

Prior to this, Alia and Varun shared a few Instagram stories, making a celebratory quip at the confusion regarding simple interest and compound interest that Varun's character Badri had in the movie.

The romantic comedy, 'Badrinath Ki Dulhania' was released in theatres on 10 March 2017, and was produced by Karan Johar's Dharma Productions. The film starring Alia and Varun was a sequel of 'Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania' which released in 2014 and emerged successfully at the box office. — Correspondent



FARHAN AKHTAR'S 'TOOFAN' TO RELEASE ON 21 MAY

NEW DELHI: Farhan Akhtar is soon going to treat movie buffs with his upcoming film "Toofan". Its release date has been revealed. The film will stream on Amazon Prime Video starting 21 May 2021. 'Toofan' is produced by Ritesh Sidhwani (Excel Entertainment), Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra (ROMP Pictures), and Farhan. The highly-anticipated sports drama is helmed by Rakeysh.

Speaking about collaborating with Farhan after 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' which released seven years ago, Rakeysh said, "After working with Farhan in 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag', I was certain he would be the perfect protagonist for 'Toofan'. The best thing about him is that he does not act the part, but lives it completely." He added, "'Toofan' is a story that will motivate and inspire all of us to get out of comfort zones and fight towards achieving our dreams. We cannot wait to present our film to viewers across the globe."

In the film, Farhan will be seen as a national-level boxing player. 'Toofan' has been shot across Mumbai at real locations like the Dongri slums and the Gateway of India.

—Correspondent



'POWERPUFF GIRLS' LIVE-ACTION SERIES CAST ANNOUNCED

LOS ANGELES: American television network CW's upcoming live-action series "The Powerpuff Girls" has finally unveiled the cast that will portray the titular characters.

According to People magazine, Chloe Bennet from Marvel's 'Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.', Dove Cameron from 'Jagged Little Pill musical' have been cast as the titular former superheroes in the CW's pilot of 'The Powerpuff Girls' which will be based on the Cartoon Network series of the same name.

The new series will revolve around its titular characters, the Powerpuff Girls who used

to be America's pint-sized superheroes but now in their twenty-somethings they are disillusioned and resent having lost their childhood to crime-fighting.

Bennet has been cast to play the role of Blossom Utonium, Cameron will play Bubbles Utonium and Perrault will be seen portraying Buttercup Utonium.

As per People magazine, "The Powerpuff Girls" pilot will be directed by executive producer Maggie Kiley. Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter, and David Madden will also serve as executive producers, and Erika Kennair is going to be a producer. —Correspondent

BOXING

Tokyo will be my Olympic swansong: Mary Kom

‘Tokyo will be my last Olympics. Age matters here. I am 38 now, going on 39. Four (three) more years is a long time,’ says six-time boxing world champion Mary Kom.

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The record six-time boxing world champion, Mary Kom, has said that this year's Tokyo Olympics will be her last appearance in the event, regardless of her desire to carry on or not.

The London 2012 bronze medalist has already qualified for Tokyo and will be travelling to Japan in July this year for her second Summer Games.

‘Tokyo will be my last Olympics. Age matters here. I am 38 now, going on 39. Four (three) more years is a long time,’ Mary Kom told the Olympic Channel. For participation in To-

kyo 2020, the age limit set for boxers was initially 40. With the Games deferred by a year due to Covid-19, it was extended to 41. Having turned 38 this March, Mary Kom will be over the current limit by the time the next Olympics in Paris 2024 rolls around. ‘Pretty sure, I won't be allowed to even if I am willing to carry on till Paris 2024,’ she said.

The boxer, who won a bronze medal at the 2012 London Olympics, said that it means a lot to her to be an Olympian and her career as a boxer would have diminished ‘if I didn't compete in the Olympics’.

‘It means a lot for me to be an Olympian. I have been boxing for 20 years. I have



Boxing champion Mary Kom.

participated in many international tournaments. I have been the world cham-

ion,’ she said. ‘But I had to wait my turn to take part in the Olympics

as women's boxing wasn't in the Games until 2012. Finally, it happened, and I am

glad it did. I think the value of my career as a boxer would have diminished if I didn't compete in the Olympics,’ Mary Kom added.

The ace boxer said winning a medal at the Olympics is a dream and it changes lives. ‘Olympics is huge. For any sports person, participating and winning a medal at the Games is a dream. It changes lives. Becoming an Olympian and winning the bronze changed my life too. It also inspired many women to take up sport, especially boxing. I feel proud. I want more girls to come out and fight. I hope there are no restrictions on them to come out and fight for themselves and their country,’ she said.

ANALYSIS

KOHLI MAY NOT HAVE HIT A CENTURY BUT IS IN A GOOD TOUCH



RAJ KUMAR SHARMA
NEW DELHI

Nowadays, the technical side of Virat Kohli's batting is the subject of discussion all over the world. Even England's finest batsman of his time Graham Gooch has called his innings at Chennai was brilliant at back foot. While it is true that Virat is a front foot batsman but according to the situation, his adaptability is so good. He sees where the ball is skidding and where it is not and formulates his strategy ac-

ording to that.

I also got to read a lot of positives on his front foot game in Adelaide. Where the pitch is different, then only he has changed his technique. He loves experiments. Mostly the cricket experts ask to use only the upper hand for a cover drive but he drives to the cover with the bottom hand which is unique.

Virat took guard of the off stump on Moeen Ali. Moeen is a very difficult bowler. Many times Moeen does not even know which of his ball will go straight. He has dismissed Virat several times. Many of his balls go straight without turning on the off-stump. That's why Virat was taking off guard in front of him so that he could drop such balls. In fact, spinners have got a good bounce on Indian pitches in the series



Indian skipper Virat Kohli and teammates celebrate a dismissal during the fourth Test match between India and England, in Ahmedabad on Saturday. (ICC/ANI Photo)

which is a bit risky to play. Such balls can be better tackled on the back foot. That is what Virat did. In such a situation, the bowler

tries for a full-length ball to force the batsman to drive on the front foot.

I appeal to Virat's fans that if he has not been able

to make a century for a long time, then they should not upset. He has been in good touch and middle the ball well. Virat has played

so many good innings recently. I don't see any flaws in his batting during this period.

It is true that recently in some innings, he was out so early. Sometimes on a rising ball and at other times chasing the wide ball of Pat Cummins in Australia. Both times Virat tried to attack right from the beginning. He wanted to take a psychological edge by playing aggressive innings. All this was part of Team India's strategy. At such times, it is the effort of the batsman not to allow the bowler to settle. Many times such things are effective and sometimes they are not but the batsman should not be disturbed by all these things.

The author is a coach of Virat Kohli and a Dronacharya Awardee.

TENNIS

My journey wasn't easy but it made me stronger: Djokovic

OUR CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

World No.1 Novak Djokovic, who recently won his ninth Australian Open and 18th Grand Slam title, said that his tennis journey had not been easy but the hardships he faced only made him stronger.

‘I think we all go through different hardships in our lives. My journey was not easy, but it made me stronger. We had two different wars in 1990s. Growing up in a war-torn country was a challenge. It definitely made me more hungry to represent my country - to send a message of peace and love and passion and joy,’ Djokovic said with an interview with NDTV.

Djokovic recently surpassed Roger Federer for the most weeks at No. 1 in the ATP rankings on Monday. He is in his 311th week in the top spot, one more



Tennis star Novak Djokovic

than Federer has spent there.

‘This achievement (to stand by tennis greats) is something that I dreamt of when I was a kid starting to play tennis. It's a tribute to the love and commitment to the sport. They have such different tennis styles and how they behave on the court and off the court,

and I have to adjust differently to the both of them,’ he added.

‘Those two guys (Federer and Nadal) are the ones who pushed me to be a better player,’ he said. ‘Hard to pick one of them, because I have always had to compete against both of them as they were so dominant and consistent.’

TOTAL RECALL

Inzamam gave me international debut after seeing just one ball: Rashid Khan

OUR CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Afghanistan's star cricketer Rashid Khan said that Inzamam ul Haq had selected him to play for the national side based on only one ball he bowled to him at the nets. Inzamam, the then Afghanistan coach, had seen something special in the 17-year-old to give him his international debut on a 2015 tour of Zimbabwe.

Rashid Khan spoke about how he was inducted in the Afghanistan national set-up and sent to Zimbabwe in a recent ESPNcricinfo video. The team was scheduled to play 5 ODIs and 2 T20Is on that tour. Inzamam did not play Rashid Khan in the 1st ODI, which Afghanistan lost, because he had not seen him yet, said Rashid.



Afghanistan's star cricketer Rashid Khan & Inzamam ul Haq.

‘In the practice session (before the 2nd ODI), Inzamam himself padded up and said he wanted to face me himself. You know how strong he is with the cut shot. The first two balls I bowled, he cut. So I thought I will bowl a wrong 'un from the same spot, let's see what happens. He didn't get out but the ball beat him,’ Rashid said.

‘At that point itself he came outside the net and told me, ‘Be ready for the match tomorrow, you will be part of the team,’ he said.

On his debut, Rashid played an 8-run cameo with the bat and was the most economical bowler of the day with figures of 1/30 in 10 overs as Afghanistan won by 58 runs.

INDIA VS NZ

ICC CONFIRMS SOUTHAMPTON AS VENUE FOR WTC FINAL

CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



India will take on New Zealand in the final of the inaugural World Test Championship at the Hampshire Bowl in Southampton from 18-22 June, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Wednesday.

Initially, the final was supposed to be held at the Lord's but the ICC Board and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) decided to change the venue to ensure that the fixture could be staged safely amid Covid-19.

Initially, the final was supposed to be held at the Lord's but the ICC Board and the England and Wales Cricket Board decided to change the venue to ensure that the fixture could be staged safely amid Covid-19.

‘The decision, taken by the ICC Board, follows discussions with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) where a range of options were considered to ensure the inaugural final could be staged safely with the potential impact of Covid-19 minimised for all involved,’ the ICC said in an official statement.

The governing body added ‘should the UK government's phased easing of Covid-19 lockdown measures proceed as planned, it is anticipated that a limited number of fans will be allowed into the Hampshire Bowl to watch the final.’

According to the ICC, ‘Southampton provides world-class playing and training facilities, giving both teams the best possible environment in which to prepare. Whilst the on-site accommodation will significantly reduce the risk around Covid-19 transmission and better protect the health and safety of everyone involved in delivering the final.’

New Zealand were the first team to qualify for the final and they were joined by India following their 3-1 series win over England which concluded on Saturday.

FOOTBALL

JUVENTUS KNOCKED OUT OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE BY 10-MAN PORTO

OUR CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo looks dejected after the match. (REUTERS)

Juventus crashed out of the Champions League round of 16 on away goals for the second successive year as the Bianconeri were eliminated by 10-man Porto on Tuesday. Sérgio Oliveira scored in extra time to send Porto into the quarterfinals of Europe's premier club competition despite a thrilling 3-2 loss in Turin after Federico Chiesa's two goals had given Juventus hope.

Porto, which played most of the second leg at a numerical disadvantage after Mehdi Taremi's sending off, advanced on away goals after the matchup ended 4-4 on aggregate.

‘That's our great disappointment and sadness, I'm pretty much speechless,’ Chiesa said. ‘We managed to get back into the match and we deserved to go through. Instead, we're here talking about something else and I really don't know what to say.’

‘We had all the cards in our hand to go through, just we didn't show it.’

We only performed in the second half today and we almost did it ... the disappointment is so great. It's all pretty much meaningless, even my two goals or my performance, because we haven't got anything out of it.’