

SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 189 | Gangtok | Monday 26 July 2021

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

CM ATTENDS MEETING OF NE CMs WITH AMIT SHAH AND DONER MINISTER

Groundwork laid, now more actors and partners required for NER to boom

"PANDEMIC HAS EXPOSED NE'S DIGITAL GAP

Shillong, 25 Jul [IPR]: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang was part of the meeting of the Chief Ministers of the North Eastern Region. Union Home Minister and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and Minister DoNER, Tourism and Culture, G. Kishan Reddy along with Chief Secretaries and DGPs were also present in the meeting held at Shillong on July 24.

In his address, the Chief Minister made few proposals including, the incentives and subsidies like NEIIPP and NEIDS-2018 extended by the Government of India which he stated have helped bring a chain of micro, medium and small ventures

Further, he added that all these have produced income, employment, technology, knowledge and revenue and has also assisted in instilling a sense of confidence and enthusiasm among the local entrepreneurs and changing the perception of the North-East region.

The Chief Minister said, "We feel the pace has been well set up now. We need to bring more actors and partners from the South East Asian countries including Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and others."

He elaborated by stating that this will meet the goals of India's Act East Policy as declared by the



Prime Minister and also harnes the advantages of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement and other regional cooperation ventures.

Speaking about some crucial sectors where the region has high comparative advantage like tourism, agro-based products, floriculture- horticulture- bamboo- ethnic fashion designing, and plantations including naturopathy and wellness, he stated that a new set of bolder and bigger interventions are required. In this context, he added that the earlier incentives of 33% to hotel industries may be restored, as this had led to a range of attractive tourism infrastructures.

The Chief Minister added that the pandemic has also highlighted the extreme digital gaps in the North-East region.

Citing the latest Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2019-2020, he informed that Sikkim has done relatively well. However, he added that adequate and easy availability of internet connections through sea routes in the Bay of Bengal can help in this aspect. He requested the Union Home Minister to increase the internet bandwidth from the existing 10 MBPS to at least 1 GBPS and for an independent BSNL circle for the state.

Further, he stated that Sikkim would like to be deeply involved in the activities of the North Eastern Space Application Centre Society and welcomed the officials to guidance going forward to adopt vari-

ous technological modernizations.

Further, he informed that Sikkim is the first state to appoint Economic Revival Committee in May 2020 to study the impact of the pandemic in various economic and commercial sectors and socio-cultural activities in the state and added that the aspects of Atmanirbhar Bharat announced by the Prime Minister have been well ingrained in this report.

Further, the Chief Minister added that Sikkim has been striving to

transform itself into an education Hub of Eastern and North-Eastern India and informed about setting up the first Subash Chandra Bose University of Excellence in PPP mode, primarily concentrating on courses and programmes focused on hills and Himalayan region of South Asia.

Further, he lauded the historic decision to set up the Ministry of Cooperation and to launch and practice cooperative ventures and requested for constituting a Committee exclusively for this region to draw a detailed plan of action within the next three months.

"This will enable the Ministry of Cooperation to kick start its ventures effectively in this region," stated the Chief Minister.

Towards the end, he thanked the Union Home Minister and Minister DoNER for their time and patience and for calling the vital meeting and also expressed his gratitude to all the Chief Ministers and dignitaries present there. He also extended his gratitude to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his team for their constant support in all the development programmes and also in fighting the deadly pandemic.

He particularly thanked the Chief Minister of Meghalaya Conrad Sangma and the officials for flawlessly organizing the event and for the kind hospitality accorded to him and his entourage.

CM travelling with huge entourages while harassing people with whimsical diktats makes a mockery of Covid management, Chamling argues

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 25 JUL: $S_{\rm ic \ Front}^{\rm ikkim \ Democrat-}$ former Chief Minister Pawan Chamling, in his weekly ruminations on Facebook, has accused Chief Minister PS Tamang of taking the second wave too lightly, something manifested in "recklessly organising in-person programs" and travelling with huge entourages despite the second wave not having ended.

Challenging the CM's recent news-byte claiming that the second wave was under control in Sikkim, Mr Chamling details statistics which bear out that the second wave was far from over and that in-

fections were continuing because the government has not been able to win the confidence of the people.

Mr Chamling is convinced that the people do not trust the SKM government to take the right decisions which is why fatalities continue to traumatize Sikkim because people are not seeking medical attention in time from a network which the State Government has not been able to support effectively.

"People are not medical experts. They need to have full confidence based on the government's performance, information and communication. If Covid patients are not coming to the hospitals, it is because they are afraid and do not have confidence in the health care system. What does that show? It shows that the government needs to upgrade its Covid facilities, intensify hospital preparation for Covid treatment, employ more manpower as per the need, ensure enough rest for fatigued Covid warriors and educate and convince the people - not blame them," Mr Chamling writes.

"The government has to win the people's confidence, generate awareness and convince them," he stresses.

While this is what should be done, what the

Government is doing instead is blaming the people and harassing them, Mr Chamling adds.

"Now with some random guidelines released by the government out of desperation, the situation is worsening, making the people's lives even more difficult. The idea of containing an entire area or ward merely because of one Covid positive case is not a scientific or socially helpful step. It is just an expression of governmental frustration. It is ludicrous," he writes, adding, "What is worse, the government is imposing mass challans to harass and terrorise the people. This state gov-

ernment knows only one way of working, which is to terrorize and inconvenience the people. They should know that this foolish tactic is not work-

"I sternly ask the government not to play with people's lives any more. The present administration has been given enough time to fight the Covid battle but it has miserably failed. The government must constitute a high powered committee with epidemiologists, renowned healthcare and disaster professionals and bring the situation under control. Enough of whimsical and silly notifications. It is now or never," he concludes.

Kargil's martyrs indelibly etched in the history of India: CM GANGTOK, 25 JUL [IPR]: Chief Minister diers who died in the line of duty will

tude towards the heroes of the Kargil War on the occasion of "Kargil Vijay Diwas".

The day is marked to honour soldiers who laid down their lives in the line of duty during the 1999 Kargil War.

Remembering the grit and valour of the Indian soldiers, the Chief Minister stated, "The sacrifice of those brave sol-

Prem Singh Tamang has extended grati- forever be etched in the history of our country".

> Further, he stated that the martyrs will always be remembered with utmost respect and also acknowledged and acclaimed the supreme sacrifice being made by the men and women safeguarding the borders for the security of the country.

Sikkim's daily Covid count goes past 300 for seventh time in past 94 days

SAGAR CHETTRI GANGTOK, 25 JUL:

Cikkim's tally of con-**S**firmed cases Covid-19 crossed the 25,000-mark on Sunday and stands at 25,160 with 337 new cases of novel coronavirus being reported in the last 24 hours. This is only the seventh time in the 94 days [as counted from 22 April, 2021] that the second wave has been in Sikkim that the number of daily cases have gone past 300. That last time this happened was

when 340 new cases were reported. The record for the highest number of new cases in one day is held by 28 May, 2021, when 420 cases

49 days back on 06 June

were reported. The Daily Report of COVID-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department on Sunday morning informs that the 337 new cases were picked up from the screening of 2,093 sample giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 16% today. In that sense, not only are the absolute numbers high today, but also the positivity rate.

The only reassuring statistic for today is that no new Covid deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, but this needs to be tempered with the fact that there are currently 17 Covid patients in ICU in Sikkim, a spike which began a few days back after having remained rather low in re-

cent weeks. There are also cur-

rently 108 Covid patients currently in hospital, which might be only 3.58% of the 3,017 active cases in the State, but is still higher than the number of hospitalizations recorded a week back.

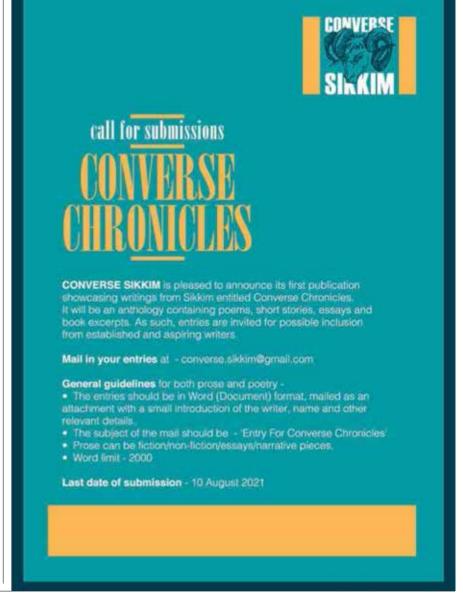
Of the 337 new cases, 188 were detected in RT-PCR testing of 1,240 samples, while 148 tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 845 samples and one more case was found in TruNat testing of eight samples.

The number of tests

conducted in the last 24 hours is also noticeably higher than the State had been averaging of late.

168 of the new cases were reported in East District, 139 in West District, 29 in South District and 01 in North District.

In the meantime, the state's count of recovered cases further improved to 21,549 with the discharge of 169 formerly Covid-positive people from home and facility isolation upon their completion of the mandated isolation people.



Green Sohra Afforestation Campaign launhed in Cherrapunji

SHILLONG, 25 JUL [PIB]: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, on the second day of his Meghalaya visit, launched the Green Sohra Afforestation Campaign at Sohra (Cherrapunji) today.

Mr Shah also inaugurated the Greater Sohra Water Supply Scheme. On this occasion, Minister of Do-NER, Mr G. Kishen Reddy, Minister of State for Science & Technology and Department of Space, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (DoNER), Mr B.L. .Verma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Mr Conrad Sangma and senior officials of the Central and State Governments were also present.

Mr Shah gave the slogan "Evergreen Northeast", underlining the importance of afforestation and tree plantation. The Home Minister said that earlier Cherrapunji used to have rains throughout the year, but due to indiscriminate harvesting in the name of development, the situation has changed.

He said that an ambitious project to make Cherrapunji green again has started today.

Mr Shah informed that the entire area of Cherrapunji is going to be adopted by Assam Riflesfor the purpose of plantation. He said that trees are cut for fuel and other uses, so 80% of the total land will be planted with traditional and long lifespan trees, the remaining 20% will be used for animal feed, ornamental plants and nursery which will meet all the requirements and help reduce the felling of long lifespan trees.

With this technique, multi-level farming is done and the forest grows 30 times faster and after 3 years it becomes free of maintenance. Mr Shah said eco-tourism will be greatly benefited by this, besides tourism of Meghalaya will also get a boost.

Mr Shah said that our country is intact because of the paramilitary forces deployed to protect the country's borders. Since the last two years they are also shouldering the responsibility of improving the environmentand so far have planted one crore &forty eight lakh (1.48 crore) trees, out of which one crore thirty six lakh (1.36 crore) plants are growing.

He said that this year also about one crore saplings will be planted in different areas by making a strategy and in the next three years a target has been set to plant 1 million trees in 1000



hectares.

The Union Home Minister said that today the whole world is fighting against global warming and climate change. Mr Narendra Modihas done the work of reducing carbon emissions by distributing a large number of cooking gas cylinders across the country and today India is at the forefront in hydropower and solar power sectors.

Mr Shah said that with the proposed action plan of Mr Modi at the Paris Agreement, the whole world is fighting against global warming

and carbon emissions. Mr Shah said that the battle we are going to fight cannot be successful without the cooperation of the general public at the district panchayat and taluka panchayat levels. Mr Shah called upon all panchayats to cooperate in tree plantation programmes being carried out by the paramilitary forces at various places, join hands with them and help the paramilitary forcesin the plantation of 10 crore saplings and

In his address, Mr Shah said that as part of

nurturing them.

the Prime Minister's ambitious project Jal Jeevan Mission, the Ministry of DoNER and the Government of Meghalaya, under the North-East Special Infrastructure Scheme, the Greater Sohra Water Project costing ₹ 25 crore, will provide pure drinking water through taps to every household. Mr Shah said that if the source of water is not pure then people will not be healthy, therefore Mr Modi has set the target of providing pure drinking water to every household in the state of Meghalaya and the

dependence and 50 years of Meghalaya. There is an ambitious programme to provide drinking water to 2,80,000 families in the state of Meghalaya, which is clubbed into 1874 small projects. Mr Shah said the task of delivering such an ambitious project in this remote area is extremely important and challenging. The Central Government has so far allocated Rs.400 crore and as the work progresses further allocations will be made. Mr Shah said that the Assam Rifles have a history that whatever work has been given to them in the last 180 years, they have completed it in time. All the Central Armed

country before the com-

pletion of 75 years of In-

Police Forces (CAPFs) are planting trees across the country today as part of the tree plantation drive launched at the initiative of Home Minister Mr Shah. Today more than 16 lakh and 31 thousand saplings are being planted under this campaign.

Mr Shah garlanded the statue of Swami Vivekananda at Ramakrishna Mission, Sohra and participated in the prayers programme. Mr Shah also met the dignitaries of Ramakrishna Mission.

Health worker arrested in West Bengal over fake COVID-19 vaccine camps

BARUIPUR, 25 [UL [PTI]: A health worker was arrested from West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Saturday on the charge of operating unauthorised Covid-19 vaccination camps in the state, a police officer said. The arrest was made a month after the police apprehended one person for allegedly posing as an IAS officer and organising a vaccination camp in Kolkata's Kasba area, where actor and Trinamool Congress MP Mimi Chakraborty had also got her jab. Ms Chakraborty, who was invited to attend the camp, said she became suspicious about the vaccination process as she did not receive the customary SMS that is sent to people after they are administered a dose, and informed the

police. Those inoculated in Sonarpur camps organised by the arrested man also allegedly did not receive any text message or certificate and reported the matter to the police. Acting on their complaints, the police on Saturday arrested the accused from a house in Sonarpur's Rupnagar locality where he was organising another camp, the officer

The police found that he charged ₹ 300-400 from individuals for vaccinating them and he has inoculated at least 40 to 50 people so far. Preliminary investigation revealed that the arrested man had worked at a primary healthcare centre in Diamond Harbour in South 24 Parganas district and as a vaccine coordinator at a health sub-centre at Masat in Bankura district.

'No follow-up results' after meeting with PM: Abdullah

Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting at Pawar's residence was called "non-political" but an interaction of like-minded people by CPI(M) leader Nilotpal Basu who was

To a question whether he would be playing a role in binding the opposition parties across the country together, Abdullah said, "...all, whether you are in south, east, west or north, we all have to get together, aim to strengthen democracy, to put the pillar of democracy far more strongly. This will happen because it is

Abdullah, who was detained under the stringent Public Safety Act after the Centre abrogated special status of the erstwhile state and bifurcated it into two union territories, said the biggest problem today was the COVID-19 pandemic which shut everything down, bringing the political process "really to a naught".

ITBP undertakes plantation drive at Lingdum camp

SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 25 JUL:

As part of the nation-wide plantation campaign, the 13th Battalion of ITBP Force, Lingdum, organised a plantation drive at its camp on Sunday. The plantation drive was led by Commandant, 13th Bn of ITBP, Chandan Singh Bhandari, and joined by officers, subordinate officers and jawans.

An ITBP press release mentioned that on the occasion, the Commandant mentioned that ITBP force has been given a target of planting 10 lakhs of saplings under the plantation campaign 2021 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, of which 13th Bn of ITBP has set a target of planting 19000 saplings.

He added that 18,773 saplings have been planted by 13th Bn of ITBP till

22 July and 500 saplings of different varieties were planted today in the camp.

"For a balanced envi-

ronment, it is necessary to have forests on a large area. The harmful consequence of deforestation is visible everywhere. At least one day of the month should be dedicated for planting by troops and all. It is necessary for everyone to participate in this holy work as forests are lungs of earth. Trees should be planted in infertile land, along the roads, on hilly sites and free spaces in residential areas," the Commandant said.

The release stated that at the end of the campaign, the Commandant insisted on taking a pledge to plant maximum saplings as well as protect them.

Kerala veterinarian gets patent for biodiesel from chicken waste

WAYANAD, 25 JUL [PTI]: After waiting for more than seven years, John Abraham, a veterinary-doctor-turned-inventor, has finally received the patents for inventing biodiesel from slaughtered chicken waste that offers mileage of over 38 km a litre at around 40 per cent of the current price of diesel and lowers pollution by half.

seven-and-a-After half years, the Indian Patent Office finally granted us the patent on July 7, 2021, for inventing "biodiesel produced from rendered chicken oil", Mr Abraham, an associate professor at the veterinary college here under the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, told PTI from Wayanad.

The invention is an outcome of his doctoral research at the Namakkal the Tamil Nadu Veterinary & Animal Sciences University.

He said the patent was delayed as permission from the National Biodiversity Authority was needed because the key raw material going into the patented invention was a biological material locally sourced.

During 2009-12, Mr

Abraham pioneered research on producing biodiesel from the slaughter waste of broiler chicken and dead poultry birds. He completed the research under the guidance of the late Prof Ramesh Saravanakumar (passed away awaiting the patent in November 2020), who had filed for the patents in 2014 on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Veterinary & Animal Sciences University, Mr Abraham said.

After his research, Mr Abraham joined the Pookode Veterinary College, near Kalpetta in Wayanad, and in 2014 he set a ₹ 18lakh pilot plant at the college campus with funding from the Indian Council for Agricultural Research.

Following this, Bharat Petroleum's Kochi Refinery in April 2015 had issued a quality certificate for the biodiesel he invented and since then a college vehicle was being run on this fuel only. he said.

When asked why chicken waste, he said birds and pigs have single stomach which offer higher fat saturation and this is easy to render oil under room tempera-

Three of his students and Mr Abraham are now working on developing biodiesel from pig waste.

He said 100 kg of chicken waste, procured from slaughter houses for which he gets paid up to ₹ 7 a kg, can produce 1 liter of biodiesel, which offers over 38 kmpl and can be sold at 40 per cent of the diesel price now.

The higher mileage and lower pollution is due to the fact that chicken waste contains 62 per cent fat, offering the key energy content of Cetane at 72, while in normal Veterinary College under diesel it is only 64. It also increases engine efficien cy by 11 per cent due to the presence of more oxygen, and reduces smoke levels by over 47 per cent, Mr Abraham said.

> The high Cetane value of 72 in animal fat bio-diesel leads to shorter ignition delays, providing more time for fuel combustion, leading to more efficiency and less exhaust emission, he explained.

> On blending side, he said, for old diesel engines his biodiesel can be blended at a ratio of 80:20, while for new CDREi engines, it the reverse--20:80.

About commercialisation, he said a team from Hindustan Petroleum visited him last Friday, adding after the lockdowns he and the HPCL team would meet the Tamil Nadu veterinary university to negotiate the commercials as the patent is granted to the varsity.

Whether he'd begin commercial production on his own, given that the 2018 biofuel policy removes licence for producing and selling such fuels, he answered in the negative saying business is not his forte but research and that he would be happy drawing a royalty from licence holder.



ANIT THAPA ARRIVES IN DARI TO WORK ON GIM-2 ORGANISATIONAL BASE

DARJEELING, 25 Jul.: Anit Thapa, elevated as the acting president of Gorkha Janmukti Morcha-2 after its president Binay Tamang quit his post and faction both recently, visited Darjeeling today and announced plans to camp here for the next 15 days to make GJM-2 organisationally stronger. He was received by supporters at Rimbick Lodhoma Samasti members at the central committee party office. BJP leader in the hills, Tilak Chandra Roka, also extended support to Mr Thapa and quit BJP to join GJM-2 at the central party office here at Judge Bazaar today. [from SMRITA KHAWAS]

SUMIR KAUL

SRINAGAR, IUL 25 (PTI): A month after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's outreach to mainstream leaders of Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah said on Sunday that there has been "no follow-up results" on the ground.

Adbullah said this in reference to the prime minister's remarks at the June 24 meeting in New Delhi that he wanted to win the hearts of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and remove "Dilli ki doori" (the distance from Delhi) and "dil ki doori" (distance between hearts).

"That was a welcome statement but there is no effort on the ground to win the hearts of the people. People continue to be locked up and dissent is not tolerated. We want to see the change on the ground, a visible effort to win back the people who went through the trauma of their state being dismembered, its special status removed in one sudden blow." the three-time former chief minister told PTI here.

"...we are yet to see any follow-up results even after a month," he said.

"Trust is something that has been missing from both sides (Delhi and Srinagar). Successive prime ministers -- Jawaharlal Nehru, Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee -- made promises but the trust deficit has persisted," he add-

The 83-year-old veteran politician said that he and his party had attended the Delhi meeting because it was an invitation from the prime minister although he had no expectations from it. Yet, he had hoped for steps to win the hearts and minds of people but nothing had happened.

Abdullah insisted that restoration of "full, undiluted" statehood to Jammu and Kashmir should precede the elections to its Assembly. All major parties have demanded that and the Centre should prove its bona fide by agreeing to that.

Asked if his party would take part in the elections if

the statehood was not granted that earlier this month the Debefore that, the NC president said, "We will decide at that time when the bugle is blown. We will then sit down and decide what we should do."

In reply to a question about the fate of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomerate of six mainstream political parties including the NC and its arch rival PDP, Abdullah said the alliance stands and "we are together...we all are there. We haven't left."

He said the alliance was cobbled up together in a hurry when the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was abrogated on August 5, 2019. "We all are like-minded people who joined together to work for restoration, knowing fully well that under this government it will not be restored."

"But we will continue to fight democratically and legally. People after us will also stand and try and work for the restoration of this," he said.

Abdullah also pointed out

limitation Commission came to Jammu and Kashmir and no members of Parliament, who are its associate members, were invited to sit and watch the proceedings.

Abdullah, who currently represents Srinagar in Parliament, urged the opposition national political parties to "forget" their plans and standings and get together to put the pillar of democracy far more strongly because the "time is running out".

"The tragedy with India is that the opposition is divided and unless they unite for restoration of democracy and forget their own party plans and party standings, we will never be able to get our democratic structure back.

"And I think efforts are being made, I see they are trying to get together and I hope it does happen soon because time is running out," he said.

The National Conference was part of a gathering at the residence of Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar

on June 22, two days before Prime Minister Modi chaired the meeting with leaders from

among the participants.

the need of the hour."

Coordination meet of Regu BAC school heads held for Su-Swastha Yojana

GANGTOK. 25 IUL [IPR]: A coordination meeting of heads of schools under Regu BAC was organised by Regu BAC, Education Department on 23 July through virtual mode.

The meeting was attended by Kumar Pradhan, Deputy Director, Rongli Sub-division, Narad Chettri AD Regu BAC, CRC Coordinators, Heads of 33 Government schools along with one teacher from each schools and teacher representative from Monastic schools and sanskrit Pathshala.

programme started with welcome note by AD Regu BAC. Deputy Director Kumar Pradhan who is also the Nodal officer cum Incharge Subdivision of Su-Swastha Yojana shared about the Su-Swastha Yojana scheme and its registration process. He also extended gratitude to Dr Gaurav and team for their support.

SWADHI founder Dr. Gaurav Kumar highlighted on different aspect and benefits of Su Swastha Yojana. Swastika Thapa presented the detail process of registration by the regular employees. The meeting was hosted by Krishna Prasad Dawari CRC Coordinator, Regu BAC. Queries and problems raised by the dignitaries in regard to empanel

the Su-Suwastha Yojana were also discussed.

Su-Swastha Yojna is the cashless health insurance of the Government of Sikkim. This scheme, envisioned and launched by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of the Prem Singh Tamang aims to provide healthcare services to employees of the Government of Sikkim and their dependent family members for a cashless benefit covering hospitalizations across top tier hospitals in India.

In the second session, different agenda related to academic and administrative issues were discussed. Submission of proforma for State / Commendation Award by teachers, submission of updated vaccination status in weekly basis, to locate children who have lost their parents due to pandemic of COVID-19 etc were also discussed.

Ambulances stuck due to VIP convoy, Hyderabad Traffic Police criticised

HYDERABAD, 25 JUL [NDTV]: Hyderabad Traffic Police have faced criticism following allegations that two ambulances were stopped to give passage to a VIP

convoy. In the visuals of the incident that have gone viral, long queues of vehicles are seen waiting for the go-ahead at Masab Tank area in Hyderabad. Among them are the ambulances and their sirens can be heard in the videos.

Two healthcare workers are seen walking up to the traffic policeman on duty and asking him to clear the way for the ambulances. The policeman is heard asking them to wait a bit.

In another video, the man shooting the video is heard asking the policeman why traffic has been stopped for a minister when ambulances are waiting. The policeman is heard replying that it is not a minister that he doesn't know whose convoy it is. The man then says despite not knowing this, he has stopped the traffic in which the ambulances are stuck.

The ambulances were reportedly going from Mahaveer Hospital to Virinchi Hospital when the traffic movement was allegedly stopped to let the VIP convoy pass. Local residents said traffic

movement was stopped to give passage to the convoy of Telangana Home Minister Mahmood Ali.

When the policeman on duty was confronted about traffic police prioritising a VIP convoy over ambulances, he denied any knowledge of this matter.

A press release issued by Hyderabad traffic police has claimed that the two ambulances had stopped at a signal and that only one of them was transporting a patient. They have further said traffic was cleared as soon as the ambulance staff alerted police. The patient, it is learnt, is currently doing well.

Mamata Banerjee to meet her Cabinet before leaving for Delhi

KOLKATA, 25 JUL [PTI]: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has called a special Cabinet meeting Monday before leaving for the national capital, sources in the government said Satur-

According to the official sources, the reason behind calling this special Cabinet is not clear yet since the last meeting was held Thursday.

"The reason behind calling this special Cabinet is not clear. There could be discussions on some special issues. The ministers have been informed about the meeting. The chief minister



will leave for Delhi after the meeting," an official told news agency PTI.

When contacted, a senior minister in the state Cabinet said that "even

ministers like us have not been told why such a special Cabinet meeting has

been called".

"We have come to know about it (the meeting) only today late in the evening. I think there could be a discussion on some important issues which the chief minister wants to brief the Cabinet about," he told the news agency Saturday.

Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to leave for New Delhi Monday evening and will be there till July 29.

She is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 28. She may also meet several leaders of the Opposition during her visit.

Haryana officers dismantle Manohar Lal Khattar's "Temple" built by locals

BHIWANI, 25 JUL [PTI]: A "temple" of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar built by locals in the state's Narnaul district was demolished Saturday, municipal officials said.

Municipal council official Abhay Yadav said they have seized the portrait of the chief minister that was kept at the "tem-

He said the structure



was built recently at a "disputed" plot and the matter is pending before the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

He said that the locals would perform morning and evening aartis before the chief minister's portrait in the structure.

Cipla recalls 7,228 bottles of overactive bladder treatment drug in US

NEW DELHI, JUL 25 (PTI): Drug major Cipla is recalling 7,228 bottles of Solifenacin Succinate tablets, a medicine used to treat overactive bladder, in the US market due to manufacturing issues. As per the latest Enforcement Report issued by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), the Mumbai-based com-

pany is recalling 10 mg,

30-count bottles in the

The recalled batches were produced at the company's Goa-based plant and later shipped to its New Jersey-based arm Cipla USA Inc.

The US health regulator noted that the company is recalling the 7,228 bottles due to "CGMP (current good manufacturing practices) devia-

Cipla initiated the recall on June 10 this year and the USFDA has classified it as a Class II re-

As per the USFDA, a class II recall is initiated in a situation in which use of, or exposure to, a violative product may cause temporary or medically reversible adverse health consequences or where the probability of serious adverse health consequences is remote.

In January this year, the Mumbai-based drug firm had recalled over 5.8 lakh packets of a drug for the reduction in the occurrence of gastric ulcers from the US market.

The drug firm manufactured the affected lot at its Kurkumbh facility in Maharashtra and then supplied it to its New Jersey-based subsidiary.

The USFDA cited "cross-contamination with other products" as the reason for the company recalling the prod-

Cipla is one of the largest generic drug makers with over 1,500 products in 65 therapeutic categories available in over 50 dosage forms.



GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY Secretariat Annexure - I, Sonam Tshering Marg. Gangtok, Sikkim.

Notice Inviting Tender for "Selection of Firm for Appointment of Project Consultant and Transaction Advisory for Sikkim IT Special Economic Zone" Department of Information Technology, Government of Sikkim invites Tenders for "Selection of Firm for Appointment of Project Consultant and Transaction Advisory for Sikkim IT Special Economic Zone". The last date of receipt of Tender is 23rd August 2021. For further details please visit: www.sikkim.gov.in.

> Additional Director, Department of Information Technology Government of Sikkim.

R.O. No. 113/IPR/Pub/Classi./20-21 Date. 23.7.2021

RBI central board short of 9 non-official directors

NEW DELHI, Jul 25 resentations from local directors are appointed **(PTI):** The central board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is facing shortage of nine non-official directors, including seven from the category of people of eminence from various fields.

The central board is the highest decision making body of the apex bank headed by the RBI governor.

According to the RBI Act, the government nominates 10 eminent persons from various fields to the central board of the RBI, besides four directors (one from each of the four local boards).

The government is yet to appoint seven non-official directors from the category of people of eminence from various fields while repboard from western and southern areas are miss-

Currently, only three eminent personalities -- Tata Sons Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, seasoned banker S K Marathe and chartered accountant and RSS ideologue Swaminathan Gurumurthy -are serving the central board. They are nominated under Section 8(1) (c) of the RBI Act, 1934, according to the RBI's

With regard to directors from local boards, eastern area is represented by Sachin Chaturvedi and northern area by Revathy Iyer, while nomination of two directors is awaited.

non-official These

for a period of four years and are eligible for re-appointment.

In June last year, Chandrasekaran re-appointed retrospectively as non-official director for a further period of two years beyond March 3, 2020.

Besides, there is a provision for two government officials to be appointed on the central board. Under this category, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth and Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda have been appointed as directors.

As far as official directors are concerned, the board has full representation with the governor and four deputy governors.

Taking into consideration five official directors, the central board of the RBI as prescribed by the Act can have a total of 21 directors.

As many as four non-official directors, including Gujarat's former chief secretary Sudhir Mankad and Mahindra & Mahindra's former group CFO Bharat N Doshi, completed their term last

Other two directors, Prasanna Kumar Mohanty and Dilip S Shanghvi, served on the central board till February 8, 2021, and March 10, 2021, respectively. Eminent agriculture economist Ashok Gulati and Teamlease co-founder Manish Sabharwal also completed their term earlier this year.

Gold imports jump multi-fold to USD 7.9 bn in April-June quarter to USD 688 million (Rs

New Delhi, July 25 (PTI): Gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit, jumped multi-fold to USD 7.9 billion (Rs 58,572.99 crore) during the April-June 2021 quarter due to low base effect in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to data from the Commerce Minis-

Imports of the yellow metal had plunged 5,208.41 crore) in the corresponding od last year, the data showed.

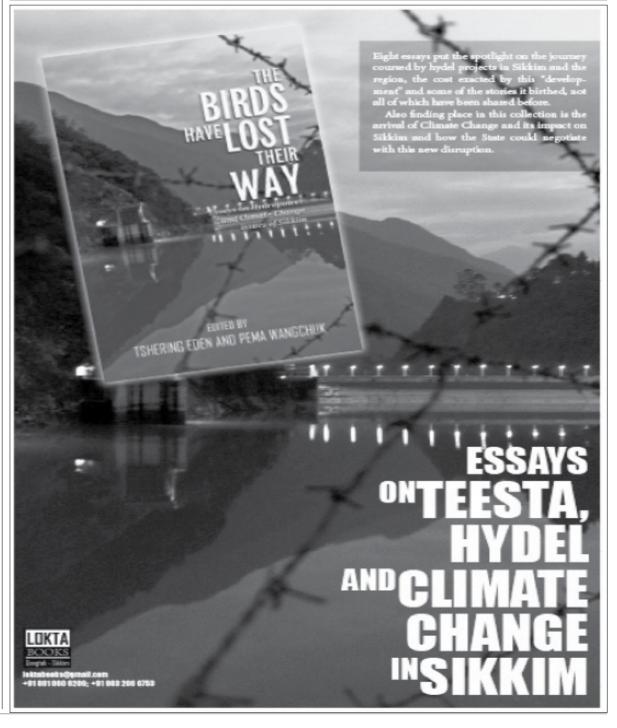
Silver imports, however, dipped by 93.7 per cent to USD 39.4 million.

Significant increase in the gold imports has led to widening of the country's trade deficit, difference between imports and exports, to about USD 31 billion during April-June this

India is the largest importer of gold, which mainly caters to the demand of the jewellery industry. In volume terms, the country imports 800-900 tonnes of gold annually.

Gems and jewellery exports increased to USD 9.1 billion during the first three months of the current fiscal as against USD 2.7 billion in the same period previous

CONTACT **SUMMIT TIMES REPORTERS** SINGTAM 8170070813 **MANGAN/ DIKCHU** 9832612485/ 9434011213 GANGTOK 9800571148 8116388176 9832424750 8016270440



SummitTIMES

Government by Discussion

Side-step consultations, and there will only be disinterest, diktats and protests

memocracy is not just about ballots and votes, but also about public deliberation and reasoning, what - to use an old phrase - is often called 'government by discussion," writes Amartya Sen in "Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny".

The book is now twelve years old, but even when it came out, this was not really a paradigm-shifting revelation, but with the act of stating the obvious, the Nobel laureate made a strong statement. By devoting an entire chapter to fleshing out this point, he holds up the mirror to the country forcing us to admit that the world's largest democracy appears to have forgotten what democracy is all about. Democracy has meant politics in India for far too long, leading to the aberration of politicians and political commentators wearing their ignorance on their sleeves, and without the slightest hint of embarrassment, holding forth on important issues and claiming to speak for the people of the country without having made any genuine attempt at consultations. The effortlessness with which false narratives are foisted and incomplete information circulated to influence public opinion is worrying. Also worrying is when important decisions are taken without the counsel of experts or consultations with interested and affected parties. These should have been standard practices, but have become abandoned courtesies which have reduced democracy to elections. It should hence not surprise that politics itself has been reduced to the segregated equation of those in power and those in the Opposition.

And when politics becomes only about being in office or waiting in the wings, debates stop being about ideology and get established by positions. Those in office do what suits their interests and the Opposition protests everything. With vote-banks already identified and appropriated, the focus is only on keeping these secure. A sorry state of affairs... When a writer who also presented a case for the 'Argumentative Indian' reminds the same Indians of the need for pubic deliberations and reasoning, the message should become clear - the nation needs to relearn many things. Amartya Sen's "The Argumentative Indian" was the highest selling book in India in 2005-06. His next, quoted above, should also have been read more widely, and then, maybe, the nation would have invested in some introspection and that might have saved us from the chagrin of watching the political rhetoric of people's representatives mouthing empty platitudes on issues which concern the entire nation and its future. Instead of genuine concern, one is being subjected to pompous self-righteousness and embarrassing self-praise

Let's reflect on Sikkim. Has anyone heard of public deliberations here? No, claims, denials and rejections do not constitute public deliberation since they are dictated by political positions, not built on informed opinion. And that is why in Sikkim there is rarely consensus, only diktats and protests. It is unfortunate that a people who at one time were so enamoured by the idea of democracy that they took on a 300 year old monarchy and even gave up their individuality as a nation state just so that they could have democracy, have, since then, pulled away from public participation in the public domain. Public deliberation does not mean that the people start debating at formal seminars; it is enough for them to become more involved in the process of democracy and its implementation. With their involvement, they will secure accountability - first at the local body level and from there upwards and across to the executive. Their involvement will force the elected representatives to make the right noises at the right places and times and motivate them to get more involved in the decision-making process themselves.

WWW. summittimes. summittimes. com | advertise@ summittimes.com

Children Start Trying to Make Us Laugh From a Surprisingly Young Age

YVONNE WREN

THECONVERSATION.COM

"What did the face mask say to the mouth?" "Let me cover for you!"

This timely joke was made not by a professional comedian but by a group of primary school students, who have won the 2021 title of "Britain's Funniest Class". It was selected by public vote from a shortlist chosen by legacy comic brand Beano Studios.

While the subject matter is pandemic-themed, the structure follows a pattern we are all familiar with from Christmas cracker jokes. The opening line sets the scene, before introducing the comic element - a punchline using a word which has a double meaning.

These pun style jokes appear simple, but underpinning them is a complex set of language skills. So how early can children recognise - and start to make – jokes like these?

Children develop humour from a very early age, starting with a sense of shared experience and socialisation. In the beginning, humour is of a physical and visual nature and includes laughing during games such as "peek-a-boo" and pulling faces. Children like to imitate and will try to make adults laugh by copying what they do. This type of humour precedes language development, but nevertheless establishes the principle in children that something can be funny -- and indeed that they can make people laugh.

Emerging words

The basis of much verbal humour is incongruity -- the use of vocabulary which doesn't make sense or fit with what is being said, and therefore is funny. To understand this type of humour, children must be able to understand pretence -- to

know that something which is said need not necessarily be true. This usually happens at around ages two to three, coinciding with the expansion of pretend play skills.

To be able to tell their own jokes, children need imagination. They need to be able to come up with the ideas for something which is not true or cannot be real as a basis for developing the joke. They also need to understand that context is important -- that what you say can have different meanings depending on when and where it is said. And children need to have sufficient vocabulary to be able to express their imagined ideas and to describe the context when they would oc-

Storytelling and double meanings

Being able to tell a story is critical even to the most basic of jokes. There is a need to set up the story and then introduce an incongruous element which is resolved with a punchline. These narrative skills also start to develop between the ages of two and three, when children are producing sentences in a sequence to report events that they want to talk about.

As most puns are based on double meanings, children also need to have an appreciation that words can have more than one meaning. An awareness of homonyms starts to emerge between ages three and four, when children begin the process of metalinguistics – talking about lan-

Once children understand that spoken words may not be true but may in fact be made up and unreal, and they can understand variation in context and double meanings, and are able to tell a simple story -- they can use language to create incongruities in the form of puns and ambiguities which cease to confuse and start to amuse.

Why does this matter?

We might think of humour as frivolous, something which doesn't really matter but provides a lighthearted distraction to everyday life. But this attitude is a significant undervaluing of the place of comedy in our lives and the skill required to

Humour can also be an avenue to help young people develop their confidence and communications skills, as demonstrated by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists' national joke-telling competition for primary school-aged

My father was a comedian who started out by using jokes as a way to get noticed when he was a small, redheaded teen and the youngest in a large family. We often think of timing as critical in comedy, but the ability to choose words and use them wisely to create humour is just as important.

And although we don't all have to be funny -- it certainly helps socially if we can understand the joke. Humour helps us to feel a sense of belonging within a group. It can have an almost tribal quality with an exclusivity for those who "get the joke."

So, well done to Britain's funniest class. Not only are you funny, but you are also skilled linguists, using words in a sophisticated way to bring joy. And like any skill, it needs to be used to be maintained -- so keep on practising your joke-telling and making us laugh.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Speech and Communication, University of Bristol, UK; Director, Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit, North Bristol NHS Trust, UK., University of Bristol]

Axie Infinity: online games where people earn as they play are transforming gaming



DREW CATTANACH

THECONVERSATION.COM

The ultimate point of playing vid-**I** eo games has always been to have fun. Whether it's Space Invaders or Sonic or Red Dead Redemption, you hit the start button and do your thing until game over - and then you probably wipe the sweat off your hands and do it again.

But a new class of games is emerging where playing is an investment opportunity - and even potentially a way to earn a living. Socalled play-to-earn games like Axie Infinity and The Sandbox have been exploding in popularity recently.

What they have in common with many previous classics is that they include complex economic ecosystems. In the 1980s blockbuster Elite, for example, players travelled from planet to planet, trying to increase their credits by buying and selling things like weapons and commodities. Or in life-simulation franchise The Sims, players buy everything from pizzas to houses with Simoleons.

But in these older games, the ingame currency had no value in the real world. There have also been games like World of Warcraft where a grey market for exchanging ingame items and characters grew up around them. But play-to-earn games take this to a whole new level. So how do these games work and where are they heading?

TO INFINITY...

The leader in this new space is Axie Infinity, a Pokémon-style game created by the Vietnamese developer Sky Mavis. It has some 350,000 daily active users, about 40% of whom are in the Philippines, with

Venezuela and the US the next two biggest markets.

The game revolves around cute furry creatures called Axies, which players breed, acquire, train, use to complete challenges, and do battle with online. The object of the game is to obtain small love potions (SLPs), which can be used to breed new Axies that can then be deployed within the game.

SLPs double as cryptocurrencies that can be bought and sold on a crypto exchange. Top players are reportedly earning SLP1,500 (US\$435/£317) per day from their Axies, though the price of SLPs against the US dollar is constantly changing. It has broadly been rising since 2020, so there is an argument for hanging on to them – or alternatively, selling while the going is good.

Axies themselves can be traded in real life in the likes of the Axie Marketplace as NFTs (non-fungible tokens). NFTs are digital collectables that exist on online ledgers known as blockchains, and are better known for recently taking the art world by storm.

As well as Axies, other in-game items like real estate, flowers, barrels and lamps are all tradeable as NFTs too. These are all bought and sold using ethereum, which is the second biggest cryptocurrency after bitcoin.

This is a welcome improvement on predecessors such as World of Warcraft where trading of gold and in-game assets took place in unaffiliated auction sites, and was grounds for being banned from the game for a long time. By introducing a dedicated marketplace, NFTs and a blockchain, the trading around Axie

Infinity and similar games is more secure and means that players actu-

ally own the items in question.

To get started on Axie Infinity, players need to buy (or borrow) three Axies. They are available from US\$190 (£138), though the current average is about US\$350, and higher level, rare or mystic Axies can sell for a lot more.

The most expensive ever Axie, a triple mystic called Angel, sold for ETH300 in late 2020, which was around US\$120,000 at the time. Meanwhile, a chunk of in-game real estate went for US\$1.5 million earlier in 2021. Monthly trading volumes for all Axie Infinity NFTs currently stand at US\$170 million.

Finally, there is another cryptocalled the Axie Infinity shard (AXS). governance of the game's ecosystem, and can also use it to get a share of the community treasury. AXS has also seen an impressive rise recently, up about sixfold in recent weeks. It is the largest gaming cryptocur-

rency on the market. ...AND BEYOND

Besides Axie Infinity, CryptoKitties is another play-to-earn game that has built up a substantial following. In that game, players buy, breed and trade digital cats using ethereum. Again, these cats are NFTs, which generate wealth not just for the developers but also the player community. The most expensive CryptoKitty sold to date, which was called Dragon, went for ETH600 (around US\$170,000 at the time).

Apart from generating real income for players, play-to-earn games also create communities where gamers and creators can meet, share wisdom, and do deals with one another. A good example of this is The Sandbox, a game in the same genre as Minecraft where players build things and exchange with them with one another as NFTs.

This discreet economy is driven by its own cryptocurrency, SAND. One way to make SAND is to sell parcels of digital real estate known as LAND, which players can purchase for their shopfront as a way of sharing experiences with visitors to the world. In February alone, the game announced that a record 2,352 plots of LAND had been sold for a combined US\$2.8 million.

With such levels of interest, major brands are seeing the potential currency associated with this game to take a piece of this expanding metaverse. For example, The Walk-Investors in AXS have a vote in the ing Dead will soon be opening its doors on the platform, allowing players to enter a zombie world within the game, in what Sandbox says is a step towards a "virtual attraction park". Brands like these are presumably likely to draw a more mainstream audience to the plat-

> Now that games like these are possible, it seems likely that they are here to stay. Many games have sustained online communities in the past, but by adding the ability to make financial gains, play-to-earn games will potentially lead to even more successful communities in future. If this corner of gaming is new to you, it's time to start watching closely.

> > [the writer is Lecturer in Computer Games Development, University of Westminster]

24 Rohingya refugees, including 7 children, arrested in Assam in 2 days

GUWAHATI, 25 JUL [NDTV]: Nine Rohingya refugees, including three women and a child, were arrested from the railway station in Assam's Guwahati on Sunday morning. They were allegedly carrying fake UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) ID cards.

A GRP, or Government Railway Police, personnel said the group - six women, three men and a child - was arrested during a check on the Agartala-Deogarh Express. They were accompanied by an Indian citizen - Aman Ullah of Jammu's Narwal.

On Friday, 15 Rohingya - six children, six men and three women - were arrested by GRP personnel in Badarpur in Karimganj district as they tried to board the Silchar-Agartala train.

Since none of the 15 have valid papers, their arrest is being treated as a case of illegal entry, the GRP said, adding that they had travelled from Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh, where they were looking for jobs, and were trying to return to Bangladesh.

Located in southern Assam, Karimganj shares borders with Bangladesh



and Tripura.

Earlier this week the Home Ministry told parliament that those entering the country illegally, including the Rohingya, would be considered a "threat to national security".

Junior Home Minister Nityanand Rai said foreign nationals entering India without valid travel documents, or who continued to stay in the country after their documents had expired, were to be treated as "illegal miin line the existing legal

India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and rejects a UN position that deporting Rohingya violates the principle of refoulment sending refugees back to face danger.

In April the Supreme Court - ruling on the fate of Rohingya in Jammu and Kashmir - stayed their immediate deportation, saying the prescribed process had to be followed.

Indian authorities grants" and dealt with monitoring Bangladesh border have arrested several Rohingya over the past months.

In December last year, 13, including six children, were arrested in Karimganj. Police sources said they were from Cox's Bazar and were trying to reach Delhi, Hyderabad or Jammu in search of work.

A month earlier police said they had arrested eight for trying to illegally enter India via Myanmar.

More than 7.3 lakh Rohingya Muslims - one of Myanmar's largest

minority ethnic groups fled their homeland in 2017 after a deadly crackdown, which the United Nations would later call "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

Hundreds of thousands are now living in squalid conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh, several of which are in Cox's Bazar. Their condition makes them easy targets for human traffickers and many also find their way to India in search of jobs, money and a better life.

Th Muivah, at helm of talks with Centre on Naga issue, hospitalised



[NDTV]: General secretary of the insurgent group NSCN(IM), Th Muivah, has been hospitalised in Dimapur, official sources informed late on Saturday night.

Nagaland health officials have neither denied nor confirmed the media report that the leader of the armed group tested positive for Covid-19 two days ago.

Th Muivah and other leaders of the insurgent group had come to Dimapur to attend a crucial meeting on the Naga political issue with the core committee of a parliamentary panel. The committee comprises all 60 MLAs and two MPs of

The NSCN-IM, the largest insurgent group in the northeast, has a ceasefire with the centre. It has held about 80 rounds of talks with the centre since August 1997 and Th Muivah has been leading the delegation.

A security official said that the 87-year-old was admitted to the Referral Hospital in Dimapur late on Saturday evening. He added that the NSCN-IM leader's condition is normal and his oxygen saturation level is around 93 per cent.

A large contingent of security personnel were on guard outside the private hospital in Dimapur, the second major city of

Nagaland after state capital Kohima.

The central government has been separately holding the peace talks with NSCN-IM and eight other outfits that came together a few years ago under the banner of Naga National Political Groups.

Following a nearly year-long deadlock over the issue of a separate flag and constitution, the insurgent group said earlier this year that the Naga political talk teams are back on the table. It had then said the negotiations would continue under the 2015 agreement signed by the centre and NSCN(IM) to pave the way to a final solution to the Naga issue.

Blinken's India visit: Situation in Afghanistan, terror financing by Pakistan to figure in talks

NEW DELHI, JUL 25 **(PTI):** The implications of the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan and the need for sustained pressure on Pakistan on terror financing and safe havens will be part of the agenda of talks during US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's two-day maiden India visit beginning July 27, official sources said on Sunday.

The discussions will also focus on deepening engagement under the framework of the Quad with the possibility of a foreign ministerial meeting of the grouping expected to take place later this year, the sources

Both sides will also take forward the Quad vaccine initiative to enable the supply of vaccines produced in India from early 2022 to countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

The sources said the visit will be an opportunity to further consolidate bilateral cooperation across a vast agenda and the areas of focus will be trade and investment, healthcare, edu-

+91-9832556698 +91-9832080753

cation, digital domain, innovation and security.

It will be Blinken's first visit to India after assuming charge as the US second by a high-ranking Biden administration official since it came to power in January

In the defence domain, both sides are expected to explore ways to deepen collaboration, the sources said.

India will also press for gradual resumption of international travel while maintaining health protocols, especially for easing the mobility of students. professionals, business travellers and for ensuring family reunions,

humanitarian besides cases, they said.

"The need for resilient supply chains of critical medicines and Secretary of State and the healthcare equipment is likely to come up,"

> The two sides will exchange assessments about Indo-Pacific with a focus on Covid assistance, economic slowdown and security scenario, the sources said.

On vaccines, India will continue to push for ensuring open and consistent supply chains for materials and items required for vaccine production as India ramps up the manufacturing for domestic and global supplies thereafter.

To Mirabai Chanu's pizza wish after Olympic Win, Domino's announces this

NEW DELHI, 25 JUL [NDTV]: The ongoing Tokyo Olympics began on a sweet note for India as weightlifter Mirabai Chanu opened the country's tally at the tournament with a silver medal. On Saturday, Ms Chanu put an end to India's dry spell of 21 years in the weightlifting category with a win in the 49kg category.

The champion's victory came as a result of years of continued training and sacrifices, some that involved bidding goodbye to her favourite foods. But now that she had managed to bag the honour at the quadrennial competition, she is ready to treat herself. Speaking to NDTV, Ms Chanu had said that she could not wait to treat herself to some pizza.

"First, I am going to have a pizza. It has been a long time since I have not eaten one," Mirabai Chanu told NDTV. "And I have waited for this day for a long time, so first



is ready to treat Ms Chanu and not just this one time.

Amid a flurry of tweets to celebrate the champion, Domino's Pizza announced

treating Ms Chanu to "free pizzas for life". Quote-tweeting a post by NDTV in which Ms Chanu can be heard confessing her love for the Italian classic, Domino's Pizza wrote, "Mirabai Cha-

on bringing the medal home! You brought the dreams of a billion+ Indians to life and we couldn't be happier to treat you to FREE Domino's pizza for life. Congratulations again!"

Twitter users were quick to appreciate the gesture and flooded the comments section with positive responses. One user joked that the move by Domino's Pizza was enough to get him to start exercising.

Another user said that thanks to this announcement he would only be buying Domino's Pizza from now on.

Mamata wants to meet PM to beg for funds: Dilip Ghosh

Congratulations

KOLKATA, JUL 25 (PTI): West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Sunday claimed Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, having "misused" central resources, now wants to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi "to beg for funds with folded hands". His remark, however, drew flak of the ruling party, which said that Ghosh should be having a "better understanding of the federal system", under which a head of the state can always meet the PM.

Ghosh, while talking to reporters, also alleged that TMC members have siphoned off money from

state coffers and left it near-empty.

"She has misused the funds that were allocated by the Centre and now she wants to meet the PM to ask for more with folded hands as the state has gone virtually bankrupt," the senior BJP leader said when asked about Banerjee's slated visit to the national capital.

West Bengal is facing a financial crisis due to large-scale corruption on the part of the Mamata Banerjee government, Ghosh maintained.

Given the financial situation in the state, and the rising factionalism within the TMC camp,



Lok Sabha polls, he added. Expressing shock

over the state BJP president's assertions, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said he is known for such ignorant comments.

"Does he understand

about the federal set up where the head of a state can always meet the PM? Dilipda should check facts... Bengal has mopped up more revenue under the TMC rule than in the past, he not-

Echoing him, state minister and TMC MLA Chandrima Bhattacharya

sought to know if the CM has whispered into the ears of the BJP leader the purpose of her visit. Banerjee had told

reporters on Friday that the prime minister has granted her time for a meeting during her scheduled Delhi visit in the last week of July, but did not specify the date.



It's easy to relax...

When you can trust the News.

To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at

floor. Opp. Ganga Hetel. Hill Cart Road. Siligeri - 03. Ph. +91-9832318644, 9800682987/1153035100 or mallatinani - Hilly (1997)

03592 KOLKATA OFFICE: Irshad All/ Imteeyaz, Synapse, 6, Madan Street, Mezine - 2, 2nd floor, Kolkata 700072, Ph. 033-22124340/ fax 033-22124337/ mab. +91-9830547774/ +91

Near Diesel Power House (DPH) Gangtok, East Sikkim , 737101

Slowest to qualify, Tunisia's Hafnaoui wins Olympic gold

TOKYO, 25 JUL [ALJAzeera]: Nobody was watching Ahmed Hafnaoui in lane eight of the Olympic pool but all eyes were on the Tunisian teenager at the finish.

Hafnaoui was the stunning winner of the 400 metres freestyle at the Tokyo Games on Sunday, beating a field of faster and older swimmers.

The 18-year-old finished in three minutes, 43.26 seconds, punctuating his victory with loud yelling that echoed in the mostly empty 15,000seat arena

He was the slowest qualifier to start the final.

"I believed it when I touched the wall and I saw myself first," he said. "I was so surprised."

Australia's Jack Mc-Loughlin earned silver and American Kieran Smith took bronze. The top three were separated by less than a second after the eight-lap race.

"When I hit the water, I was just thinking about the medal, not the time," Hafnaoui said.



He squeaked into the final by 14-hundredths of a second, landing him in the far outside lane. The fastest qualifiers were in the middle of the pool, without the ability to track Hafnaoui during

Asked what he knew about Hafnaoui, Smith said, "Absolutely noth-

Hafnaoui joined Ous Mellouli to be the only Tunisians to win a gold in swimming.

Mellouli won the 1,500 metres freestyle at the 2008 Beijing Games, one of his three career Olympic medals.

The teen, who trains in the capital, Tunis, is the North African country's fourth Olympic gold medallist. He is the second-youngest athlete

Standing on the podium, and his coach furiously pumping his arms

from an African nation to

win a swimming gold.

in triumph in the stands, the moment was overwhelming for Hafnaoui.

"I was in tears because when I see the flag of my country and I hear the anthem in the background, it was great," he said. "I'm so proud of it. I dedicate it to all the Tunisian people."

Chennaiyin FC ropes in striker Jobby Justin



CHENNAI, JUL 25 (PTI): Two-time Indian Super League champions Chennaiyin FC on Sunday announced the signing of striker Jobby Justin on a two-year contract ahead of the upcoming season.

Justin made his ISL debut with ATK in their title-winning campaign of 2019-20 making 10 appearances. However, the Thiruvananthapuram-born footballer was ruled out of the following season due to a ligament injury.

The forward, who

grew up playing on the beaches of Vettucaud, was also a vital cog in East Bengal's second-place finish in the 2018-19 I-League season. His nine goal tally for the Red and Gold Brigade was the third highest in the league that season.

"Being a South Indian, I always wanted to play for a south-based team and when a prestigious club like Chennaiyin FC came calling, it was an easy decision for me," Justin was quoted as saying in a release.

CFC co-owner Vita Dani said, "Jobby's signing boosts an area that we were lacking in last season. We are happy to have an Indian player with such attacking intent and I am sure he will fit in seamlessly in our family.'

The 27-year old Justin possesses the pace, skills and aerial ability to provide much needed depth to Chennaiyin FC's attack alongside youngster Rahim Ali.

India's lone gymnast Pranati Nayak fails to qualify for All Round finals

TOKYO, JUL 25 (PTI): India's lone gymnast at Tokyo Olympics, Pranati Nayak failed to qualify for the All Round finals of Artistic Gymnastics competition here on Sunday. The 26-year-old from West Bengal recorded a total score of 42.565 over the four categories -- floor exercise, vault, uneven bars and balance beam -- at the Ariake Gymnastic centre.

She is now ranked at 29th overall at the end of subdivision 2.

There are a total of five subdivisions, from which top 24 gymnasts (best score across all four apparatus) qualify to the All-Around final, which will be held on July 29.

The top eight gymnasts in each event qualify for the respective individual event finals to be held from August 1 to 3. However, Navak finished at the bottom half in all the events. She scored 10.633 in

floor with a difficulty of 4.400 and execution of 6.233, before producing a score of 13.466 in vault with a difficulty of 5.000 and execution of 8.466.

In uneven bars, she came up with a score 9.033 with a difficulty of 4.100 and execution of 4.933, while in balance beam, she had a score of 9.433 with difficulty 4.500 and execution

Nayak hardly got any time to prepare for the Olympics after qualifying through the continental quota following the cancellation of the 9th Senior Asian Championships which was scheduled to be held from May 29-June 1 in China, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

TOKYO 2020

She had won a bronze

medal in vault at the 2019 Asian Artistic Gymnastics Championships.

Manu loses nearly 20 minutes due to technical snag, misses final spot in Olympics

TOKYO, JUL 25 (PTI): A major malfunction in her pistol cost Indian shooting ace Manu Bhaker dearly as she lost nearly 20 minutes during her qualifications, leading to a heartbreaking exit from the women's 10m air pistol event at the Tokyo Olympics here on Sunday. When the technical snag -- the pistol's cocking lever broke down -- happened, she was left to shoot 44 shots in 55 min-

When she came back to the firing point after getting the issue sorted, Manu had to complete the remaining number of shots in 36 minutes, an improbable task in any level of competition.

Once she had returned to the range, more agony awaited the 19-year-old as 4-5 minutes were lost in checking the repaired gun in the sighter (practice).

"Normally, it doesn't take more than a few seconds and we couldn't have claimed more time, so I had to tell Manu to start shooting as we had already lost a lot of time," pistol coach Ronak Pandit told PTI.

Manu, along with her coach and a member of the jury, had to go to a designated area to get her pistol checked and repaired, as no repairing is allowed near the range because of safety concerns.

"55 minutes were remaining for 44 shots when the malfunction took place and when she came back after getting it sorted (the cocking lever was replaced), which we got in a record time, she was left to shoot 44 shots in 36 minutes," Ronak, a former India shooter,

Needless to say, the unfortunate incident has left the young shooter "heartbroken".



past too, most notably during the ISSF World Cup in Munich in 2019, which offered quota places for the Tokyo Games. But, she came back strongly to grab the quota in another event of the same tournament.

"But, even with all the problems that she has faced today, an inner 10 in the last series would have taken her in the finals." the coach added.

The duration of time lost was more than enough to disturb her rhythm, after she had made an impressive start in her maiden Olympic appearance.

Earlier in the day, her father Ramkishan Bhaker as well as a National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) official, had said that the electronic trigger of Manu's pistol had "suffered a circuit malfunction" in the middle of the second series of the qualification.

Manu returned to the firing point after getting the issue fixed but, by then, it has disturbed her momentum as she went up again, against a world-class filed comprising Olympic and world champions.

Ranked number two in the world, Manu was pegged back by the "double blow" after a start that saw her take one of the places in the top eight.

An opening of 98 was followed by 95, 94 and 95 as the young shooter dropped out of the top-

With a 98, the Commonwealth Games and Youth Olympics gold medallist tried to stage a comeback in the fifth series, but one 8 and three 9s in the sixth and final series left Frenchwoman Celine Goberville to bag the eighth and last qualifying spot.

Manu recovered extremely well to shoot 98 in the 5th series but the time lost due to the technical snag took a toll on

Pistol shooter Heena Sidhu, who has represented India in two Olympics besides being a former world champion and world record holder, explained in detail the problems faced by her compatriot while slamming those who held the view that Manu buckled under pressure.

"For all d people who are quick to judge that Manu succumbed to pressure. I just got to know what happened to her equipment in detail n how much time she lost. She didn't succumb to pressure she rose to it." Heena, who is married to Ronak, tweeted.

"Giving a score of 575 in less than 34 mins is n achievement of her nerves."

Manu finished 12th in the event with a total score of 575 while Yashaswini Singh Deswal managed to be placed 13th with 574. The cutoff was 577. Both the Indians were appearing in their maiden Olympics.

In another tweet, Heena wrote, "She was so close that if that last shot was an inner 10 she wud have been in the finals even after going through a complete weapon breakdown in between the match.

"Stop judging athletes on numbers coz maybe that's the only thing u can understand. Start understanding Performance!!"

Lauding the two India shooters for their effort, Heena said, "Manu and Deswal rank 12, 13 with 575 and 574. I think they put up a brave brave fight especially Manu, after having some problem with her equipment.

"I think this experience will make them stronger for the mixed team event which I'm really looking forward to

Iranian refugee shocks Olympic gold medalist Jones at Tokyo 2020

TOKYO, 25 JUL [ALJAzeera]: Iranian refugee Kimia Alizadeh came within striking distance of winning the Refugee Olympic Team's first ever medal after three impressive wins in the Tokyo Games' taekwondo tournament on Sunday.

Alizadeh shocked two-time Olympic gold medalist Jade Jones in the round-of-16, beating the British champion 16-12.

She went on to defeat Zhou Lijun of China 9-8 in the quarterfinals, mounting a stirring final-minute rally for the second straight bout. Earlier, she beat Iranian opponent Nahid Kiyani Chandeh 18-9 in her opening bout in Tokyo

Alizadeh's streak raised hopes that the Refugee Olympic Team could take home its first

the Tokyo games, however she lost her bronze medal bout to Turkey's Hatice Kubra Ilgun.

Alizadeh had a narrow lead after the first round against Ilgun, but failed to score again until it was too late to catch

Twenty-three-yearold Alizadeh previously made history during the 2016 Rio Olympics, becoming the first Iranian woman to win an Olympic medal when she brought home a bronze.

She has since fled Iran for Germany and is competing for the refugee team, which is competing at its second Olympics.

Alizadeh's biggest upset on Sunday came against Jones, who was attempting to become the first three-time taekwondo gold medal-

medal in history during ist and the first British woman in any sport to win gold at three consecutive Olympics.

> She screamed and celebrated with her coach while the small crowd of Olympians and support personnel in the Makuhari Messe convention centre erupted with astonished roars at the victory.

> Alizadeh cited institutional sexism and the mandatory wearing of the hijab in her criticisms of the Iranian system, which she decried for using her for propaganda purposes in a passionate letter announcing her defection.

> She was the latest in a series of high-profile defections from the Iranian sport system by athletes dissatisfied with the government's treatment and

In April, the Interna-

(IJF) suspended Iran for four years because the nation refused to allow its fighters to face Israe-The IJF said Iran's policies were revealed

tional Judo Federation

when former Iranian judo competitor Saeid Mollaei claimed he was ordered to lose in the semi-finals of the 2019 world championships in Tokyo to avoid potentially facing Israeli world champion Sagi Muki in the final. Mollaei defected to

Germany in 2019 and will be representing Mongolia at the Tokyo Olympics when he begins competition on Tuesday. Alireza Faghani, a prominent international

for Australia in 2019.

She had suffered due football referee, left Iran to technical issues in the

Australia avoids UNESCO downgrade of Great Barrier Reef

CANBERRA, JUL 25 (AP): Australia has garnered enough international support to defer an attempt by the United Nations' cultural organisation to downgrade the Great Barrier Reef's World Heritage status because of damage caused by climate

UNESCO had recommended that its World Heritage Committee add the world's largest coral reef ecosystem off the northeast Australian coast to the World Heritage in Danger list, mainly due to rising ocean temperatures.

Australian-proposed amendments to the draft decision at a committee meeting in China on Friday would have deferred the in danger question until 2023.

But Norway moved amendments that put the reef back on the committee's agenda at its annual meeting next June.

In the meantime, a monitoring mission will visit the reef to determine how the impact of climate change can be managed.

Australian Environment Minister Sussan Ley on Friday told a virtual meeting that downgrading the reef's status before the committee had finalised its own climate change policy made no sense.

Delegates, we ask only two things: time for experts to see first hand our commitment to the reef, its present condition and our management, and for the final climate policy to provide a consistent framework for addressing the impacts of climate change on all World Heritage properties, she said from Australia, where she in in quarantine after lobbying delegates in Europe and the Middle East on the decision.



In 2014, Australia was warned that an in danger listing was being considered rather than being proposed for immediate

Australia had time to respond by developing a long-term plan to improve the reef's health called the Reef 2050 Plan.

Since then, the reef has suffered significantly from coral bleaching caused by unusually warm ocean temperatures in 2016, 2017 and last year. The bleaching damaged two thirds of the coral.

Australia reacted angrily last month when the draft decision was published to remove the network of 2,500 reefs covering 348,000 sq km (134,000 square miles)

from the World Heritage list it joined 40 years ago for its outstanding universal value. The in danger listing is one step away from losing all World Heritage standing.

This decision was flawed. Clearly there were politics behind it, Ley said at the

Many in Australia's conservative government saw the move as an attempt to pressure it into committing to reducing the nation's greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050 and to stop allowing coal mines to be expanded.

In arguing for the reef's downgrade, UNESCO World Heritage Centre's marine programme coordinator, Fanny Douvere,

referred to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's conclusion that global emissions needed to fall to zero by 2050 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Accelerated action on climate change on all possible levels, in accordance with the 1.5 degree target under the Paris Agreement for Climate Change, and the recovery of the property from poor water quality are both vital and are urgent to secure the outstanding universal value of the Great Barrier Reef for present and for future generations, Douvere said.

Greenpeace said in a statement that the committee had missed an opportunity to shine a light on Australia's neglect of a natural wonder.

The Chinese host of the committee meeting in the city of Fuzhou this week defended the proposed in danger listing against Australian government suspicion that China influenced the finding for political reasons.

Australia, as a member state of the World Heritage Committee, should ... attach importance to the opinions of the advisory bodies and earnestly fulfill the duty of World Heritage protection instead of making groundless accusations against other states, said Tian Xuejun, the Chinese vice minister of education and the president of this year's session.

China's representative said during the debate that his nation supports the emerging consensus to defer the in danger question.

Before the committee's ruling, Jodie Rummer, a research fellow at the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, said the in danger designation was needed to get Australia to act on climate change.

I think that's the wake-up call that we need here in Australia, very much so, Rummer said. It's the wake-up call that we need to cut our emissions and commit to net zero. It's the wake-up call that we need to really put that spotlight on the Great Barrier Reef.

The deferral sidelines Australia's management of the reef as an issue at elections due by May next year at which the government will seek a fourth three-year term.

Europe's summer tourism outlook dimmed by variants, rules

LONDON, JUL 25 (AP): Chaos and confusion over travel rules and measures to contain new virus outbreaks are contributing to another cruel summer for Europe's battered tourism industry.

Popular destination countries are grappling with surging COVID-19 variants, but the patchwork and last-minute nature of the efforts as the peak season gets underway threatens to derail another summer.

In France, the world's most visited country, visitors to cultural and tourist sites were confronted this week with a new requirement for a

special COVID-19 pass. To get the pass, which comes in paper or digital form, people must prove they're either fully vaccinated or recently recovered ilar kind of things that are from an infection, or produce a negative virus test. Use of the pass could extend next month to restaurants and ca-

Italy said Thursday that people will need a similar pass to access museums and movie theatres, dine inside restaurants and cafes, and get into pools, casinos and a range of other venues.

At the Eiffel Tower, unprepared tourists lined up for quick virus tests so they could get the pass to visit the Paris landmark. Johnny Nielsen, visiting from Denmark with his wife and two children, questioned the usefulness of the French rules.

If I get tested now, I can go but then I (could) get corona in the queue right here," Nielsen said, though he added they wouldn't change their plans because of it.

Juan Truque, a tourist from Miami, said he wasn't vaccinated but took a test so he could travel to France via Spain with his mother.

Now they are forcing you to wear masks and to do simimpositions to you. To me, they are violations to your freedom. he said.

Europe's vital travel and tourism industry is desperate to make up after a disastrous 2020. International tourist arrivals to Europe last year plunged by nearly 70%, and

for the first five months of this year, they're down 85%, according to UN World Tourism Organisation figures.

American, Japanese and Chinese travellers aren't confident it will be possible to visit and move freely within Europe, the European Travel Commission said. International arrivals are forecast to remain at nearly half their 2019 level this year, though domestic demand will help make up the shortfall.

The UK's statistics office suspended its monthly international passenger data, because it said there aren't enough people arriving to provide robust estimates.

The United States this week upgraded its travel warning for Britain to the highest level. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention advised Americans to avoid travelling to the country because of the risk of contracting COVID-19 variants, while the US State Department raised its alert level to do not travel from the previous less severe reconsider travel advisory.

The recommendations are constantly under review and not binding, although they may affect group tours and insurance rates. Britain's warning has fluctuated several times this year already.

Some countries are showing signs of a rebound, how-

Spain, the world's second-most visited country, received 3.2 million tourists from January to May a tenth of the amount in the same period of 2019. But visits surged in June with 2.3 million arrivals, the best monthly figure since the start of the pandemic, although still only 75% of the figure from two years ago.

Spain's secretary of state for tourism, Fernando Valdes, credited the European Union's deployment in June of its digital COVID-19 vaccine passport for having a a positive impact on foreign arrivals. That, and the UK move to allow nonessential travel, allowed us to start the 2021 summer season in the best conditions, he said.

The EU app allows the

bloc's residents to show vacation plans into disarray. they've been vaccinated, tested negative or recovered from the virus.

In Greece, where COVID-19 infections are also rising sharply, authorities have openly expressed concern that slowing vaccination rates could hurt the struggling tourism industry, a mainstay of the economy. Authorities have tightened restrictions for unvaccinated tourists and residents, banning their entry to all indoor dining and entertainment venues.

Development Minister Adonis Georgiadis urged the travel industry to put on a brave face.

It's very important that we do not give the impression that we have lost control of the pandemic," Georgiadis said last week.

Some countries sparked with last-minute changes to entry rules.

Denmark's decision to upgrade Britain to its red list of countries with tighter travel restrictions threw London resident Richard Moorby's Moorby originally

planned to go to Copenhagen in August to meet up with his Danish wife and their two children visiting his in-laws like they did last summer. But under current rules Moorby wouldn't have been able to travel separately because he's not Danish. They planned instead to

travel together, which they thought would be allowed even after the change but they missed the announcement's fine print prohibiting non-Danes from red list countries including the U.K. from visiting without a worthy purpose, which doesn't include tourism.

It was going to be a bit of a non-holiday anyway, Moorby said. But it went from, We'd have a nice holiday in Denmark, to well, maybe I can just about get there,' to I can't even travel'.

Meanwhile, the UK government unexpectedly announced that travellers coming from France would still have to self-isolate for up 10 days because of worries

about the beta variant, frustrating travelers and angering the tourism industry and French government.

Emma and Ben Heywood, the British owners of adventure travel company Undiscovered Montenegro, said booking inquiries are surging after the UK government said in the same announcement it would stop advising against travel to countries on its amber list and dropped the self-isolation rule for returning travelers.

The couple said bookings last summer plunged to 10% of their usual level but now they're at 30% and rising fast. Montenegro has a relatively low infection rate and relaxed entry requirements.

It's so hard keeping everybody up to date with what's required to go where, with so many countries and so many different rules involved, said Ben Heywood.

It's a total minefield. Half the emails I'm fielding now are people saying, We definitely want to come.

PoK holds legislative elections

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

ISLAMABAD, JUL 25 (PTI): Voters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir went to the polls on Sunday to elect the legislative assembly.

There are over 3.2 million eligible voters who can elect 45 members of the assembly for a five-year term.

India has previously slammed Pakistan for its decision to hold elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and said any action to alter the status of the militarily occupied region has no legal basis.

The assembly has a total of 53 members but only 45 are directly elected, while five seats are reserved for women and three are meant for the technocrats

A tough triangular competition involving Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is expected.

The PTI has nominated candidates for all the 45 constituencies, while



PML-N and PPP each issued tickets to candidates for 44 seats

Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), the radical Islamist party which was banned in April by the Pakistan government for its violent activities, is contesting on 40 seats.

The TLP was not de-registered by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) after the ban, enabling it to take part in the elections.

Thirty-three constituencies are located in PoK, while 12 seats are for refugees settled in different cities of Pakistan.

Apart from the ticket holders of different political parties, a total of 261 independent candidates are also in the race for the 33 constituencies in PoK, while 56 independents are vying for the 12 refugees' seats.

Elaborate security measures have been taken and army troops deployed to maintain peace during the elections.

Traditionally, the ruling party in the country wins the elections in Pok.

The last general election for PoK Legislative Assembly was held in Iuly 2016 and won by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz led by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

According to a poll survey of Gallup Pakistan, 44 per cent of people support Prime Minister Imran Khan's party while its nearest rival PML-N has the support of 12 per cent voters.

Typhoon In-fa hits China's east coast, cancelling flights

ANDY WONG

SHANGHAI, JUL 25 (AP): Typhoon In-fa hit China's east coast south of Shanghai on Sunday, after airline flights and trains were cancelled and the public was ordered to stay indoors.

The typhoon made landfall in Zhoushan in Zhejiang province, state TV reported, citing the national weather agency. It forecast rainfall of 250-350 millimetres (10-14 inches).

People should not willingly go outdoors, the bureau said.

The typhoon was packing winds of 155 kilometres (95 miles) per hour and gusts up to 191 kph (120 mph) when it dumped rain on Taiwan. It knocked down tree branches but no deaths or injuries were reported.

Hundreds of flights at Shanghai Pudong and Shanghai Hongqiao airports were cancelled and more were expected to be cancelled on Monday, state TV reported. Shanghai closed parks and the riverfront Bund district, a popular tourist area.

The international airport in Hangzhou, southwest of Shanghai, also cancelled flights.

Train service to Ningbo, a port city south of Shanghai, was suspended, according to state TV. The Zhoushan Bridge that connects islands near Ningbo was closed, as were schools, markets



and businesses in Zhejiang province.

On Saturday, large container ships were moved from Yangshan Port in Shanghai, one of the world's busiest shipping centres. State TV said a ship lock in Nantong, which abuts Shanghai to the north, stopped releasing vessels into the Yangtze River.

Meanwhile in central China, the death toll rose to 58 after record rains hit the major city of Zhengzhou on Tuesday, state TV reported. The rains flooded a Zhengzhou subway tunnel where at least 12 people died, knocked out power to a hospital and other buildings and left streets filled with mud.

Rescuers used bulldozers and rubber boats to evacuate residents of areas that still were underwater, according to the Shanghai news outlet The Paper.

China sends supplies to flooded area, rebuilds barriers

25 (AP): Trucks carrying water and food on Sunday streamed into a Chinese city at the centre of flooding that killed at least 58 people, while soldiers laid sandbags to fill gaps in river dikes that left neighbourhoods under water.

Residents cleared away mud, wrecked cars and other debris after record rains that started Tuesday and flooded streets and disrupted train service. The rainfall subsided earlier in the week but some neighbourhoods still were waiting for water up to two metres (six feet) deep to drain.

Trucks dropped off instant noodles and other goods at a stadium in Xinxiang, 40 miles (65 km) north of the metropolis of Zhengzhou in Henan province. Volunteers shifted pallets of drinking water stacked higher than their heads onto other trucks for distribution.

The volunteers oc-

XINXIANG (CHINA), JUL casionally broke into cheers of, Go, Xinxiang!

Direct economic losses throughout Henan were estimated at 13.9 billion yuan (2 billion), according to the official Xinhua News Agency. It said a total of more than 3,800 houses collapsed across the province and 920,000 people were evacuated from their homes.

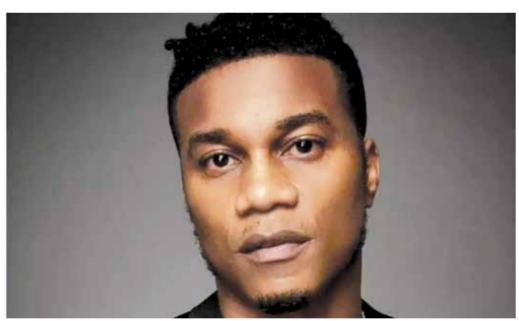
Emergency were trying to close gaps in flood dikes that flooded sections of some villages.

Soldiers and paramilitary police dumping stones and sandbags into a 100-metre-long (300-foot-long), eight-metre-deep (25-foot-deep) gap in a gap on the Weihe river in Xinxiang, the official newspaper The Global Times reported.

On Saturday, authorities intentionally had flooded parts of the nearby city of Hebi to lower water levels elsewhere, according to the Shanghai online news outlet The Paper.

MWAH! Singer Becky G poses with her awards at Premios Juventud 2021 in Coral Gables, Florida.

Cory Hardrict to star in 'Die Like a Man'



Actor Cory Hardrict, known for drama series "The Chi" and war drama feature "American Sniper", will star in the independent thriller "Die Like a Man".

The film is said to be the first part of a street trilogy revolving around themes of masculinity, violence, and gentrification in 21st century America, reported Dead-

Eric Nazarian, known for the 2007 drama "The Blue Hour", is writing and directing the film.

In "Die Like a Man", Hardrict plays a recently paroled west side gangster who after serving a decade behind bars returns to his old west LA neighborhood, now gentrified and redeveloped.

All his friends are either dead or have moved on. His only anchor is training his best friend's son in the ill-fated codes of masculinity on the street that lead to devastating con-

Hardrict is also attached to serve as executive producer on the project.

Amitabh Bachchan starts shooting for Deepika Padukone and Prabhas-starrer sci-fi film

Megastar Amitabh Bach-chan on Saturday began filming for a multilingual scifi movie, headlined by actors Prabhas and Deepika Padukone, in Hyderabad.

Filmmaker Nag Ashwin, known for helming the National Award winning 2018 biographical drama "Mahanati", is directing the project, which has been tentatively titled "Project K".

According to the makers, Ashwin will be canning crucial sequences featuring the 78-year-old icon and other actors during the film's first shooting schedule at Ramoji Film City (RFC).

Prabhas took to Instagram and shared an image of the film's clapperboad.

"On this #GuruPurnima, it is an honour for me to clap for the guru of Indian cinema!



It now begins!! #Projectk," the "Baahubali" star wrote.

Bachchan shared the same picture on his Instagram page, saying it was his privilege that Prabhas gave the clap for his first shot.

"For the Mahurat shot of

#ProjectK.. what an honour to be behind the clap being given by the icon that created cinematic magical waves throughout the country and the world with 'Bahubali,'" he wrote.

and founder of Vyjayanthi Movies, is backing the project which marks the 50th year of the production house.

Bachchan and Padukone have previously starred in filmmaker Shoojit Sircar's Aswini Dutt, producer 2015 comedy drama "Piku".

Harbhajan Singh wraps 'Friendship' shoot

 ${f F}$ ormer Indian cricketer Harbhajan Singh has wrapped up the shoot of his multilingual feature film debut "Friendship" and will soon start dubbing for the movie.

Directed by John Paul Raj & Sham Surya, the film also features South star Arjun and Losliya.

Producer Kiran Reddy Mandadi said the team is thrilled to have wrapped up the final schedule.

"It was just an amazing experience working with the fun, ball of energy that Harbhajan is. He is now going to start his dubbing soon as the film releases in multiple languages - Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi and Telugu.

will be taking onto the screens with a different avatar and speaking different languages, which will definitely reach the audiences soon," the producer said in a statement on Sunday.

"It is as exciting as it gets as Bhajji

The team is working towards presenting the trailer of the film by the end of this month, added Mandadi.

"The film has some great action sequences and is packed with entertain-

ment while the audiences also get treated to Harbhajan Singh, one of biggest names in sports who now also marks his name in the field of entertainment. We certainly cannot wait to take everyone through this journey of 'Friendship',"

"Friendship" stars Singh in a full fledged role following guest appearances in films like "Mujhse Shaadi Karogi" (2004) and "Bhajji in Problem" (2013).

The film features Singh, 41, as a mechanical engineering student, who, along with his group of friends in the beginning of first year, manages a clever escapade from the ragging by the seniors.

"What follows next stays a mystery yet to be unfolded as we gradually delve deeper into the emotions with this one of its kind rollercoaster journey of friendship," read the official logline of the film.

Presented by Toughened Studios Limited, the film is slated to be release this year.

Sonu Sood and Farah Khan's new Netflix sets premiere date **project is "All Things Punjabi"**

Actor Sonu Sood and film-hotel's luggage cart. Sharing the pictures on Instagram, for the film Happy New Year, are all set to work together for a new project.

The actor-director duo are currently in Chandigarh for the shoot of their upcoming project. How we know this? Courtesy, Sonu Sood's latest Instagram post.

The actor on Sunday, dropped two new pictures of himself and Farah Khan on Instagram. While the first picture features the duo sitting on a tractor in the middle of a farm, another one captures them sitting in a

have earlier worked together Sonu Sood wrote: "Haryaali aur Raasta (greenery and the way) with my best friend Farah Khan."

she said.

Yesterday, Farah Khan had also shared the picture that featured her and Sonu Sood on the tractor. "All things Punjabi... Chandigarh, tractors and Sonu Sood... shooting with u my friend is always such fun," she wrote in the caption of the post. Many fans and celebrities commented on Farah Khan's post. Among others, singer Neha Kakkar commented on Farah Khan's post and wrote: "Yasssss."

for 'Lucifer' final season

The sixth and final season that "even bad things must I of the fantasy superhecome to an end" as it posted the ro series "Lucifer" will air on September 10 on Netflix, the streaming platform has announced.

"Lucifer" revolves around Lucifer Morningstar, played by Tom Ellis, the Devil, who abandons Hell for Los Angeles where he runs his own nightclub named "LUX" and joins Lauren German's Detective Chloe Decker to consult the LA Police Department.

Ellis, and executive producers Joe Henderson and Ildy Modrovich made the announcement during the show's panel at the virtual Comic-Con@Home on Saturday.

teaser of the final season.

The minute-long video clip offered fans a look back at various moments across the previous seasons. Lucifer is then shown being pulled over by the police upon which he tells the officer that it's his last night in LA. The last season saw Lucifer go through a lot of changes and also redeem his banishment from Heaven.

The cast of "Lucifer" also includes Rachael Harris, DB Woodside, Lesley-Ann Brandt, Aimee Garcia, Tricia Helfer, Scarlett Estevez and Kevin Aleiandro. The show is produced by Jerry Bruckheimer Television, DC Entertainment and Warner Bros Television.

On its official Twitter account, Netflix Geeked shared

like never before.

AQUARIUS: How do you measure your success, Aquarius? Do you wait on the outside world to shower you with praise and accolades or give yourself the pat on the back you deserve in every moment? Something tells us you are moving into a space of power, where you don't need anybody else to tell you your worth. But, that doesn't mean you are on this journey alone. The support and contribution of your team members is the key to your evolution. So, rise above your ego, and with a way to work in harmony with the crew.

You're feeling all kinds of creative, Pisces, and it's making you want to weave a web of magic with your words. So, put pen to paper, beautiful. Who knows? You may just end up writing a verse or two that you will be remembered for. On the interpersonal front, however, you're being asked to practice tactfulness. It's not important to share every thought that crosses your mind. Centre yourself before you say anything that could potentially cause trouble.

ARIES:

Peace and love are granted to those who actively cultivate these qualities in their life. This is something you are beginning to understand on a deep level, Aries. The full moon finds you transmuting the pain, the sadness, the anger, and the rejection into higher vibrations and calling in the energy of miracles into your life. Trust that it is all going to go uphill from here as long as you move forward with faith in your heart. TAURUS:

Like the rams, you're transmuting the pain, the sadness, the rejection, and the loneliness into the higher vibrations of joy, creativity, and love. They say like attracts like, and you want to embody this love as fully as you can. The good news is, your outer reality is reflecting your shift in perspective as well. You are surrounded by that warm and fuzzy feeling and people who remind you of what being truly happy is supposed to feel like.

GEMINI: There's something amiss here, and you've known it for a while, Gemini. The fact that they don't look you in the eye when they say certain

things. The fact that there is a huge disconnect between what they practice and what they preach. It's time for you to pay attention to the red flags-and we mean *all* of them. It's time to hold space for the dreaded conversation.

What the cards are bringing your attention to this full moon is the need for balance. You've been on the productivity train for a while now, and it's time to give yourself the break you deserve. One word: prioritise. Get the important stuff out of the way, so you can take the rest of the day off. Remember, nothing is more therapeutic than spending quality time with the people you love.

Maybe home is not a place. It's a feeling you feel in the company of those you love, and it's a feeling you are celebrating fervently today. Your romantic side is also coming to the fore, Leo, and it's inspiring you to make your lover feel special. We know it's all about the grand, sweeping gestures for you! But, just for today, be present to them and indulge them in small, simple things that add value to their existence.

So it didn't work out the first time? So you faced resistance the second and third time around too? What makes you say victory will not ultimately be yours? This chapter of your life is about integrating your past learnings and moving forward with courage and conviction. You are supported in all of your ventures, Virgo. Trust that and give this your best shot.

Libra, you want to see the best in people and you believe in their inherent goodness. But, could this work against you on certain occasions? Saturday sees you taking your rose-tinted glasses off and seeing the situation for what it is. Some people are just not worth your time and effort, so it's best to redirect your attention towards yourself.

Visualise this: a blank canvas in front of you. A blank canvas of infinite possibilities waiting to be painted in the colours of the rainbow. This is your moment, Scorpio. Your moment to transmute all the pain, all the sadness, and all the rejection into the higher vibrations of joy, creativity, and love. The real question is, "What will you choose to focus on today?" SAGITTARIUS:

Big things do not happen overnight, and instant gratification isn't real. This chapter of your life is about committing to the hustle and watching your labour of love grow organically. As for the seeds you planted a long time ago? They're beginning to bear fruit now, reminding you that slow and steady truly does win the race. **CAPRICORN:**

'Peace' and 'harmony' are your magic words, Capricorn, and the full moon is helping you call in the blessings you deserve. Things on the domestic front are looking especially lit this week. You and your (soul) family have a new found appreciation for each other's presence. For some of you, taking a step towards commitment may be on the cards too. Trust what your heart is telling you at this time as you remember that some risks are truly worth it. You and your (soul) family are appreciating each other's presence

Owner, Printer, Publisher Dr. ROMA KANTI ALLEY, Printed at M/S. Baba Offset Press Works Pvt. Ltd., Tadong Bazaar, East Sikkim, Gangtok, Pin: 737102 and Published from Santa Bhawan Complex, Near Diesel Power House, Gangtok. East Sikkim-737101, District- East, Gangtok, State- Sikkim Editor: PURAN TAMANG. Phone- [03592] 208698 E-mail- news@summittimes.com ~ letters@summittimes.com