

Karnataka, Manipur and Chandigarh Top NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index 2021

PIB
New Delhi, July 21:

Karnataka, Manipur and Chandigarh have topped in their respective categories in the third edition of NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index.

The index was released today by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery in the presence of Member Dr VK Saraswat, CEO Parameswaran Iyer and Senior Adviser Neeraj Sinha, and Institute for Competitiveness Chairman Dr Amit Kapoor.

While Karnataka has topped again in the 'Major States' category, Manipur is leading the 'North East and Hill States' category and Chandigarh is the top performer in the 'Union Territories and City States' category.

'Innovation is the key to

sustainable and inclusive growth. It can help us solve the biggest challenges of our times; bringing millions out of poverty, generating livelihood opportunities, and paving the way for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat,' said Dr Saraswat.

'I would like to reaffirm NITI Aayog's continued commitment to monitoring the state of innovation in India through the India Innovation Index. We strive to improve the innovation ecosystem across the nation in partnership with the states and other stakeholders,' said Mr Iyer.

What is the India Innovation Index?

Prepared by NITI Aayog and the Institute for Competitiveness, the India Innovation Index is a comprehensive tool for the evaluation and development of the country's innovation ecosystem. It

NE and Hill states			UT and City states		
States	III 2021	Rank	States	III 2021	Rank
Manipur	19.37	1	Chandigarh	27.88	1
Uttarakhand	17.67	2	Delhi	27.00	2
Meghalaya	16.00	3	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	17.29	3
Arunachal Pradesh	15.46	4	Puducherry	15.08	4
Uttar Pradesh	14.62	5	Goa	14.93	5
Sikkim	13.85	6	Jammu and Kashmir	12.83	6
Mizoram	13.41	7	Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Diu	12.09	7
Tripura	11.43	8	Lakshadweep	7.38	8
Assam	11.29	9	Ladakh	5.91	9
Nagaland	11.00	10			
			Odisha	11.42	16
			Chhattisgarh	10.87	17

ranks the states and the union territories on their innovation performance to build healthy competition amongst them.

The third edition highlights the scope of innovation analysis in the country by drawing on the framework of the Global Innovation Index.

The number of indicators has increased from 36 (in the India Innovation Index 2020) to 66 (in the India Innovation Index 2021). The indicators are now distributed across 16 sub-pillars, which, in turn, form seven key pillars.

India Innovation Index 2021: Overall Rankings

The contours of the India Innovation Index 2021 remain the same as last year. Similar to the previous edition, the five 'Enabler' pillars measure inputs and the two 'Performance' pillars measure output. All the indicators in the Enabler pillars cover features crucial for promoting innova-

tion within a state/union territory. Indicators in the Performance pillars represent a nation's output in knowledge creation and competitiveness.

'Innovation is critical in promoting the country's resilience and self-reliance. The index points to the decentrali-

zation of innovation across all Indian states,' said NITI Aayog Senior Adviser Neeraj Sinha.

'The index also draws some international parallels, which will add to India's learnings and how we can be on a par with our counterparts,' said Institute for Competitiveness Chairman Dr Amit Kapoor.

The India Innovation Index 2021 is a testament to the Government of India's continued commitment to transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.

The India Innovation Index also contributes to the Government's effort to monitor select global indices through the Global Indices to drive Reform and Growth (GIRG) mechanism, for which the NITI Aayog is the nodal organization.

Presidential elections 2022: Murmu surges ahead of Sinha, final announcement shortly

New Delhi, July 21:

India is set to get its 15th president today as the counting of votes is underway for the presidential elections. The contest lies between BJP-led NDA candidate Droupadi Murmu and joint Opposition candidate Yashwant Sinha. However, BJP's nominee Murmu is likely to be the odds-on favourite to be elevated to the country's highest constitutional office. The NDA candidate secured 540 votes while Opposition's Yashwant Sinha secured 208 votes in the first round of counting.

The former Jharkhand governor Droupadi Murmu, if elected, will be the first tribal President of India and the country's second female President.

Meanwhile, local BJP is planning victory celebrations for Murmu after the results are announced.

On July 18, all elected MLAs and MPs across the

country had voted for Ram Nath Kovind's successor between 10 am to 5 pm across 31 locations including the Parliament House and 30 centres within state legislative assemblies. Of the 736 electors comprising 727 MPs and nine MLAs who were permitted by the Election Commission to vote at Parliament House, 728 electors cast their votes. The total turnout at Parliament House was 98.91 percent.

Officials involved in the counting of votes say that the final result of the presidential election can be revealed in the next one and a half to two hours.

One of Murmu or Sinha will succeed Ram Nath Kovind to the highest constitutional post in the country after his term expires later this week.

Murmu is widely expected to be that person, given the numbers in the camp of the BJP and its allies. She will become the first member of a tribal community (and only the second woman) to become president of India.

Celebrations in anticipation of that win erupted early in Murmu's hometown in Odisha's Raipur, where vast quantities of sweets have been prepared.

Prime minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Murmu at her current accommodation in Delhi later today, to congratulate her, sources said.

Murmu filed her nomination papers in the parliament this month flanked by the prime minister and home minister Amit Shah - a statement of intent and power to an opposition struggling to unite.

On paper, Yashwant Sinha has the backing of at least 30 political parties, including the Congress, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Trinamool Congress and several others.

In practice though, on the day of voting there were reports of opposition lawmakers cross-voting in favour of Murmu, including Congress' Kuldeep Bishnoi (Haryana) and Mohammad Moqim (Odisha).

Governor visits Lilong Sub-division in Thoubal District



IT News
Imphal, July 31:

Governor of Manipur La. Ganesan today visited Lilong Sub-Division in Thoubal District and interacted with District Level Officers (DLOs), representatives of Civil Society Organisations and student leaders. In the interaction programme held at Lilong Bazar, Governor heard the grievances and issues faced by the people

in the Sub-Division and assured them to extend all possible help.

Speaking at the gathering, Governor said, government is always ready to serve people and therefore different schemes have been introduced and implemented at the Centre and the State. He said, many people have been benefitted under the schemes and larger issues like improvement of health facilities, providing safe drinking water and issues faced by the people

of education sector and connectivity etc. will be addressed in a time bound manner. He continued that government is planning to address these issues and works have already been started. Almost all roads will be repaired within nine months and latest by a year in the State. Under Jal Jivan Mission, works have been started to augment existing infrastructures of water supply and safe drinking water will be

provided to every household, he added.

On Covid-19 pandemic, Governor said, this dreaded disease was almost nil in the State before one and a half months. Unfortunately, during the last month, the number of Covid-19 cases has been increasing but still remained well under control. We have to be still very careful and alert. He appealed people to get vaccinated which is the best way to defeat the pandemic. Expressing concern over the increasing number of youths in drug abuse and trafficking in the State, Governor said, it is a dangerous step and all should co-operate the Government to stop the drug culture. It is a huge challenge in the development process of the nation. Governor further said that on attaining 75th years of Independence and as a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav let us celebrate Independence Day with joy and hoist National Flag in every household in the State. He appealed all sections of society to co-operate with the government in the development works in the State.

contd. on page 4

ATIPOM wants financial autonomy for Go to Hill programme

IT News
Imphal July 21:

While appreciating the government of Manipur led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh for launching the "Go to Hill 2.0" programme, the All Tribal Indigenous Peoples' Organisation of Manipur (ATIPOM) demands financial autonomy and budget allocations to achieve the goal of the programme.

In a press statement, the ATIPOM said that the funding pattern for the programmes is incompatible with achievement of the, slated goals of "Go To Hills 2.0", which is the terrible reality of the situation. Programs and initiatives of the govern-

ment that lack financial autonomy and budget allocations remain on paper only. The organization however appreciated the N. Biren Singh led government and extended their support to "Go To Hills 2.0."

"The organisation supports the mission's goal of bringing the government closer to the people by building friendly relationships with and among the public via rigorous development. It also took cognisance of the recently inaugurated thirty projects with a total value of Rs. 37.34 crores in sectors such as works, tribal affairs and hills, and health to mark the launch of the initiative. Through these outreach

programmes, the state government provided equipment and support of Rs 51.52 crores to a variety of ministries, including those in agriculture, horticulture, health, social welfare, and education", the statement said.

It however said that there is no additional funding and most importantly separate budget for this excellent policy, which is a hindrance to the delivery of the program's benefits.

"This policy, introduced by the current administration under the capable leadership of N Biren Singh as People's Chief Minister, would be rendered ineffective if funding is not commensurate with objectives. The Organization commends the

much acclaimed People's Day (Meeyamgi Numit), Hills Peoples' Day, and Hills Leaders' Day, flagship events held on the 15th and 10th of every month to provide the people a forum to voice problems and propose suggestions. In an effort to make government proactive, citizen-centric, and programme implementation efficient, software and an SMS service have been developed to track and notify citizens of the action taken on their complaints, and a Grievance Redressal Cell have been established to provide greater facilitation and coordination for the prompt disposal of complaints.

contd. on page 4

Borobekra SDC office reopens after 15 years

IT Correspondent
Jiribam, July 21:

The SDC office of Borobekra Sub-Division under Jiribam District which was set up in 1983 to facilitate revenue related works in Borobekra Sub-Division but ceased functioning since a decades, has resumed operation from today.

The reopening function of the SDC office was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Jiribam W. Malemnganba Chenglei, ADC Jiribam Jemson Hangsing along with other officials and local Pradhan, public leaders.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Jiribam W. Malemnganba Chenglei (IAS) expressed that the Borobekra Sub-Division is around 24km from District headquarters, since long time the Sub Divisional officer was not appointed but recently under the initiative of Chief Minister's Sub Divisional development plan the SDC office of Borobekra was re-opened. He added that the reopening of the SDC office will help accelerate development in the area.

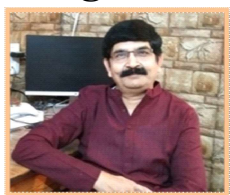
Thereafter, the Pradhan of Borobekra Gram Panchayat Laljading Hmar expressed that reopening of SDC office will

ease the hardships of people of Borobekra Sub-Division for going to and fro to district headquarters for official works.

The SDC Borobekra Sub-Division Moirangthem Devananda Singh (MCS) said that under the initiative of Chief Minister Sub Divisional development monitoring mission, the SDC office of Borobekra Sub-Division re-opened. He assured, he will make his best efforts for various developmental works in the areas.

He further urged the people for extending support to the new government's endeavour to execute works for the development of the areas.

Beware. Covid cases again rising in India



By: Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit

COVID-19 infections are now increasing in India. Since many people are vaccinated, this virus is now concentrating on the throat and the nose and replicating fast and transmitting also very fast. It reveals the fact that the poor adherence to safety protocols is driving the surge. The rise in COVID-19 cases has mirrored the pattern of the worst days of the crisis. The reckless and selfish behaviour witnessed around the country has drawn much ire. Why do some people dodge their responsibility in these difficult times? Medical experts have flagged that many people not wearing masks and violating social distancing norms have contributed to the sudden spurt in novel coronavirus cases. A large number of people going out of their homes, either not wearing a mask or wearing it only on their chin. This has spread infection and that is one of the reasons we are seeing a spike in cases in the last several days. The laxity in not wearing masks, congregating in numbers, holding large functions and going out even for non-essential activities have all played their part in promoting the surge. We have also seen that in the number of political meetings and rallies being organised, with elections being held at the block, local body and assembly levels.

The pandemic has taken a toll on the mental health of a lot of people, and for those who live alone it is a cause of worry. The age-old mantra "prevention is better than cure" is the solution in hand and is especially important for those who taught us the same, the senior citizens of our society. The elderly is at a greater risk against COVID 19, and those with pre-existing problems are all the more vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the interconnected nature of our world – and that no one is safe until everyone is safe. It is also observed that the younger population mostly starting to go out, posting pictures on social media about sitting at a cafe or a restaurant, which quite a dangerous trend is. The reasons for the sharp rise in cases could be mainly attributed to the severe decline in compliance of COVID-appropriate behaviour, especially in the use of masks and social distancing. The risks of getting COVID-19 are higher in crowded and inadequately ventilated spaces where infected people spend long periods of time together in close proximity. The worst thing that we see is even wearing a mask, even if the bus is crowded, not more than 50% of the people will be found wearing a mask. Even on the roads, in a crowded place many do not wear a mask and even though they stand close to each other.

India has administered at least 1,968,671,713 doses of COVID vaccines so far. Assuming every person needs 2 doses, that's enough to have vaccinated about 72% of the country's population.

Let us maintain "physical distancing" keeping at least 1 meter. This distance helps to avoid direct contact with respiratory droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. Until a vaccine against COVID-19 is available to everyone, we have to continue to do the hard, albeit tedious, work of keeping ourselves safe and healthy—by wearing facial coverings, keeping our social distance, practicing good hand hygiene, and staying home. People must celebrate festivals, Birthdays, Wedding Anniversaries at their homes, as this would help in breaking the Covid-19 chain and preventing a fresh wave of the pandemic. Let us make sure that we are well sanitized and follow all the necessary steps before you approach an elderly person to help. Wearing a mask, washing hands and maintaining distance are a must if one wants to protect oneself. Don't be that if you are careless, walking out without a mask, then we are putting ourselves, our family, our children, the elderly in trouble. This is the time that we have to show the true value of our education and listen to experts and behave responsibly. Your sanitizer and your mask are like your shield. Why not to use it?

Frail Political Parties Derail Parliamentary Democracy



By: M.R. Lalu

Soon after the Udaipur killing, the RSS held a three day meeting of its Prant Pracharaks and senior workers from across the country in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the BJP and other Sangh affiliates to discuss the barbarity that Udaipur witnessed and the intensity of the precariousness that the Hindus in the country have been thrown into, despite a humongous political victory in their favour. It was not long ago did the Congress party convene its Chintan Shibir in Udaipur and both the meetings by the RSS and the Congress were held with special purposes. The RSS might have found potential reasons to strategize an ouster of the Ashok Gehlot led Congress government in the upcoming state elections, which the Sangh feels remained passive throughout the unfolding of the gruesome killing and while the chilling waves of horror emanated from the state. And for the Congress, its Chintan Shibir should have been an occasion to deeply delve into the anomalies that the arrogance of the most powerful dynasty of the party landed it with, and find solutions to resolve the dissension and dissatisfaction among its cadre.

The BJP this time held its national conclave deep down in the south in the city of Hyderabad recently. The party's executive meeting was to mainly focus on what it identified as a push for electoral victories in the south. Except Karnataka, the other South Indian states remained uphill territories for the party which predominantly have been under the control of the local satraps. Unable to hit the area with its usual political narratives of

Hindi, Hindu and Hindutva, the party proposed to enter the scenario with a new recital- the 'dynasty politics'. By bad mouthing on the political dynasties, the BJP aptly targets its arrows on Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in Telangana and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. The BJP is ready to wait for Andhra Pradesh as Jagan Mohan Reddy is not an untouchable for the party. And for Kerala, the state not being an electoral laboratory of any particular family, the BJP should frame different narratives to fit the political dynamics of the state. Nipping its winning aspirations in the bud, local coalitions, both the LDF and the UDF have so far been capable of keeping the BJP behind the fence. All the three conclave had their own significance and cognizance with regard to their respective organisational structure and goals.

The RSS, as of now, is unable to fine-tune the symphony of its usual Hindutva protector song. And the barbarity after the Nupur Sharma episode has turned its sympathisers whipping questions on the outfit's ability to protect the Hindutva ideology that it has been the founder and a propagandist since 1925. The Sarsangchalak's remarks on the Gyanvapi controversy have probably brushed the emotions of a large number of Hindus under the carpet. Meaningfully fire-fighting the anger among the Hindus on what the Gyanvapi survey discovered; a shivling at the wash point of the controversial mosque – Bhagwat's efforts were to block the gushing Hindu emotions from further damaging the BJP government's image at the centre. An India without the BJP holding the power reins is unthinkable for the RSS at present. This is the reason that the Sangh, despite its understanding about Modi's towering popularity beyond the standards and definitions drawn by it, is now ready to compromise to walk an extra mile of disguised compassion on anything that comes against its interest of protecting the Hindu rights. Its silence on the arrests of

sadhus who provoked communal amity in their gathering at Haridwar and its efforts to systematically distance itself from all the controversial issues by assuming the image of a matured moderator, the RSS is trying to send messages across its critics to see it as a sovereign, seeking to present the liberal face of Hindutva. Spanning across its periphery of activities, the RSS accentuates by its gesticulations, a reality that has gone deeper into its reticence, that the popularity of Modi has brought the party out of the shadow of servitude that the RSS had once successfully managed to spread. The party has now managed to build its image as- toundingly visible everywhere without much of its assistance coming from the RSS directly and the Sangh leadership is convinced of this truth.

The political prosperity that the RSS and the BJP could individually, and to some extent collectively achieve should press the nerves of the Congress and other dynasties in India. The more they sit idle the more devastating would be their political future. What comes as an advantage to the BJP- RSS coalition is that it never supports dynasties and the workers from the local level to the national, stay upright and fight to save its ideological embankment fearless and dedicated. Political victory that this coalition could manage to win in the most populous state Uttar Pradesh for the second time has almost made its fortunes rock solid in the Hindi-cow-belt areas. The party's South India push should be seen as a calculative and achievable length that the party leadership has decided to pace forth. On the other hand, the Congress, with its Udaipur conclave declaring future course of action with inclusive and participatory endorsement has not taken much strides to bring about changes in its usual set of behaviour. The party often ends up committing the same mistakes of turning vituperative on Modi and thereby maligning the essence of India. Controversies surfacing on a daily basis on the party's inten-

tions have often been pressing it hard to an incongruent, immature and despicable position. It is a victim of its own internal contradictions and a leadership without commitment and political maturity lands its feeble fortunes in frequent turmoil, exacerbating its internal conflicts further.

What is undeniable at this juncture is the absence of a common opposition checkmating the belligerent BJP from celebrating its paramourty. This was evident from the body language of the opposition parties who turned delirious on the BJP's decision on fielding Draupadi Murmu as its Presidential candidate. The Modi fiefdom could successfully break the capricious walls of opposition unity once again, bringing many among the opposition parties to its side and garner support for its choice for the candidacy. This will be repeated in the Vice President elections too. Mostly being disarrayed and enmeshed in the contrariness of a self-defeatist approach; the opposition parties will keep distance from each other indirectly paving way to what the BJP plans. The outcome is clear and visible; a country without a strong and creative opposition will run amok. The ruling alliance gaining more confidence from the pitfalls of the opposition will grow more perverse and go unquestioned. The monsoon session in the parliament will once again witness uproars and disruptions without anything meaningful happening there. An opposition, overthrown by its own ill-will, would remain unproductive and scared of being resourceful and sagacious on matters that the common men in the country are illusive about. India needs to redefine its parliamentary democracy with more voices from the opposition side creatively echoing the issues of people. The Congress should pull its resolve from the dungeons of an uncanny forgetfulness and dizzy mindset and try to pick pebbles of political fortunes by becoming a candid opposition.

(The author is a Freelance Journalist/Social Worker)

No reason for Bangladesh to be defaulter/ face Sri Lanka like bankruptcy crisis

By: Sufian Siddique

Since gaining independence, Bangladesh has successfully repaid its foreign debt in order to maintain its sterling reputation abroad, according to analysts.

Few eminent economists noted that the nation has never defaulted on foreign loans due to its careful management of external debt, which has a significantly higher proportion of soft loans with longer maturity terms.

There is a lot of discussion concerning Bangladesh's foreign debt at various levels following the economic crises in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

However, according to economic specialists, Bangladesh is not in that much danger because its debt-to-GDP ratio is still below the safe level of 13 percent, as opposed to Sri Lanka's close to 50 percent.

Bangladesh's national debt (as a percentage of GDP) is much lower than that of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan.

Sri Lanka's national debt as measured by the World Development Indicators (WDI) in 2011 was almost 70% of its GDP. The percentage increased dramatically to almost 100% in 2021 as the economic crisis worsened. During the same time period, Pakistan's national debt-to-GDP ratio grew from roughly 60% to 87%.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's national debt is substantially lower, standing at roughly 40% of its GDP in

2021. But the US and Japan have likewise consistently had high debt-to-GDP ratios.

According to the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh's GDP and export volume are larger than those of Sri Lanka and Pakistan combined, and its foreign currency reserves are more than twice as large as those of these two South Asian nations (PMO).

Recent records from the Bangladesh Economic Relations Division (ERD) show that from July to May of the 2021-22 fiscal year, foreign loan assistance to Bangladesh totaled \$5.91 billion. They gave \$8.41 billion, exceeding their intended donation to Bangladesh by 42.40 percent. This kind of foreign credit assistance is uncommon, according to economists.

Project assistance of \$8.22 billion and grants totaling \$188.50 million were obtained from the disbursed loan. In the first 10 months of the previous fiscal year, \$2.53 million in food grants and \$186 million in project grants were received.

However, for the fiscal year 2020-21, from July to May, development partners released \$5.72 billion. As a result, in the first 10 months of the previous fiscal, foreign credit assistance climbed by 47%.

Donors committed \$5.36 billion in loans between July 2020 and May 2021, according to ERD. It climbed to \$5.91 billion over the same period of the fis-

cal year 2021-2022 by 10.20 percent.

The amount of interest paid has increased by 10%. However, Bangladesh has already paid \$1.88 billion to development partners in principal and interest. As a result, the loan's principal and interest repayment increased from the previous fiscal year to this one by 10%, totaling \$1.71 billion.

However, after the economic crisis in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, there is a lot of talk regarding Bangladesh's foreign debt on several floors. In this regard, Bangladesh always accepts initiatives in terms of truth, according to Planning Minister MA Mannan, since we do not accept anything with passion.

"The nation's reserves and remittances are strong. We consistently pay back international loans and interest due as a result of these factors. We've never failed before, and we won't in this situation either. We always use loans from abroad for the correct reasons. We are paying regular interest and principal, which is primarily why we are unable to eat with the loan, he said.

The newly appointed Finance Secretary Fatima Yasmin explained that Bangladesh was swiftly recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak as an explanation for why the situation in Sri Lanka did not exist in Bangladesh. Many nations in the globe were unable to accomplish that. We had 6.94 percent GDP growth in the 2020-21 fiscal year.

In the most recent fiscal year, more than 7.25 percent will be made. More than 35% more has been made via ex-

ports. More than 15% more money is being collected in taxes. The private sector's debt flow has risen to more than 12%.

"Bangladesh has exceptionally cheap interest rates on foreign loans," she declared. Every economic indicator shows that the economy is doing quite well right now. Bangladesh has more than twice as many reserves as Pakistan and Sri Lanka combined. In contrast to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh has not made any errors. Consequently, there is no issue with international borrowing. Bangladesh will develop more quickly the more foreign loans with cheap interest rates there are.

According to media reports, Dr. Zahid Hussain, a former World Bank lead economist, said that loans and interest payments are rising as export revenues and foreign exchange reserves rise in Bangladesh with regard to foreign interest and actual payments. Remittance influx into the nation is strong. Since the country's independence, these have grown. Bangladesh borrowed money from abroad at cheap interest rates, with lengthy grace periods before repayment. Thus, he said, the nation might have a chance to repay the loan in the future.

The results of development projects are positive. One tool for repaying debt is exports and remittances. It's in a respectable position. Earnings from foreign exchange are relatively substantial. The performance of loan repayment is strong due to all of these factors. In each industry, we have undertaken a distinct endeavor. Money

wasn't thrown away; if it had been, the economy would have suffered. Our economy is currently strong enough, he continued.

Low-rate foreign loans have always aided Bangladesh's development, according to Dr. Monzur Hossain, Senior Research Fellow at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). "The Russia-Ukraine war has now completely altered the global economy after two and a half years of the Covid-19 pandemic, media report says. Bangladesh's economy is still in relatively excellent shape even then. This debt is maintaining the upward trajectory of our economy, he said.

He noted that Bangladesh's economy is in excellent shape, presenting a favorable image of the nation to the rest of the globe.

However, Bangladesh has pledged \$127 billion in foreign debt in total since its independence. According to ERD sources, of this, \$72 billion has been disbursed, while the pipeline has \$50 billion (excluding autonomous ones).

Various development projects have received loans and grants from development partners. Since Bangladesh's independence, the World Bank has disbursed a total of \$23 billion to that country.

ADB has since issued \$18 billion, while Japan has paid out \$16 billion. China issued \$4.38 billion at this time. At the same time, the European Union contributed \$4 billion, the United States \$3.5 billion, Russia \$3 billion, Canada and Germany both contributed \$2 billion, UNICEF received \$1.5 billion, In-

dia received \$1.47 billion, the Netherlands contributed \$1 billion, Denmark contributed \$1 billion, Saudi Arabia contributed \$1 billion, and Sweden contributed \$1 billion.

Bangladesh has been successful in making timely principal and interest payments to the development partners on these loans. As a result, Bangladesh is constantly owed money by development partners.

There are now 498 million people who are able to pay international interest, up from 7.5 million previously. In contrast, Bangladesh's war-torn fiscal years of 1971-1972 and 1972-1973 saw no repayment of foreign loans and principal.

Since 1973-1974, Bangladesh has made regular repayments of its foreign debt, including interest. Bangladesh barely paid \$6.5 million in foreign interest during the first fiscal year (1973-1974).

The capacity to pay foreign interest has climbed to \$498.18 million at the moment. According to economists, Bangladesh's economy is always expanding and that country's capacity to pay interest is also rising.

They claimed that Bangladesh's economy is currently in a very good position and that as a result, the payment of foreign interest has increased significantly. Bangladesh has taken already cautionary measures to not be loan defaulter. Bangladesh has taken 'cost minimization' policy to not face Sri Lanka like crisis.

(The author is a Researcher and freelance columnist, Dhaka)

Letters, Feedback and Suggestions to 'Imphal Times'

can be sent to our e-mail - imphaltimes@gmail.com.

For advertisement kindly contact: - 0385-3590330 (O). For time being readers can reach the office at Cell Phone No. 9862860745 for any purpose.

India logs 21,566 fresh COVID cases, 45 deaths; active infections rise to 1,48,881

Agency
New Delhi, July 21:

India saw a single-day rise of 21,566 coronavirus cases, the highest in 152 days, taking its COVID-19 tally to 4,38,25,185, while the number of active cases in the country climbed to 1,48,881 on Thursday, the Union health ministry said.

The death toll due to the viral disease has gone up to 5,25,870 with 45 more fatalities, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am.

The active cases account for 0.34 per cent of the total

caseload, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.46 per cent, the ministry said.

An increase of 3,227 cases was recorded in the active Covid caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 4.25 per cent, while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 4.51 per cent, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has gone up to 4,31,50,434, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.2 per cent.

According to the ministry, 200.91 crore doses of Covid vaccines have so far been administered under the nationwide Covid vaccination drive.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 2020, 40 lakh on September 5, 2020 and 50 lakh on September 16, 2020.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 2020, 70 lakh on October 11, 2020, 80 lakh on October 29, 2020, 90 lakh on November 20, 2020 and the one-crore mark on December 19, 2020.

The country crossed the grim milestone of two crore

Covid cases on May 4 last year, the three-crore mark on June 23 last year and four crore cases on January 25 this year.

The Centre on Wednesday reviewed the Covid-19 surge in nine states - Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh. The union health ministry said that the nine states will "have to monitor and report district-wise cases of severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) and influenza-like illness (ILI) on a daily basis".

Sonia Gandhi to appear before ED in National Herald case, party leaders to protest nationwide, Akbar Road sealed

Agency
New Delhi, July 20:

Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi will appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday in the National Herald case.

The Congress has decided to protest across the country against the BJP-led government Thursday in support of Sonia Gandhi.

Congress leader Manickam Tagore tweeted, "Congress office HQ in Akbar Road but now closed by shah police.... They know the strength of Congress workers and their commitment."

The police have already made elaborate arrangements and have barricaded Akbar Road as the party headquarters is located at 24, Akbar Road.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, other senior party leaders and MPs are already present in Delhi. They had a meeting this evening at Congress leader

Mallikarjun Kharge's house.

Congress leader and former MP PL Punia said that both the Houses of Parliament would be adjourned on Thursday and after that, all Congress MPs will gather at Pant Marg near Gurdwara Rakabganj and from there they will reach the Congress headquarters together.

Further, Punia said that the rest of the Congress leaders and AICC members will go to the ED office from the party headquarters in support of Sonia Gandhi.

Official sources said that Sonia Gandhi has been asked to appear before the investigators at the party headquarters here around 11 am on Thursday.

The fresh summons was issued as Sonia Gandhi could not join the ED investigation in the case due to COVID-19.

The agency had earlier issued similar summons to Sonia Gandhi as she did not appear before the investigators on June

8 and then on June 21 due to COVID-19.

The Congress leader had developed a mild fever on June 1 evening and was found COVID-19 positive upon testing the next morning.

The ED had on June 1 summoned Sonia Gandhi to appear before its investigators on June 8 in the case for the first time in connection with a money laundering case involving the National Herald.

The ED wants to record both Sonia Gandhi's statements under criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

The ED last month questioned Rahul Gandhi on several occasions in the case.

The case to investigate alleged financial irregularities under the PMLA was registered about nine months ago after a trial court took cognisance of an Income Tax Department probe carried out on the basis of a private criminal complaint

filed by former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Subramanian Swamy in 2013.

Swamy had approached the court alleging that the assets of Associated Journals Limited (AJL), which published the National Herald newspaper, were fraudulently acquired and transferred to Young Indian Pvt Limited (YIL), in which Sonia Gandhi and her son owned 38 per cent shares each.

The YIL promoters include Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. Swamy had alleged that the Gandhis cheated and misappropriated funds, with YIL paying only Rs 50 lakh to obtain the right to recover Rs 90.25 crore that AJL owed to the Congress.

Congress argued that YIL was a not-for-profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 that can neither accumulate profits nor pay dividends to its shareholders.

Supreme Court allows 27 percent reservation for Maharashtra in Polls



The Supreme Court's decision to allow 27 percent reservation to OBC in elections to local bodies has quelled the tension in the political arena in Maharashtra.

By Raju Vernekar
Mumbai, July 21:

The Supreme Court (SC) accepted the Bhanthia Commission report and gave consent to 27 per cent reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBC) in elections to local bodies soothing tension in the political arena in Maharashtra on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis both took to Twitter to celebrate the SC's order. Fadnis wrote, "Our grand coalition government kept its promise of OBC political reservation! The recognition of OBC political reservation by the Supreme Court is a victory for the entire OBC community." On the other hand, Shinde tweeted, "OBC community has been granted political reservation by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. We are the true Shiv Sainiks of Shiv Sena chief Balasaheb Thackeray. Once a promise is made, it will be kept."

The bench, comprising Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, A.S. Oka, and J.B. Pardiwala, said: "We direct the State Election Commission (SEC) to ensure the election process in respect to each of those local bodies is immediately commenced and taken forward based on order dated May 4, 2022." The SC also directed the Election Commission and SEC to announce elections within 2 weeks. The elections to 92 municipal councils and 4 Gram Panchayats were delayed due to the pending SC judgment.

In March, the MVA government had set up a committee led by former chief secretary Jayant

Bhanthia for collating empirical data on the OBCs following the SC's refusal to accept an interim report of the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission (MSBCC) headed by Justice (retired) A.V. Nigude.

The MSBCC in February had recommended the restoration of a 27% political quota in local bodies subject to a permissible upper limit of 50% excluding statutory reservation for SC and ST. It had stated that the OBC population in Maharashtra is 38% and not 33% as pointed out by the union ministry of social justice in its report released in March 2021.

Whereas the Bhanthia Commission formed on March 10 by the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, in its report submitted to the Shinde-Fadnis government on July 10, said that as per the survey carried out based on the voter's list, the population of the backward class of citizens is estimated to be around 37% and it is different in each local body. As such the reservation for the backward class of citizens should be given in proportion to their population in each local body without affecting the statutory reservation for SC and ST subject to the overall reservation limit of 50%.

The Commission submitted its report to the SC on July 12. In between the SEC announced the program of local elections on August 18 (without OBC reservation). This stance was questioned by the Maharashtra government and Opposition.

The state implemented the 27 per cent OBC reservation in

civic body elections in 1994. However subsequently, Vikas Gawali, a former member of Zilla Parishad from Washim district, approached the Bombay High Court and sought a stay on the election process in Washim and Akola districts citing the breaching of the 50 per cent ceiling for reservation. The court ordered the status quo and the elections were delayed. Then Gawali approached the SC, which passed an interim order directing the SEC to conduct the polls subject to the final order of the pending petition.

In 2010, SC stated that dedicated commissions need to be appointed to conduct a rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of backwardness. In the absence of updated empirical data, it is well nigh impossible for the courts to decide whether the reservations in favour of OBC groups are proportionate or not. The court also fixed the upper limit of reservation at 50 per cent.

In March 2021, the SC said that the provision of Section 12 (2) (c) of the Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act 1961 gave 27 per cent reservation to OBCs might be invoked only after complying with the condition to conduct the empirical inquiry.

After political parties unanimously decided to not hold elections without the OBC quota, the Maharashtra government began demarcating municipal wards for local civic bodies and annulled the earlier procedure. Despite this, the SC on May 10, asked the SEC to announce the election program without the OBC quota.

Career Guidance

Declining interest in Books among Children



By: Vijay Garg

Amidst the hustle and bustle of social media, the declining fascination for books among the new generation of children is a matter of serious concern. More and more children are confined to the books of the school curriculum. The burden of the bag gives them less opportunity to read books on different subjects.

At the same time, the teachers also did not perform this responsibility properly to motivate the new generation to read additional books from the subject. The irony is also that the children of the affluent sections of the society and the policy-makers, were born in expensive public schools oriented towards. Even if there has been a trend of books, then preference was given to books of foreign authors, in

which the environment is foreign, the culture is from abroad and the lifestyle and heroes are also from abroad. Maybe in the coming time, the question of any public school student will be who is Premchand? It is difficult to say that a generation immersed in online games and virtual world representatives in social media, immersed in selfie culture and artificial folk behavior, will find time to read Indian literature and books of various genres.

But still our Efforts should be made that the new generation should be acquainted with the literature written in Indian soil and mother tongue. This initiative should be taken by teachers, parents and our policy makers. In such a situation, the initiative of Himachal Pradesh Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar in the direction of developing the culture of reading and writing is inspiring, in which he himself goes to the schools and presents books to the children out of the syllabus and developing the culture of reading and writing in them. These include those books in which those who have made great contributions to the country, soci-

ety and culture. Heroes are mentioned. The Governor not only gives the books but also invites his feedback himself. A student wrote to him telling him that he did not know that he should read books outside the syllabus.

Undoubtedly, books enrich the vision of the students. A book contains the dense experiences of time and life. While books develop the culture of reading in the students, they also develop linguistic values. Develop in them the idea that poison how should I behave in situations? This also exposes the students to the challenges of the country. Their thinking develops and they move towards becoming ideal citizens.

Books also work to break the monotony arising out of the school curriculum. There is no doubt that the meaning of education has changed in our present society. What used to be a role in building a better citizen has been replaced by fierce competition and economic priorities. The disappearance of life values and ideals in our lives will eventually lead to social evils rise to distortions. The increase in violent behavior and crimes in

the society is also the defeat of our life values. Undoubtedly, the goal of education is not only the competition for marks, but also the development of human values and values in the student. The rising incidence of sexual and child crimes in the country is a matter of concern.

Undoubtedly, the country-time situation can be the primary reason for the disorientation of a child, but that education is also necessary which can inculcate conscience in the children. The values of life behavior are the same in every age, in every period Character and goodwill are the primary. Indian philosophy of life has never been a follower of occultism. Indian life values have contributed a lot in the personality formation of the Indian talents who are waving their success in the western countries today. Western society is also a fan of the same family values. Today the society of developed countries is following the same family values. The rites of reading pass on the acquired experiences of many of our generations to the new generation, making us unique in the rest of the world.

Grounding of Unmanned Barge at Guhagar Beach

IT Correspondent
Mumbai, July 21:

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has spotted an unmanned barge grounded along the Palshet coast off Guhagar beach near Jaigad harbour in Ratnagiri district of coastal Konkan region of Maharashtra.

The non-self-propelled barge spotted on Tuesday, was not carrying any fuel. It was being towed by "Tug ASL Osprey" (an offshore supply ship) from Colombo to Djibouti with some heavy machinery onboard.

It was reported that due to the rough sea conditions, the tow parted and machinery fell off the barge due to which the barge turned upside down on July 08 at about 200 nautical miles from the Indian Coast.

A Coast Guard spotted the barge during helicopter surveillance when it was expected that would reach close to the spot where the JSW Jaigad port, Angre Port Private limited, and Sande Lavgan port are located. After drifting approximately 200 nautical miles in an easterly direction towards the Indian coast, the barge finally grounded at Guhagar beach on July 19.

The "Tug ASL Osprey" reported the likely sinking of the barge on July 10. However, considering the possibility of submergence, the Indian Coast Guard issued a navigational warning to all the mariners and kept a lookout for the submerged barge.

It was confirmed by the Indian Coast Guard that the vessel was not carrying any fuel

and there was no danger of marine pollution in the area.

Indian Coast Guard had already alerted the State authorities of the situation. Now the Tug Marigold and Salvor belonging to M/s Brand Marine Consultant, Mumbai, a global marine consultancy, has been arranged by the owner of M/s Capitol Navigation PTE Ltd, Singapore. The tugs have been positioned near the location for salvage of the grounded barge, an ICG statement said.

However, the grounded barge created panic among local fishermen who suspected heavy oil spillage from it, which would contaminate the waters and will affect their fishing activities. But the Maharashtra Maritime Board officials dispelled the rumours.

Centre asks States, UTs to strictly monitor Covid-19 Home Isolation cases, prevent spread

Agency
New Delhi, July 21:

The Centre urged the states and Union territories on Wednesday to strictly monitor the home isolation cases of Covid-19 so that these patients do not intermingle in the community, while stressing on awareness regarding home-test kits through the rapid antigen test (RAT) for a timely identification of the disease. The states were advised to conduct surveillance and report district-wise SARI (Severe Acute Respiratory Illness) and ILI (Influenza-like Illness) cases on a daily basis and also to send these for genome sequencing to the mapped INSACOG laboratories.

These states are either reporting a surge in the number of fresh Covid cases or a rise in the positivity rate, the statement said. The public health measures for surveillance, containment and management of Covid-19 were also reviewed, it stated.

Dr Vinod Paul, Member

(Health), NITI Aayog was also present at the meeting. Expressing concern regarding the surge in the number of cases in these states in the last one month, Paul said, "We need to be mindful that Covid is not gone. Looking at the global scenario, we need to be at high alert. There is poor surveillance, poor testing and below-average vaccination in many states undergoing the present surge." He urged the states to improve the testing in areas reporting a high positivity rate, increase surveillance in accordance with the revised surveillance strategy and speed up vaccination, the statement said. Bhushan underlined the critical Covid control and management strategies. All districts reporting a high positivity rate need to undertake adequate testing with a higher proportion of RTPCR tests. Any laxity will re-

sult in deterioration of the situation in these districts, the Union health secretary said.

There is a need to effectively and strictly monitor the home-isolation cases so that these patients do not intermingle in their neighbourhoods, community, village, mohalla, ward etc. and spread the infection. The states were also urged to send positive samples from large clusters and outbreaks in the community and unusual events for whole genome sequencing.

They were asked to create added awareness regarding reporting of those who opt for home test kits through the RAT for a timely identification of those cases that need clinical management.

All such positive patients to be advised for home isolation to prevent the infection spread in the community, the statement said.

AR foils smuggling of Narcotics and Khangra Wood

IT News
Imphal, July 21:

In two separate operations, Modi Battalion under aegis of IGAR (S) foiled smuggling of Heroin and Khangra Wood in Chandel District and Areca Nuts in Kakching District on 20 and 21 July 2022.

Based on specific intelligence, troops of Assam Rifles launched a search operation in Old Songyang, Chandel District. After intense search, two cartons well concealed under the foliage were recovered. The cartons contained 188 Soap Cases of Heroin weighing

approximately 1.88 Kg worth Rs 7.52 crores. Seized items were handed over to the Narcotics Control Board, Imphal today.

In another intelligence based operation launched by Assam Rifles in Chandel district. The troops seized Khangra wood worth of Rs 8 lakhs which were being ferried in three buses. Seized timber along with the buses and nine traffickers were handed over to the Range Officer, Forest department, Chandel district.

In another operation, at a Mobile Vehicle Check post along Pallel - Imphal axis. The

troops intercepted a TATA DI vehicle plying on the road on 20 July and another TATA DI vehicle on 21 July which resulted in recovery of 137 bags of Areca Nuts along with several other contraband items. The amount of the seized goods is assessed to be worth Rs 75.23 lakhs. The seized goods along with a vehicle and two traffickers were handed over to Customs Preventive Force, Kakching District.

The total seized items in different operations resulted in recovery of narcotics and contraband items of worth Rs 8.35 crores.

Contd. from Page 1

ATIPOM wants financial....

The Organization also supports the government's commitment to promote the harmonious development of the whole state, with a focus on bridging the emotional and developmental divide between hills and valley. One such endeavour is the observance of "Hill Leader's Day" on the tenth of every month - a forum for Tribal Chiefs and Hill-based Civil Society Organization Leaders to discuss their issues, identify obstacles, and push for stronger Hill-Valley connections to promote equitable development", the statement

said.

Taking note of the arduous effort to bridge the chasm between the hills and the valley, the Organization also urged the government to explore the possibilities of making this grand programme a success.

"This Organization requests the government to fill out the skeletons of these flagship programmes in order to make them compatible with the goals of Go to Hills", the statement said.

The organization further urged the government to address the infrastructure deficit

in the hills to bridge the development gap, with a particular focus on health and education facilities. It is imperative to perse and implement the promised policies and projects to alleviate the development gap and mistrust existing between the hills and the valley.

It also appealed to the Government of Manipur that a separate budget should be passed by the Manipur State Assembly and, or State Cabinets to translate all the above mentioned noble policies of the Government into reality for the benefits of the hill people.

Governor visits Lilong Sub-division...

Alhaj Md. Abdul Nasir, MLA, Lilong A/C while welcoming the Governor said, it is a proud moment that Governor has come down to hear the grievances and issues faced by the people of Lilong area and hope that he will definitely help to address the issues. He said, among the issues, upgradation of health care facilities is the priority

and he will also apprise to the government in this regard. He also announced that a drug de-addiction centre will shortly be opened in Lilong. Secretary to Governor Bobby Waikhom also spoke on early detection and treatment of Tuberculosis (TB) to achieve India's goal of TB eradication by 2025.

Governor was accorded a

warm welcome on his arrival at the venue by Ahanthem Subhash Singh, Deputy Commissioner, Thoubal and other Officers of District Administration. Earlier, representatives of civil society organizations and student leaders submitted memoranda raising issues and grievances and urged the Governor to take steps at the earliest.

Chalachitram film festival scheduled for Sept

IT Correspondent
Guwahati, July 21:

Sixth Chalachitram National Film Festival is scheduled for 10, 11 September, 2022 at Rabindra Bhawan in the city. Feature, non-feature, documentary and animation films produced between 1 Sept 2020 and 31 August 2022 will be screened in the festival, where the winners of CNFF21 will be awarded with cash prizes, certificates and trophies. For the competition section, the films with Hindi or English subtitles from north-east India will be entertained.

The theme has been declared as Our Heritage Our Pride, but film works with the subject matters of Indian art, culture, tradition, woman, patriotism, development, environments, lands, family, etc will be included. In the non-competitive section, the selected feature films will be awarded cer-



tificates and trophies. A number of distinguished directors and film-writers from different parts of the country are expected to grace the occasion.

"Since 2017 Guwahati has been hosting this festival in March, barring the last year while it was organised in August through online arrangements because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year, the festival is organised in September, keeping in line with other film festivals held across India,"

said Upal Datta, president of Chalachitram Society and festival director of CNFF22.

In a recent media briefing, renowned Assamese sound designer and film director Rajen Rajkhowa along with journalist turned filmmaker Sibanu Bora released the festival logo, which is designed by acclaimed artist Dhanjit Das. A competition among radio & television programs and vlogs in digital platforms on the selected theme will also be held.

Moreover, another competition on best book, article and web-blogs on Assamese cinema is also on the card, informed Bhagavat Pritam, one of the organisers.

"Cinema can be a powerful catalyst of social change and a rich handloom of heritage. However it remains confined largely as a source of entertainment in our country. Primary purpose of the CNFF is to build a bridge between the traditional and the modern outputs with an aim to enable cinema to travel beyond the mainstream and touch the grass roots," said a declaration of the society, which comprises Pramod Kalita, Pabitra Margherita, Amar Jyoti Deka, Babita Samah, Riju Dutta, Sankar Das, Kishor Shivam, etc., adding that interested persons can access all information regarding the festival from www.chalachitram.in.

Sports

Why Mirabai Chanu is the greatest weightlifter India has ever produced

Agency
New Delhi, July 21:

There have been many trailblazers in the field of weightlifting that India has produced down the years. The first Olympic medal that an Indian woman ever received came when Karnam Malleswari clinched the bronze at the 2000 Olympics. Kunjarani Devi is India's most decorated weightlifter having clinched two Asian Games bronze medals and a staggering seven World Championships silver medals. However, no weightlifter has been as iconic as Saikhom Mirabai Chanu.

Mirabai Chanu, in fact has won a medal in almost every tournament that he has participated in. She began to be noticed on the world stage at just 19 years old. In the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, where Indian weightlifters ruled the roost in the 48-kg category, Chanu too left an indelible impression. She lifted 170 kg in the final to clinch a silver medal in her very first major international event.

After a disappointing Rio



Olympics 2016, where she failed to register a legal lift in all her three clean and jerk attempts, Mirabai Chanu bounced back in style at the 2017 World Weightlifting Championships in Anaheim. Weighing in just shy of 48 kg, Chanu lifted a total of 194 kg, to clinch the gold medal at the event. She thus, became the first Indian to win a gold at the event in 22 years since Karnam Malleswari's win in 1995.

In what was her most dominating performance yet, Mirabai Chanu won the gold at the 2018 Commonwealth

Games by lifting 86 kg in snatch and 110 kg in clean and jerk - lifting a total of 196 kg, a whopping 26 kg more than the silver medalist. In fact, she smashed the Commonwealth Games record created by Augustina Nwaokolo in 2010.

The 2021 Asian Championships, which was being held after a year gap due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was another landmark event for Mirabai Chanu. She won the bronze medal at the event, by lifting a total of 205 kg. However, what was significant was that she lifted a total of 119 kg

in clean and jerk, thus creating a world record. In fact, she became the first Indian to hold a world record in weightlifting, and till date no one has broken the record.

However, her crowning glory came at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Mirabai Chanu produced a terrific performance to lift a total of 202 kg (87 kg in snatch and 115 kg in clean and jerk). She was just 8 kg shy of Hou Zhihui's 210 kg lift, as she went on to clinch the silver medal at the event. Thus Mirabai Chanu, became the first Indian weightlifter to clinch an Olympic silver medal, and the second weightlifter from the country to win a medal at the event after Karnam Malleswari's bronze in 2000.

Mirabai Chanu has consistently delivered in major world events, and has a long list of achievements including holding world record. She has done all this and is just 27 years old. She is now heading into the prime of her career and she is bound to win more medals in the future. Hence, she is already the greatest weightlifter India has ever produced.

UEFA Women's EURO 2022: Stanway scores in extra-time against Spain to book England's semi-final spot

Agency
London, July 21:

England rallied from the brink of elimination to beat Spain 2-1 after extra time and reach the semi-finals of Euro 2022 thanks to Georgia Stanway's stunning strike.

Ether Gonzalez's opener had the hosts heading for an early exit, but Ella Toone rescued the Lionesses six minutes from the end of normal time before Stanway's winner took England into the last four of a fourth consecutive major tournament.

Sarina Wiegman's side will face Sweden or Belgium in the last four on Tuesday.

England were given a boost pre-match with the return of Wiegman to the touchline after she tested negative for coronavirus earlier in the day.

The Lionesses had everything their own way in the group stage as they plundered 14 goals without reply against

Austria, Norway and Northern Ireland.

However, despite their own struggles to reach the knockout stages, Spain were a big step up in class.

La Roja had been pre-tournament favourites before injuries to reigning Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas and all-time top goalscorer Jennifer Hermoso rocked their preparation.

Jorge Vilda's side suffered their first defeat since 2019 to Germany in the group stage, but even in that game dominated possession of the ball.

Spain's ability to keep the ball off the hosts frustrated England and another sell out crowd of 29,000 in Brighton for the vast majority of the first 90 minutes.

But they again struggled to turn their possession into goals.

Despite being on the back foot, the home side could have led before the break as Ellen White smashed a loose ball

from a free-kick into the roof of the net only to be flagged offside.

England have still never lost in now 18 games since Wiegman took charge in September.

But they have never come so close to defeat in that time and had to show admirable fight to battle back from a goal down.

Spanish substitute Athenea Del Castillo jinked past Rachel Daly and squared for Gonzalez, who had time to take a touch before firing low into the far corner.

Mary Earps then had to make a brilliant save to prevent a cross from the lively Del Castillo floating into the far corner to double Spain's lead.

Wiegman did not waste time in turning to her bench with White, Fran Kirby and the tournament's top goalscorer Beth Mead surprisingly sacrificed for the introduction of Chloe Kelly, Alessia Russo and Toone.