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# Desi push bans 101 defence imports

Giant step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat, says Rajnath; embargo on guns and missiles import from Dec

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

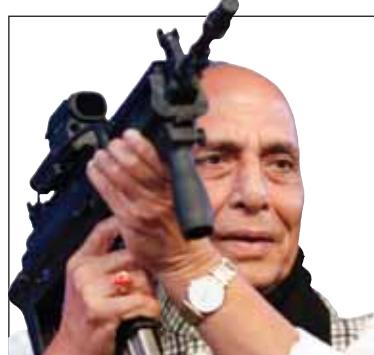
The Government on Sunday announced an import embargo on 101 items to give a major boost to the Indian defence industry.

This move towards self-reliance will see the domestic players manufacturing weapons ranging from artillery guns to missiles and assault rifles to name a few.

They will also be expected to bag orders worth over ₹4 lakh crores over the next seven to eight years as the Army, IAF and Navy will be procuring world class weapon systems developed and manufactured within the country.

The negative list or the embargo will commence from December this year in a graded manner and continue till 2024 as the Services are now amidst negotiating deals with foreign vendors. As defence deals take relatively longer time compared to other contracts, the Government has gone in for timeline for stopping imports.

Making the important



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- A separate budget head has been created with an outlay of nearly ₹52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year, Rajnath said
- More equipment for import embargo would be identified progressively by the Department of Military Affairs in consultation with all stakeholders

announcement about the import embargo, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said here it is a big step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliance) in defence.

In a series of tweets, he said the Defence Ministry has prepared a list of 101 items for which there would be an embargo on the import beyond the timeline indicated against them.

The Minister also said the Defence Ministry has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes.

A separate budget head has been created with an outlay of nearly ₹52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year, he said. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a call for a self-reliant India based on the five pillars, i.e., economy, infrastructure, system, demography & demand and announced a special economic package for Self-Reliant India named 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Elaborating upon the policy, the Minister also said almost 260 schemes of such items were contracted by the Tri-Services at an approximate cost of ₹3.5 lakh crore between April 2015 and August 2020. "It is estimated that contracts worth almost ₹4 lakh crore will be placed upon the domestic industry within the next 6 to 7

years," he said.

Of these, items worth almost ₹1,30,000 crore each are anticipated for the Army and the Air Force while items worth almost ₹1,40,000 crore are anticipated by the Navy over the same period.

Singh said more equipment for import embargo would be identified progressively by the Department of Military Affairs in consultation with all stakeholders.

The list also includes, wheeled Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which the Army is expected to contract almost 200 at an approximate cost of over ₹5,000 crore, he said.

The Defence Ministry officials said the embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 and 2024.

The aim is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the Armed Forces so that they are better prepared to realise the goal of indigenisation.

## PC: PROMISED BANG ENDED WITH WHIMPER

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig, Congress leader and former Home Minister P Chidambaram said the Defence Minister promised a 'bang' on a Sunday morning and ended with a 'whimper.'

The only importer of defence equipment is the Defence Ministry. Any import embargo is really an embargo on oneself. What the Defence Minister said in his historic Sunday announcement deserved only an Office Order from the Minister to his Secretaries!

Import embargo is high sounding jargon. What it means is we will try to make the same equipment (that we import today) in 2 to 4 years and stop imports thereafter, the Congress leader said in a series of tweets.



A health worker takes a nasal swab samples to test for Covid-19 in Hyderabad on Sunday AP

If trend continues, by August end, cases will soar to 35 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India breached 2 million Covid-19 cases on Friday and just in three days from then it has added two lakh more cases, taking the overall count well past 22 lakh cases on Sunday death in a day increased to 1,000.

The country has started recording more than 60,000 cases every day, and death toll are above 900 on daily basis.

The way India is adding new cases and death, by the end of this month, the country could have around 3.5 million cases and nearly 75,000 deaths.

Aparts from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka and West Bengal have started reporting huge number of cases on daily basis.

With several States still not carrying out adequate number of tests, the caseload

could go up substantially when the testing is ramped up.

On Sunday, the country saw its highest single day death count of around 1,000 with Maharashtra alone reporting 390 deaths during the last 24 hours. Maharashtra reported 12,248 new cases, 390 deaths, while 13,348 patients discharged today. The total positive cases in the State rose to 1,45,558.

Mumbai reported 1,066 new positive cases and 48 deaths, while situation in Dharavi remained under control. Tamil Nadu accounted for 119 deaths as there was no let up in the number of positive cases fatalities being reported from various places in the state, which recorded 5,994 new cases.

This is for the eleventh day in a row Tamil Nadu is testing less than 6,000 persons per day.

On August 1, the State had 5,879 patients while the numbers came down to 5,875 on August 2 and 5,609 on August 3. Though the number further came down to 5,063 on August 4, since the last five days it has been showing hike in the number of positive cases.

# 10 killed in inferno at Vijayawada hotel used as Covid care centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A major fire broke out in the early hours of Sunday morning at Hotel Swarna Palace in Vijayawada, which

had been converted into a Covid Care Centre (CCC). At least ten people are feared dead in the mishap besides several others who were injured, according to authorities.

The building was housing Covid-19 patients who were mildly symptomatic and those who did not require hospitalisation.

Ramesh Hospitals has taken Swarna Palace Hotel located in Vijayawada was transformed into temporary Corona hospital to treat Covid-19 patients.

The flames suddenly started in the hotel at about 4.45 am in the early hours on Sunday and the fire tenders started rescue operations at 5 am.

## KALIA money refund kept in abeyance

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Refund of the State Government's KALIA financial assistance by ineligible beneficiaries has been kept in abeyance.

The Director of Agriculture & Food Production has written a letter to the Chief District Agriculture Officers in this regard, sources said on Sunday.

"In view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic situation and the Kharif agricultural crop operations, it has been decided to keep the refund activities of KALIA assistance

from the ineligible beneficiaries in abeyance for the present. Therefore, you are requested to inform the field extension functionaries accordingly," the director said in the letter.

Notably, the Government had recently asked around 50,000 ineligible KALIA beneficiaries, who had availed financial assistance under the scheme, to refund the money.

Out of 51 lakh beneficiaries, about 50,000 were found ineligible, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Department's Principal Secretary Saurabh Garg had said.

Cuttack dist's most Covid cases in urban areas

**RECOVERY RATE 66.03 %; FATALITY 0.01%**  
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Electrical short circuit cause of fire, 31 patients housed in the hotel

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## Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 22,14,077

DEATHS: 44,466

RECOVERED:

15,32,544

ACTIVE: 6,36,603

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	5,15,332	17,757	3,51,710
Tamil Nadu	2,96,901	4,927	2,38,638
Andhra Pradesh	2,27,860	2,036	1,38,712
Karnataka	1,78,087	3,198	93,908
Delhi	1,45,427	4,111	1,30,587
Uttar Pradesh	1,22,609	2,069	72,650
West Bengal	95,554	2,059	67,120
Bihar	79,720	429	51,315
Telangana	79,495	627	55,999
Gujarat	71,064	2,652	54,238
Assam	57,715	145	40,592
Rajasthan	52,977	789	38,235
Odisha	45,927	321	31,785
Haryana	41,635	483	34,781
Madhya Pradesh	39,025	996	29,020
Kerala	34,331	109	21,832



Health Min: Record 7L tests conducted in a day; recovery rate goes up to 68.78%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Scaling up testing capacity in the country, over seven lakh samples have been examined for Covid-19 in a day taking the cumulative tests conducted so far to 2,41,06,535, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday with recovery rate rises to 68.78 per cent.

# 116 MORE TEST +VE IN BBSR; TOTAL 3,932

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR/CUTTACK

As many as 166 new Covid-19 positive cases were detected in Bhubaneswar on Sunday. With this, the total cases in the city mounted to 3,929. Of the new cases, 98 were from quarantine and 68 local contact cases.

The quarantined cases included 17 from Salia Sahi, 13 from a quarantine centre linked with an earlier case; five of Badagada Brit Colony; and two of Old Town Hata Sahi.

The local contacts included three of Shailashree Vihar, two of Chintamaniwar, two of Acharya Vihar, two of Prasanti Vihar, two of Siripuri Kandha Sahi, two of Forest Park, two of

- Day's highest 17 cases from Salia Sahi
- 113 patients recover
- 112 infected in Cuttack city; total climbs to 1,668

Police Colony; two of Unit-8 OCC Colony Basti; two of IRC Village N-6; two cases, both employees of a private hospital; two of Baramunda Jagannath Vihar; two of Badagada Brit Colony; and two of Old Town Hata Sahi.

Besides, 11 were from institutional quarantine, 48 from home quarantine and 31 were local contact cases.

However, another 1,543 patients recovered on the day, taking the total recoveries to 31,784 in the State.

The highest 402 recovered in Ganjam district followed by



## ONLINE CLASS ALTERNATIVE

# 'Let Odisha take cue from C'garh edu model'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While civil society organizations (CSOs) across the country have welcomed the Chhattisgarh Government's move on providing education to children who are not able to attend online classes due to the lack of digital resources, they have urged the Odisha Government to bring a similar alternative model of education to bring a large chunk of rural children to the fore of education.

Recently, Chhattisgarh Education Minister Dr Premasai Singh Temak informed the media that their Government is planning to introduce "Loudspeaker schools" and "Bultu Ke Bol" initiative to teach rural chil-

dren amidst lockdown, with the help of teachers and community across the State.

Under the programme, children especially from rural areas of who depend on the public education system for their studies, will be highly benefited.

Children from poor and marginalised communities will be back to the fore of education, especially who live in remote areas and hilly terrain where basic amenities like electricity and internet are not available.

"The retention of learning for these children was important as they had almost been out of education for more than four months. This will help these children with their learning. The Odisha Government must make a

similar move like Chhattisgarh, immediately to address the children's education in the State," said Odisha Shramajeejee Manch Anjan Pradhan.

"We appreciate the move of the Chhattisgarh Government's recent decision to start offline mode of education which was a result of our month-long campaign titled "Hamari Maang: Achha School, Sudharatmak Shiksha" which was run in five States including Odisha. We also have written letters to the Prime Minister, Governors, Chief Ministers and Education Ministers across the country to highlight the issue of children. We hope that the Odisha Government will also do similar move," said Ruchi Kashyap of Atmashakti Trust.

According to the report of the State Government, out of a total 67,128 Government elementary schools, only 27.68 per cent of them have initiated online education so far and children who attend online classes through a smartphone pegs at merely 31.95 per cent, the report revealed. With the existing digital divide, relying only on online education will push the have-nots out of the education system, which will be accumulating inequality in educational outcomes, it said.

Therefore, the Government must make alternative measures to ensure that these children are not losing out on their education, the members of the CSOs urged.

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## Students advised skill-oriented activities

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Director of AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, Prof Ashok Kumar Mahapatra graced the e-Expert Talk organised by DAV School of Business Management, entitled "Covid-19: Psychosocial Issues and Empowering Students for Future Challenges".

Dr Mahapatra explained the psychosocial situations during the pre-pandemic period citing various facts about economic stability and health statistics across the world. He deliberated on various issues viz. mental health, depression, suicide, and mostly the attitude of people during the Covid-19 scenario.

He focused on the situa-

tion of migrant workers, health workers, police and doctors across the globe as well as emphasized on the psychosocial state of children who need maximum attention specially during this pandemic. He also told about the vital role of teachers and parents towards the society.

He highlighted about the skill-oriented activities for the holistic development of the students citing the focus on National Education Policy.

The e-Expert Talk was followed by an interactive session with the students and teachers thereby addressing the queries on various aspects.

DSBM Principal Dr DN Mishra, moderated the event.

## INBRIEF

### RAMESH PATI GETS PHD IN ENVIRON SCIENCE

**Bhubaneswar:** Ramesh Chandra Pati, senior teacher at the DAV Public School,



Chandrasekharpur, has been awarded with PhD in Environmental Science by the Utkal University. Pati had been conducting researches on "Studies on Environmental Pollution in Different Coastal Cities of Orissa" for the last 12 years under the guidance of Prof Swayam Prakash Rout. The thesis was examined and highly appreciated by CSIR-NEERI, Nagpur's Environmental Materials Division Chief Scientist Dr Sadhana Rayalu and IIT, Kharagpur's Civil Engineering Senior Faculty Prof Anjali Pal. Tata Steel Limited, Kalinganagar's Environment Department senior manager Dr Pradyush Kumar Samantray provided support to Pati in research work.

### MALE SWAMP DEER DIES AT NANDANKANAN



**Bhubaneswar:** A male swamp deer died at the Nandankanan Zoological Park here on Sunday after many days of illness. Now, there are three male deer, five female deer and three fawns in the zoo.

### KEONJHAR BJD HOLDS BLOOD DONATION CAMP



**Keonjhar:** Under the programme of Jeevan Bindu-Mo Sarkar, the Keonjhar BJD held a blood donation camp at Nagar Bhawan, Keonjhar town on Sunday. Total 45 units of blood were collected. Keonjhar BJD present Madhab Sardar organised the programme. Minister Premaanda Naik, Senior party leader and Ghaspura MLA Badri Narayan Patra, Champua MLA Meenakshi Mahanta, Patna MLA Jagannath Naik, Keonjhar MP Chandrani Murmu, Keonjhar Yuva BJD present Soumya Shishir Chakrabarty and Gandhamardan Loading Agency secretary Anjan Kumar Bej were present.

### BEEF-LADEN CONTAINER SEIZED IN JAJPUR



**Jaipur:** A container of stolen beef was seized from Kantapada junction of NH-53 in Jaipur district on Saturday. Bajrang Dal activists stopped the vehicle after receiving a report that about 20 tonnes of beef was being transported. The Jenapur police arrived at the spot, seized the vehicle and detained three people, including the driver, for investigation. The container was reportedly going from Kolkata to Andhra Pradesh.

### BARGARH SHOP BLACK-MARKETING FERT RAIDED

**Bargarh:** The Agriculture Department, Bargarh, led by Deputy Director of Agriculture Dinabandhu Gandhi conducted a raid on a fertiliser shop at Paikmal on Saturday and seized 260 packets of urea. Kishor Agrawal, the owner of the shop was selling the fertiliser at Rs 460 per packet instead of the Government price of Rs 266. Earlier, there were allegations of black marketing against Agarwal, who runs two shops at Paikmal.

## Puri cops' body chief dies at Covid hosp

### Shockwaves among cops

PNS ■ PURI

**P**olice Havildar Sangha president Subhransu Sekhar Pradhan died at a Covid hospital in Puri on Sunday. He was 50 and his untimely death has brought shockwaves among police personnel and administration.

Pradhan was working at police line barrack in Puri. He had been admitted in the Covid

Care Centre at the Cholera Hospital. Sources said his wife and daughter are also under treatment for being Covid-positive.

With 55 new cases on Sunday, as many as 1,273 persons have been confirmed as Covid-infected so far, DIPRO sources said. A total of 746 persons have been discharged from hospital.

The district administration has declared 73 containment zones. The administration has so far collected 29,707 samples for test.

## Odia bodies hail Murmu as new CAG

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

**C**hairman of Vande Utkal Foundation and senior journalist Kishore Dwivedi extended hearty congratulations to Girish Chandra Murmu for becoming the first Odia to be appointed as CAG.

Dwivedi said that the entire Odia diaspora across the globe are feeling proud of Murmu's elevation. Dwivedi wished him all the best in his new office and expressed hope that Murmu will definitely come out with flying colours in his present assignment.

Notably, Murmu, a resident of Mayurbhanj district, has taken over as fourteenth

Comptroller and Auditor General of India. A 1985 Batch IAS officer of Gujarat Cadre, Murmu recently resigned from the office of first Lieutenant Governor of newly created Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir. 61-year-old Murmu was the Principal Secretary to Narendra Modi during his last term as CM of Gujarat before becoming Prime Minister of India in 2014.

The Utkal Sammilani also greeted Murmu. It also thanked the Union Government for appointing an Odia in the prestigious post of CAG, informed Sammilani Manchawar Branch president Dillip Dashsharma.

## ICC CONFERENCE

### 'Authentic human character to help overcome pandemic'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

**T**he Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Odisha organised an e-conference, "The Human Resource (HR) - Post Pandemic Scenario" on August 5.

Union Minister of State for MSME and Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Pratap Chandra Sarangi attended as chief guest, while former Chief Secretary Bijay Kumar Patnaik and Nalco CMD Sridhar Patra joined as guests.

The eminent panelists were Think Talent India Services founder Bimal Rath, former president and global CHRO, JK Organization and

Vedanta Resources A Thiru, president and CHRO, Steel and Corporate, JSW Steel Limited Dilip Pattanayak, Director-HR, Nalco RS Mahapatra, Group Director - HR, JSPLRahul Taneja, former Director-Personnel, Odisha Mining Corporation Ltd Dr Santanu Rath, Head - HR, Paripad Phosphates Ltd JK Khuntia and HR and Communication Specialist on behalf of Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Arun Bhatt, M C Thomas, chairman, JB Pany, co-chairman and Sanjay Patnaik, convenor, HR and IR Committee of ICC Odisha State Council participated in the programme.

They focused on a variety of intricate issues pertaining to how the organisations, leadership and HR leaders should take actions not only just to overcome the catastrophic effect of the Covid 19 pandemic but also deliberated on the strategy and preparedness to face similar catastrophes in future.

Minister Sarangi enlightened the audience with bright examples from the history and the mythology about how we have faced the situations in the past and have the learning's from there. He emphasized that the authentic human character should be nurtured and re-cultivated among the people. Reskilling, devotion, discipline is a must to survive and compete in this world, he told.

Patnaik emphasized on effective communication. He said the companies should be willing to listen to their employees and their ideas.

Patra said that Odisha has faced cyclones. Through experience it has developed its preparedness and planning and today we have ensured that there is no casualty even if we face cyclones every year.

Therefore, learning out of the situation is important to combat the calamities effectively.

## 12-hour Satyagraha held across State

### Thousands protest 'anti-people' policies of Centre, State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR/CUTTACK

**A**midst coronavirus threat, a large number of people joined the 12-hour fast Satyagraha observed in different districts of the State in protest against privatisation of Railways, coalmines, banks, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL) on the occasion of Kranti Divas on Sunday.

They also raised voice against unemployment, farmers' plights and alleged large-scale corruption in Covid funds.

"The fasting-at-own-house call was given by eminent personalities, including Sarvodaya leaders, journalists, lawyers, civil right activists and youth leaders. Over a lakh of Satyagrahis participated in the fast," claimed Debi Prasad Prusty, coordinator of the action committee.

He said families at many places in Dhenkanal and other districts observed fasting.

He slammed that Naveen Patnaik Government supported the Narendra Modi Government in auctioning of coal blocks. Besides, both have joined hands to finish the NINL steel plant.

Reforms in power sector would burden the consumers and changes in environment and labour laws will destroy environment and pave the way for rampant loot of natural resources, he alleged.

Prusty said the agriculture ordinance is not for farmers interest.

Eminent persons like Pravul Samantara, Lingaraj Azad, Panchanan Senapati, Md Usman, Manas Jena, Bidyadhar Duriya, Sushant Dhal Kishore Das, Bijaya Parida, Aren Pani and women organisers Indumati Sahu, Sasmita Behera, Manoranjan Pattnaik, Bikram Swain led the fasting.

Former MLAs Radhakanta Sethy and Narayan Reddy and PCC president Nirajan Patnaik extended support.

All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC) led by Cuttack district secretary Rajkishore Mallick, office secretary Khageswar Sethi, Pavel Priyadarshan, Sharat Chandra Behera, Bhagirathi Bhoi, Shivanand Ray, Deba Prasad Ray, Debi Prasad Prusty, Kishore Mania, Girija Dash and over a hundred others joined

## 'RETURN MY VOTE; I'LL RETURN KALIA MONEY'

MALAY RAY ■ SUNDARGARH

**A** former Navy cadre of Sundargarh district, who claims he had not received money under KALIA scheme, was slapped notice to refund the money describing him as ineligible.

However, the man, in return has replied to the Chief District Agriculture Officer (CDAO) that if the State Government would return his vote, he would refund the money.

Benu Madhav Prusht, after retiring from Navy service, has been staying in his village at Mangaspur under Tangerpalli block. According to Benu Madhav, he had received a notice from CDAO to refund the amount he received under KALIA scheme.

After receiving the notice to return KALIA assistance money, Benu Madhav got shocked since he had not received money. Recently, he has written to CDAO that he had not applied for KALIA assistance money and had also not received the assistance amount.

"I had also given a vote to BJD but now the same party in Government is asking to return the KALIA assistance amount. However, if the State Government will return my vote, I will return Rs 5,000 without any hesitation."

"We have received the list of ineligible candidates from our State headquarters, with an instruction to serve notice to the beneficiaries and, accordingly, we have sent notices," said CDAO Laxmi Narayan Das.

## Promote English medium edu for dev of India



MANAS JENA

National Education Policy meanwhile has been opposed from many quarters based on language policy especially by non-Hindi speaking States and others concerned for education of the linguistic minorities, mostly the marginalized sections. Along with language policy, there are also many connected issues such as privatisation of education and limiting the scope of States in education policy formulation, although education is in the concurrent list. However selection of language is most important in medium of education. The NEP says that wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least grade-5 but preferable till grade-8 and beyond, will be the mother tongue /local language /regional language. It is also told that three language formula will continue to be implemented and Sanskrit knowledge system will be offered at all level of school and higher education as an option in the three language formula.

There is nothing wrong in learning many languages and mother tongue is always good for a child to learn its first lessons through it. But at the same time there must be a purpose of learning languages and

### Three-language policy in NEP needs relook

school, etc. There are about 5,100 languages spoken in the world and about 99 per cent of them are home to Asia and Africa, Pacific and American continents whereas only 1 per cent of them are in Europe. The Census of India 2001 has identified 1,500 distinct languages as mother tongues and these languages are grouped under 114 major languages out of which only 22 languages including Sanskrit are scheduled languages included in the eighth schedule of the Constitution of India (Article 343) that English is the official language for 15 years only and after that Hindi will be used but again it is decided to continue with English.

The use of Hindi was opposed by south Indian States in 1960 especially the Dravidian movement leaders RS Periyar and CN Annadurai who advocated for English.

Article 348 says that language of the Supreme Court,

High Court and orders, rules, regulations, bylaws, issues under Constitution and law made by Parliament and the legislatures of States shall be in English. Even today after 70 years of constitutional governance, the dominance of English language to be found everywhere. The people those who know English are rulers and leaders of respective field and the common people those have no access to English are excluded from all spheres of socio-economic and political life.

The STs in Odisha constitute about one fourth of the population of the State. There are 62 tribes speaking about 21 language and 74 dialects and only seven tribes have their own scripts. Santali language is included in the 8th schedule but it has been difficult on the part of the State Government to teach the tribal children in their mother tongue at primary level due to lack course material in all subjects. It is good to educate children in mother tongue for learning the basics but they must be educated in English medium for a level playing field if we want to see any radical change in the socio-economic life of the most marginalized section. The STs of the North Eastern States are doing much better in all India jobs because of English education. The Government of Odisha is already doing this through Adarsha Vidyalayas in each block, Ekalabya model school for STs and Anwesha programme. The pioneer of modern India Raja Ram Mohan Ray had vehemently argued for modern education with English medium in India in his letter to Governor General William Pitt in 1823. In 1816, he opened an English medium school for boys. Later, TB Macaulay in 1835 introduced English education through the English Education Act and it was approved by William Bentinck, the then Governor General of India. Though English was discouraged as part of anti-colonial struggle by GK Gokhale, MK Gandhi and RM Lohia but post-Independent India witnessed the

# Demand for plasma bank in B'swar mounts

PNS ■ BALESWAR

In view of the number of Covid cases growing by the day, people belonging to various quarters have demanded establishment of a plasma bank here so that patients of Baleswar and neighbouring districts can benefit.

"Once established, the bank would save lives of many patients on time. Now, serious patients are moving to Cuttack or Bhubaneswar to get plasma."

Chief District Medical Officer Dulalson Jagdeo said the proposal is under active consideration of the Government. Deliberations are on and preparations are being made accordingly, said he.

While some Covid-recovered patients have already donated plasma in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, some others have agreed to donate plasma.

active cases.

Culture Minister Jyotiprakash Panigrahi, who is also in-charge of the district to motivate more and more healed patients to donate plasma, said he has already apprised the Chief Minister about the need of a plasma bank for the north Odisha. He said he would again talk to the CM in this regard.

Now, Balasore district with 1,250 positive cases stands 8th in the State's Covid infection table. The district has so far recorded eight deaths, including four for other reasons, and 898 recoveries. It has now 412

# B'pur MLA helps cremate poor woman's body



PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Setting an example for others, Brahmapur MLA Bikram Kumar Panda on Saturday carried the dead body of a poor woman and helped in its cremation with the help of a few others as the deceased had none, excepting two tiny children, a son and a daughter.

Kabita Bhuyan, a resident of Dharma Nagar in the city, had been undergoing treatment at the MKCG Medical College Hospital for long. She succumbed to her ailments last night. Her husband had died due to kidney-related ailments three-four years back.

Earlier, the MLA had provided financial support for her

treatment. As she died, the MLA rushed to the hospital and carried her body with help of few others to a graveyard and cremated the body.

Panda has also said to provide required support to her children in coming days. The humanitarian act of MLA Panda has been hailed by many.

# Chinna Nana back to biz as lockdown norms eased

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Many people were directly or indirectly affected, especially by the closure of business establishments during lockdown. However, with the lockdown norms relaxed to some extent in Unlock 3.0 since August, people from all walks of life feel relieved.

56-year-old Dhruba Charan Tripathi of Uttarpratap village in Dharmasala block who is a priest by profession is a case in point.

Since the age of 10, he has been holding puja wandering around various shops and markets to support his family.

He leaves his house on a bicycle every day at 7 am, crosses a 7 km stretch of road and returns home by evening, worshipping at all the shops in Zarka Bazaar, Shantibazar, Laxmibazar, Hanuman Market, Badbazar and Main Market.

The priest wearing a saffron robe does the same every day, whether it is winter, rain or summer. People fondly call him as Chinna Nana. He is also wanted in various religious festivals.

But his livelihood had been particularly affected by the Corona epidemic. For the last six months, he has been facing

a lot of difficulties, thanks to the closure of markets.

However, for last few days, he has found a ray of hope with lockdown norms eased. Now that the shops have opened, he is happy to be back in business.

# Covid norm lapses: J'suguda villagers gherao unit

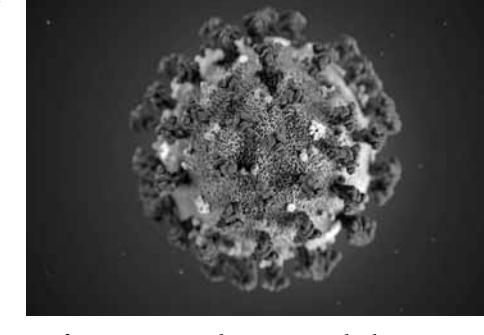
RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ JHAR-SUGUDA

Despite some of its workers were found to be infected by Coronavirus, there are no concrete measures taken by the management of SMC Power Generation Limited at its Badmal factory.

Besides, as per sources, even the Government mandated Covid workplace guidelines aren't being adhered to properly in the factory.

The measures include 24-hour sanitisation of premises; temperature check of all employees twice daily; providing face shields, masks and PPEs; creating physical distancing by erecting barriers on work floors and dining facilities; and ensuring no sharing of tools, among others.

Hundreds of migrant workers from Bihar and Jharkhand are employed in the factory via various labor



days, assured the company management.

Sources said that eight persons in the plant became Corona positive after which the villagers gheraoed the plant for clamping shutdown in the unit's premises. They demanded immediate sanitisation of the village and health examination of the villagers.

Considering the demands, each day one ward will be sanitised and health camps will be organised in every 15

suppliers contractors. Last week two contractors were booked for violation of Covid guidelines. Yet the management seems to be apathetic to safety concerns of the workers.

Sources said that eight persons in the plant became Corona positive after which the villagers gheraoed the plant for clamping shutdown in the unit's premises. They demanded immediate sanitisation of the village and health examination of the villagers.

"When asked about the matter, HR Head of SMC Power Generation Ltd Sanatan Senapati said, "We are undertaking stringent measures to keep the employees safe and disinfecting the premises."

# Maoist camp busted at Gandhamardan

PNS ■ BARGARH

A Maoist camp was busted by security forces in the Gandhamardan Reserve Forest of Bargarh district with the seizure of arms and ammunition on Saturday.

Acting on a tipoff about the camping of Maoists, a team of SOG raided the spot. Realising the presence of the security forces, the Red rebels opened fire at the jawans. The security forces retaliated and the exchange of fire continued for around 30 minutes.

The extremists managed to escape taking advantage of the dense forest and heavy rainfall. During search, the SOG team found four Maoist camps and recovered four INSAS empty cases, three AK-47 empty cases, two .303 empty cases, a



.303 live ammunition, two SLR empty cases, handwritten Hindi and Odia literature relating to Maoist ideology and other articles from the spot, sources said.

The Tehsildar along with a team had gone to the village for shifting eight members of the family, who tested positive for the virus, to a Covid Hospital. However, the family members

# Covid+ man misbehaves with Tehsildar

## Refuses family's shift to hosp



PNS ■ PURI

A Covid-positive person of Kahalapada village under the Brahmagiri police limits in Puri district allegedly misbehaved with local Tehsildar Kishore Chandra Panda on Saturday night over the administration's decision of shifting him and his family members to a Covid Hospital.

argued refused to go to the hospital. They also claimed that the reports of their Covid-19 test were false. The Tehsildar then lodged a complaint against them with the Brahmagiri police over violation of the Government's Covid-19 guidelines.

Notably, a member of the family had died of the disease a week ago while others tested positive.

# Three fake Maoists held for extortion

**BHAWANIPATNA:** Police on Sunday arrested three youths for allegedly trying to extort money from a farmer while impersonating as Maoists in Jayapatna of Kalahandi district.

Farmer Tulasiram Nayak of Pujhariguda village under the Jayapatna police limits got a call a few days ago asking him to pay Rs 10 lakh. The caller while identifying himself as a Maoist told him to fulfil the demand at the earliest, failing which he would face dire consequences.

Tulasiram lodged a complaint at the Jayapatna police station. According to a plan laid out by police, Tulasiram called up the person who was demanding money and convinced him to take Rs 70,000 initially.

The three accused arrived at a particular place as they were told by Tulasiram. PNS

# Home Guard held for impregnating minor



PNS ■ BALESWAR

The Industrial police in Baleswar town on Sunday arrested a Home Guard on the charge of raping and impregnating a minor girl.

The accused was identified as Sanjay Majhi, a resident of Angargadia.

The victim was brought by the accused about three years ago from her village Berhampur in Nilgiri and engaged as domestic help in his house.

But in absence of his wife he used to keep a physical relationship with the girl.

The matter came to light when the girl went to his native place along with her aunt. She

narrated her plight to her mother and other relatives alleging she was threatened with dire consequences by the accused if she revealed the matter to anyone.

After coming to know that she was four months pregnant, her family members lodged an FIR with the Industrial police with the help of a social activist. Following which Majhi was arrested and forwarded to court.

# OFFICIALS-CONTRACTORS NEXUS

## 'Substandard PMGSY road works' in Subarnapur

SRIKUMAR MAHANTA ■ SONEPUR

Irregularities in ongoing road works at various locations of Ullunda block in Subarnapur district under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) have sparked strong resentment among the local villagers.

Despite repeated complaints in this regard, the department officials were not showing seriousness towards the issue. Notably, the Rural Development Department is supposed to inspect the road laying works after those are allocated to qualifying contractors through tendering process.

It is alleged that the construction works are of very low quality in many places. Local villagers have been running from pillar to post complaining about the low quality work, but all in vain. On the other hand, the department officials rub-



were forced to use sub-standard construction materials to meet the budget. After repeated complaints by the villagers, the contractors were asked

to repair the roads as soon as possible. But the contractors again used substandard material for reconstruction of the roads.

# Kendu leaf workers deprived of benefits

PNS ■ NUAPADA

The Odisha Kendu Leaf Workers' Union, Nuapada Division held a demonstration before the office of DFO, Kendu Leaf at Khariar on Friday under the leadership of its zonal secretary Jadumani Panigrahi.

The union alleged that hundreds of kendu leaf workers in the division have been deprived of their benefits under various welfare schemes during the years 2017-19 due to negligence of the departmental officials.

"We have drawn the attention of the higher authorities, including CCF and PCCF, several times in this regard, but there is no move towards fulfilling the longstanding demands," said the agitators. "I had submitted a memorandum



dum to the PCCF in his office at Bhubaneswar, but he is not responding to our request," read Panigrahi.

He said departmental officials are not taking any step to release fund to workers who have already been awarded financial support for various

purposes like treatment and students scholarship. "Such indifferent attitude of the department towards the needs and rights of kendu leaf workers that too during the corona pandemic will shatter the economic conditions of the poor workers," added Panigrahi.

# SUJ(O), Rayagada constituted



PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Badal Kumar Tah, a member of the National Union of Journalists (Odisha)-SUJ(O), affiliated to the National Union of Journalists (India)-NUJ(I), was constituted recently.

On the advice of SUJ(O) State president Ajay Sahu and V.P. Kirti Chandra Sahu, the meeting was presided over by

Santosh Panigrahi as State executive members, Santosh Patra as chairman, District Journalist Welfare Board, Dilip Pattanaik as chairman, District Journalist Tribunal. Eleven executive body members, one from each block, were elected with consensus to the district unit. Badal Tah and Kirti Sahu were appointed as advisors to the district unit.

# JSPL plants celebrate OP Jindal birth anniv

PNS ■ ANGUL/CHAMPUA

The 90th birth anniversary of Om Prakash Jindal, founder of the Jindal Group, was celebrated at the Jindal and Steel and Power Limited (JSPL)'s two plants at Angul and Barbil on Saturday.

JSPL plant, Angul employees led by unit head Damodar Mittal together with local community leaders paid homage to OP Jindal.

Mittal shared his experience about leadership style and vision of Jindal, who was affectionately called Bauji. "Because of his unique leadership and passion to serve the society and contribute to economic development of the country, he could build Jindal Group of Industries from

Scratch," he said.

JSPL chairman Naveen Jindal also paid floral tributes to Jindal.

Among others EVP-HR Ravi Shankar, L & PR VP SK Sharma, AVP-SSD Subhash Jain and Swami Satyabindu Saraswati also shared their experience about Bauji.

The JSPL Barbil plant observed several programmes at the Jindal School and pellet plant premises.

Barbil unit head Suresha G along with other employees and workers of the pelletisation complex offered floral tributes Bauji.

Among others, EVP (Commercial) SK Agrawal, GM (HR & ES) Sarat Kishore Panda, DGM (CSR) Vargil Lakra and Jindal School principal Sangitarani Das were present.

But in absence of his wife he used to keep a physical relationship with the girl.

The matter came to light when the girl went to his native place along with her aunt. She

# Andaman will be hub of 'blue economy': Modi

**Modi urges people to maintain 'do gaj ki doori'**

Nicobar, Long Island, and Rangat of the Island group, is expected to transform life in the remote Island including defence, business and tourism sectors.

An estimated 2,300 km of submarine optical fibre cable has been laid at an expenditure of about ₹1,224 crore and the project has been completed well within deadline.

"The internet connectivity in Andman and Nicobar will go through a sea change after the inauguration of the facility on Monday. This will facilitate online education, tourism and business in the islands," said the Prime Minister who also pointed to the strategic location of its ports which he said are established in "competitive distance" with many places and countries.

He said "high-impact projects would be developed in 12 islands" and Andaman and Nicobar would emerge as a "blue-economy" front in the country.

The submarine cable, which will also connect Port Blair to Swaraj Dweep (Havelock), Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day before the launch of the 2,300-km optical fibre cable connectivity project in Andaman & Nicobar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that the Union Territory would be developed as a hub of 'blue economy' and high-impact projects would be developed in 12 islands.

The Prime Minister was interacting with BJP workers of Andaman and Nicobar Islands through a video conference in the presence of party president J P Nadda.

The meeting comes a day before inauguration of the submarine optical fibre cable connecting Chennai and Port Blair which would provide fast internet to the archipelago.

The submarine cable, which will also connect Port Blair to Swaraj Dweep (Havelock), Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great

Addressing the workers, Modi again stressed on "do gaj ki doori" and the importance of wearing facemask to keep away coronavirus. "We need to insist on these two things and also spread awareness...," the Prime Minister said.

Modi said in the time of pandemic it is important that "dialogue should continue" with all and "we should be useful for all".

During the interaction, party workers described to the Prime Minister how they provided food and medical aid to people stuck in the island during the lockdown.

Modi praised their efforts in serving the distressed people in the island during the coronavirus pandemic saying "you have passed with flying colours".

He asked party workers to continue their work with the spirit of 'Seva hi sangathan' motto.

The total number of coronavirus patients in Andaman and Nicobar Islands reached 1,222 on Saturday. The Union Territory has 778 active cases, while 425 have been cured of the disease so far. In all, 19 patients have died in the islands.

# Gehlot urges MLAs to save democracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

At the Assembly session, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has appealed to all MLAs to listen to the voice of people to save democracy and stand with the truth in the interest of people of the State.

In a letter to all MLAs, Gehlot sought their cooperation in fulfilling the promises of development and prosperity of the State. "It is my appeal that you should listen to the voice of people in order to avoid wrong tradition, to maintain people's trust in us and to save democracy," Gehlot said in the letter.

The Assembly session in the State, which has been witnessing political turmoil after the rebellion by former Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and legislators loyal to him, will start on August 14. Gehlot is likely to seek a trust vote during the session.

Pilot was sacked as deputy Chief Minister and the president of the State unit of the Congress after he and some MLAs loyal to him rebelled against Gehlot. Many believe that Gehlot still has an edge in the numbers game and is confident of a majority.

"You may be a legislator from any political party, you

should ensure and take a decision after understanding voter's feeling that how a people's elected government continues to work strongly for state's welfare," he said, emphasising that efforts to destabilise Government are not successful.

The Chief Minister expressed faith that legislators will act in the larger interest of people of the state and will cooperate in fulfilling the promises of development and prosperity.

In the three-page letter the Chief Minister also wrote about the novel coronavirus pandemic besides mentioning "attempts to topple his Government". The senior Congress leader also said that former Prime Ministers - Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee - faced defeats during elections, "but they didn't let the institution of democracy weaken".

"I appeal to all of you that to save the democracy, to ensure that voters continue to trust us and a wrong precedent is not set by us, you all should listen to the voice of people. While respecting the sentiment of your family members, your voters, please channelise your efforts in ensuring the government - elected by the people - continues to deliver with all its strength," the 69-year-old leader wrote.

"I am confident that you all

with stand with the truth and will contribute in delivering promises made to the public," he said.

"Amid the pandemic, we should all be concerned about fighting coronavirus... saving lives, economy, jobs. The State Government is working day and night for this. At such a time, some of our colleagues and opposition leaders are trying to conspire against us... this is unfortunate," Gehlot's letter read.

Between 1993 and 1996, "similar attempts were made to make such deals in order to topple the Bhairon Singh Shekhawat government," he mentioned.

"At that as the Union Minister and state's party chief, I had raised objection with (former Rajasthan governor) Baliram Bhagat and ex-prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao, stressing that it's against the democratic values to topple an elected government. Voters here will never want that such a precedent is set," the Chief Minister added.

"Victory and defeat are a part of election cycles but the 'people's mandate' is the most important," he stressed.

"Our fight is to save democracy, it will continue. We will win. Truth shall win... people shall win. All the MLAs -

whether those from the ruling party or opposition - will win who don't want the government to be destabilised," Gehlot tweeted on Sunday.

Gehlot has claimed that he has the support of 102 MLAs, one above the majority mark. The BJP has 72 MLAs. Both the parties have been guarding their flock amid the crisis.

BJP MLA Nirmal Kumawat had alleged that the Congress government in Rajasthan was "harassing" opposition MLAs, and said they were on a pilgrimage to Somanath to seek

mental peace.

Congress MLAs are currently holed up in a Jaisalmer hotel as the party has accused the BJP of horse-trading following the revolt by Pilot and 18 MLAs loyal to him.

Pilot and his 19 MLAs in his camp are at resorts in BJP-ruled Haryana.

Earlier this week, the BSP appeal seeking a temporary freeze on the merger of its six former legislators with Rajasthan's Congress government, was dismissed by the High Court. The six MLAs have sought transfer of the case to the Supreme court.

If there is a freeze on the merger, Gehlot's numbers will drop and he will have a tougher fight on his hands in case of a trust vote.

NGT directs DDA to file response to plea alleging pollution in lake

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to file response to a plea alleging that a lake in east Delhi is being polluted by operation of boat services.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson, Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel, also noted the submission that concretisation around trees is taking place in violation of its orders.

"Let DDA file its response within one month failing which coercive measures under Section 25 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 read with section 51 of CPC may be the only option available," the bench said.

According to the applicant, he made a representation to the authorities but the same has not been acted upon.

The Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation told the bench that no pollution is being caused in operating boats on the lake.

With regard to the issue of concretisation of the trees, action is to be taken by DDA, the tribunal noted.

# Rahul flays centre over 'looming unemployment'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Why did this happen? Because of wrong policies. Demonetisation, faulty implementation of GST and then lockdown - these three steps have destroyed the economic structure of the country and the truth now is that India cannot give employment to its youth," the former Congress chief said in a video message he tweeted.

Therefore, the Indian Youth Congress has hit the streets, he said, expressing happiness that the IYC will raise these issues in all towns and streets.

Please join the 'Rozgar Do' programme and along with Youth Congress, get jobs for the youth of this nation," the Gandhi scion said.

He also congratulated the Youth Congress on the occasion of its foundation day and urged them to keep fighting for the youth of the country.

Expressing solidarity with the campaign, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said "youth power" is India's strength.

"As opposed to the BJP Government's job-destroying policies, there is a need to create more and more employment opportunities for the youth of India," she said on Twitter.

"Rozgar Do is the demand of young India. Employment is the need of young India," she said.

Under the "Rozgar Do" campaign, the voices of the unemployed youth will be amplified all over the country, the IYC said.

"Anti-youth policies of the central government will be highlighted among the youth of the country through social media and other mediums," it said.

Several Congress leaders posted videos on social media voicing concerns over alleged rising unemployment in the country.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the demand of every youth of this country is "Rozgar Do" (give employment).

"We all demand, it is our right that the youth of the country should get employment on the basis of qualifications and get ahead in the progress of the country," he said.

Several Congress leaders like Digvijaya Singh, Depender Hooda, Gaurav Gogoi, Rajeev Satav, Gaurav Vallabh and Ragini Nayak called for employment opportunities for the youth on social media as part of the campaign.

"As opposed to the BJP Government's job-destroying policies, there is a need to create more and more employment opportunities for the youth of India," she said on Twitter.

# KVIC set to open first of its kind Training-cum-Production Centre of Silk in Arunachal Pradesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The far-flung tribal village of Chullyu in Arunachal Pradesh will soon be bustling with spinning and weaving activities with Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) set to open the first of its kind Training cum Production Center of Silk in the State.

Conceived just six months ago, the Centre will be launched in the first week of September. The KVIC has refurbished and converted a dilapidated school building into the training cum production center. The school building has been provided to KVIC by the education department of Arunachal Pradesh Government zero rent.

Machinery like handlooms, Charkha, Silk reeling machines and warping drums have already arrived and installation of machines are in full swing. The first batch of 25 local artisans of Chullyu village has been selected to begin the training with.

The project was conceived in February this year during the visit of KVIC Chairman Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena to this tribal village Chullyu.

Identifying a great potential of silk production and other activities of village industries in the village, Saxena sanctioned setting up of training cum production center for the Eri Silk, which is traditionally worn by tribal locals.

According to kharif sowing data released by the Agriculture Ministry, a total of 966 lakh hectares were planted till date, nearly 10 per cent more than 878 lakh hectare sown in the corresponding week last year. Though there is nearly two months left in the season, paddy plantation such as rice, soyabean, cotton, maize and groundnut already surpassed the normal sown area.

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The data shows that there is a spectacular 17.36 per cent increase in area under pulses with moong exceeding its normal area and urad arhar inching closer to the respective normal areas.

Total under pulses so far is close to 119.59 lakh hectare as against 114.77 lakh hectare planted in the same period last year, an increase of 4.82 lakh hectare.

Telangana, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra have reported more paddy plantation so far while Assam, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh reported

# Kharif cultivation all set for new record this year

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

D

espite the loss of 4.5 lakh hectare crops due to floods in 11 States and 20-60 per cent deficiency in rainfall in eight States, kharif cultivation is all set for a new record with sown area under many crops including major oilseeds and cotton exceeding the normal area.

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less area under rice sowing. Similarly, there is a 4.22 per cent increase in area under pulses with moong exceeding its normal area and urad arhar inching closer to the respective normal areas.

As per the central water commission report, most of the river in the country are overflowing or above the danger mark.

As against the designated area of 110 lakh hectare, soybean is sown over 118 lakh hectare so far.

Similarly, cotton has covered 123.64 lakh hectare as against the normal area of 121 lakh hectare. The area sown in the same week last year was 118.73 lakh hectare. At 47.29 lakh hectare, groundnut planting is nearly 44 per cent more than 32.86 lakh hectare in the corresponding week in the previous kharif season.

The normal area under groundnut is 41.41 lakh hectare. Against the assigned area of 74.73 lakh hectare, maize is planted over 75.88 lakh hectare already.

**The data shows that there is a spectacular 17.36 per cent increase in rice planting too**

Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh are among those States reeling under the flood.

As per the central water commission report, most of the river in the country are overflowing or above the danger mark.

As against the designated area of 110 lakh hectare, soybean is sown over 118 lakh hectare.

India has received 531.6 mm rainfall as against the normal of 533 mm so far while over 1.33 crore population have been affected due to floods across India. According to the India Meteorological Department, the rain deficiency in Nagaland recorded 25 percent, Manipur 46 percent, Mizoram 26 percent, Tripura 10 percent, Delhi 33 percent, Himachal Pradesh 34 percent, Jammu and Kashmir 52 percent and Rajasthan 22 percent, so far while Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala,

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He insisted that mortality rates in India continue to be low and in terms of response, home-based isolation protocols have succeeded. Deaths will be imprinted in pages of history, how many deaths happened in this pandemic in a given nation? Need to keep a sharp eye number of deaths? In case of fatality rate, India is currently at 2.06 per cent. Some states have below 1 per cent case fatality rate. The highest we have seen for a state is 6 per cent or little above 6 per cent said Dr Paul.

He insisted that in India the mortality burden so far has been on the lower side. "We would like to keep our case fatality rate below 1 per cent and it is possible," he added.

Dr Paul said, "We still have large swathes of our geography and large swathes of our population, which are naive to this virus. The virus loves people, the virus loves dense places, the virus loves irresponsible citizens who do not look after their respiratory secretions and do not maintain physical dis-

tance."

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# Death toll in Idukki landslide at 42 now

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The death toll in Friday's landslide at Munnar in Kerala reached 42 as search and rescue team retrieved 17 dead bodies by Sunday evening. The rescue team had retrieved 25 dead bodies on Saturday. A family of 18 members were perished in the disaster leaving a lone survivor.

Efforts are on by the NDRF team to locate the workers who were washed away in the early morning water rush. But those engaged in the operation said that chances of locating any more survivors were remote because of the prevailing weather condition.

The Kerala Government has come under severe criticism from opposition parties as they alleged that the solatium of ₹2 lakh granted to the deceased by the administration was low compared to what

was offered to those who killed in Friday evening's air crash involving Air India Express Dubai-Kozhikode flight. The Kerala Government had declared ₹10 lakh each to the families of those who lost their lives in the air crash.

Union Minister of State for External Affairs who visited Munnar and Rajamali said that the Kerala Government should be more humane in its approach towards the victims of the landslide in the High Ranges. "A compensation matching the solatium allocated to the deceased in the air crash should be provided to victims in Munnar landslide," said the union minister.

Inclement weather continued to torment most of the 14 districts in the State on Sunday. The State Disaster Committee had issued red alert in seven districts while orange alert has been issued in six districts on Sunday.

Death and destruction were reported from various low lying lands in the districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Idukki in southern Kerala. Situation was no different in Wayanadu, Kozhikode, Thrissur and Malappuram as rivers in all these districts have been overflowing since Saturday.

The Main Central Road connecting Angamali with Thiruvananthapuram was flooded in various places and this threw traffic out of gear in most places. According to Indian Meteorological Department many districts in Kerala are likely to receive heavy rainfalls on Monday also. There are strong possibilities of sea waves of 4 meter height hitting the coastline from the southern end to the northern tip of the Kerala coast in the next 24 hours, announced the IMD.

## Kerala reports 1,211 new cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Kerala, battered and bruised by nature's fury for the last three days saw Covid-19 continuing its dance of destruction across the State as 1,211 new patients were diagnosed with the pandemic on Sunday.

According to the media release issued by the Government of Kerala (chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan does not meet scribes on Sunday), 1,026 patients contracted Covid-19 through social transmission. Thiruvananthapuram continued to top the list of districts with 292 Covid-19 cases while Malappuram (170) and Kottayam (139) came second and third respectively.

The only news that offered consolation was in the number of patients who were cured of covid-19 and discharged from hospitals. The day saw 970 patients leaving hospitals for homes.

The new patients include 76 expatriates and 78 persons from other parts of the country.

There were 103 persons who could not pinpoint the source from where they contracted the pandemic.

The release said 12,347 patients were being treated across the State for the pandemic out of which 11,742 are in hospitals. On Sunday, 1,278 persons were admitted to the hospitals on account of Covid-19.

## Infected people roaming around pose big threat to health of others: Officials

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

The negligence of the district administration and the health department has proved to be a threat to health of many people now. Covid positive patients are roaming around in the public and no wonder how many people they have come in contact with.

A 60-year-old corona positive woman, in Jawahar Nagar, was found selling vegetables. Don't know how many people would have come in contact with her. A 13-year-old girl of the same family went to the mill to get flour. The danger of spreading the infection to the girl child also cannot be ruled out.

6 people of the same family were found infected in Jawaharnagar. The infected patients were not admitted even after 20 hours had passed.

Meanwhile, the family members continued to do their work like other days. Such carelessness is coming to the fore. That too in a situation when the infection of corona in the district is spreading rapidly.

The work of sealing and sanitizing the areas around the house of infected patients is also not being done prop-

erly. Infections are also spreading by seeking contact with infected patients and delaying their reports. Systems like Containment Zone and Red Zone are no longer visible anywhere. There is a provision for penalty on entering the market without wearing a mask. But there is no shortage of people who are taking risks themselves and putting other people's lives at risk as well.

Policemen are remaining mute and simply spectating people roaming around the streets without masks. Social and physical distance is also not being followed in the market. For this, no concerned efforts are being done by the district administration.

Vishnu Kumar Bunty, social worker told that the infected woman of Jawahar Nagar was selling vegetables. She was not admitted even after 18-20 hours. The girl at her house went to the store to get the goods. The businessmen of Vishnupuri were also not admitted for about 18-20 hours. When the infected patients are not being admitted, then when and how will they check the people who come in contact with them. Then how will Corona break the chains. There is a need to follow the rules strictly and act honest-

ly.

Dr. BP Singh, CMO stated that after the list of infected patients is out, attempt to admit the Covid +ve patient at the earliest are made. If it is delayed then it is not good. Awareness and public support is necessary to break the corona infection chain. Health department and administration is also making efforts for this. The court is also very serious about social distance and masks.

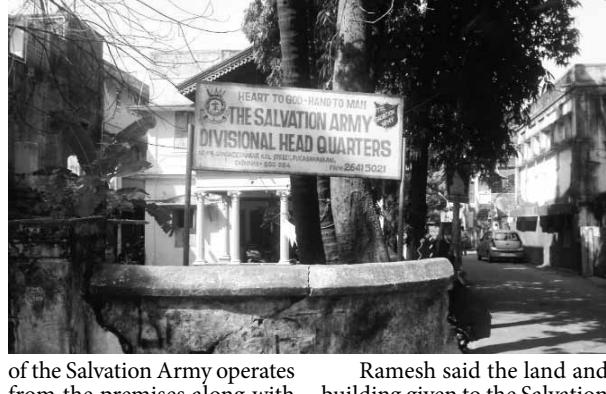
A PAC Jawan who was covid positive was found roaming in the Hathras Market.

A Jawan from the Provincial Armed Constabulary(PAC), who had tested positive for Covid-19 along with 11 others two days ago, was found roaming in the market in Hathras, near the district hospital where he was admitted on Friday.

According to sources the Jawan tried to hide his identity by saying that he came to buy medicine for a patient admitted in the hospital. However later on he admitted that he is covid positive and stepped out to buy medicine for his upset stomach as no one in the isolation ward was giving medicines for his upset stomach.

## Temple trust land given free on rent to Church in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI



The uninitiated may see this as the standing proof of the Social Justice for which the Dravidian political parties stage agitations across Tamil Nadu. But this has resulted in creating a serious wedge between the Hindus and Christians in the State and the responsibility lies with the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department of Tamil Nadu.

More than four grounds of prime land belonging to the famous Sri Gangadareswar Temple in Chennai's Purasawalkam area has been given free on rent to the Salvation Army, an organization engaged in proselytization. "The Divisional Head Quarters

of the Salvation Army operates from the premises along with a Church, absolutely free of cost as the HRCE has given it on Rent Free basis to the Church," said TR Ramesh, president, Temple Worshippers Society, Tamil Nadu.

the Temple properties, the land or building can never be rented out or leased or sold to a non-Hindu organization.

It may be remembered that the Madras High Court had asked the HRCE Department in 2018 to inform the court about the "whereabouts" of the 50,000 acres of Temple lands in the State to which the Department is yet to give any report.

The HRCE officials remained incommunicado . according to Ramesh, they refused to part with any information despite his efforts to get the terms and conditions on which the premises has been given to the Salvation Army. H Raja, national secretary, BJP, who launched the Hindu Temples Reclaim Movement

has some shocking information with him. "We took a sample survey of the temples. In the survey, we uniformly found that 5 per cent of the temples exists no more. Among the 38,646 temples, we estimate that at least 1,800 temples could have been demolished to give way to buildings and shopping complexes. Then, at least 20 per cent of the temples have been abandoned or are underused," said Raja.

Ramesh had some startling information to make on Sunday. "Peaceful soldiers of Abrahamic religions along with pseudo Hindus have encroached the Sree Kailasanathar Swamy Temple at Raasipuram and built public toilets right next to the temple," said Ramesh.

## Army intelligence, national intelligence agency question fake colonel

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

A fake lieutenant colonel resident of Nurpur, Ludhiana, who cheated people in the name of being recruited into the army by being a fake lieutenant colonel in the name of his brother Shrawan Singh son of Gurmel Singh. He had taken seven and a half lakh rupees in the name of enlisting in the army from Ramkumar, son of Kalicharan, resident of Kudwara village of Mont police station in Mathura district.

It is said that the Army Intelligence also closely inspected the vehicle recovered from the fake colonel. They also recovered three SIM cards.

While registering a report on Ramkumar's statement, the police detained a fake lieutenant colonel in uniform in a car near Battodevi School in village Bhilpur. Fake PAN card, fake ID, fake canteen card,

fake identity card, fake educational records were recovered from him.

After the fake lieutenant was caught, the Army Intelligence is also trying to find out to whom its wires are connected. A four-member team of Army Intelligence led by Major Gaurav Nirjanan inspected the arrest site on and recovered three SIM cards.

Pradeep alias Piru, a resident of Nurpur, Ludhiana, used to cheat people in the name of being recruited into the army by being a fake lieutenant colonel in the name of his brother Shrawan Singh son of Gurmel Singh. He had taken seven and a half lakh rupees in the name of enlisting in the army from Ramkumar, son of Kalicharan, resident of Kudwara village of Mont police station in Mathura district.

Pradeep alias Piru was admitted to the Army in 2002 on the basis of his Shrawan Singh's credentials and was sacked in 2016. After that, he was roaming around and cheating on people. It has been told that a women also used to work along with him. Police is searching for her.

## Terrorist killed, two hurt as Army foils infiltration bid in Poonch

Jammu: Alert jawans of the Indian Army eliminated one terrorist while two others received injuries when an infiltration bid was foiled along the line of control in Krishna Ghati sector of Poonch on Friday.

Thorough searches were being conducted in the area to retrieve the dead body of a terrorist but the same was dragged away from the site.

Meanwhile, a fresh incident of ceasefire violation was also reported late Sunday evening in Shahpur, Kirni and Krishna Ghati sectors of Poonch.

According to a Jammu based Defence Spokesman, Lt-Col Devender Anand, a group of terrorists had attempted to infiltrate from across the LoC in Krishna Ghati sector on August 7, 2020. The alert Indian Army troops detected the terrorists close to LoC and immediately engaged them resulting in the spot killing of one terrorist and serious injuries to other two".

Defence PRO further stated, during searches it was found that the dead body of the terrorist had been dragged away from the incident site. However, one AK 47 Rifle, two AK 47 Magazines and some eatables were recovered from the incident site. Defence PRO said, "Pakistan markings on the eatables and a few other items clearly indicate the complicity of Pakistan in sponsoring terror activities in J&K".

He said, the security forces are maintaining a robust Counter Infiltration grid along the Line of Control to foil any nefarious designs by Pakistan.

According to Lt-Col Devender Anand, "on Sunday at about 5.50 p.m Pakistan initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation along the line of control by firing with small arms and shelling mortars in Shahpur, Kirni and Krishna Ghati sectors in Poonch. "the Indian Army retaliated befittingly", he added.

## 119 more succumb to virus, 5,994 new infections in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Number of Covid-19 cases across Tamil Nadu remains critical and there is no let up in the fatalities being reported from various places in the State. On Sunday, the Government medical bulletin said 119 persons succumbed to coronavirus while the number of new cases diagnosed with covid-19 showed 5,994.

This is for the eleventh day in a row Tamil Nadu is testing less than 6,000 persons per day. On August 1, the State had 5,879 patients while the numbers came down to 5,875 on August 2 and 5,609 on August 3. Though the number further came down to 5,063 on August 4, since the last five days it has been showing hike in the number of positive cases.

As part of aggressive testing carried out across the State, 68,179 persons were tested on Sunday. The number of persons discharged from hospitals till date crossed the 2.38 lakh on Sunday. This is against the 2.96 lakh persons diagnosed with covid-19 till date in the State.

There were 53,336 active patients across Tamil Nadu on Sunday.

Chennai tested positive for 989 out of the 5,994 new patients across the State. Chengalpet (397), Kancheepuram (393) and Tiruvallur (396) remained problematic districts in the cluster of four districts which include Chennai.

Theni (360) is the only other district which tested more than 300 new patients other than the four districts cluster led by Chennai. The death toll in Tamil Nadu reached 4,927 on Sunday.

## WB OK's charter flights from abroad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal Government which has temporarily banned flights from corona hit regions have however decided to let international charter flights ferrying Indian nationals land in the State.

The State Government has conveyed its intentions to the External Affairs Ministry saying that all the corona negative patients taking chartered flights to Bengal would be allowed to land at State airports provided they board the flights after having tested for corona and the stated flights follow certain standard operating procedures.

"Only those with negative RT PCR reports will be allowed," Government sources said adding a letter to this effect had been sent to the Union Government on Saturday.

The standard operating procedure in such case will be effected from August 10, sources said adding the MEA has been requested to pass on the SOP to the Aviation Ministry and

Indian Missions abroad.

The flights coming to Kolkata will be required to carry clearance certificates from the Indian Missions or the MEA.

Besides it has also been said that the respective airlines ferrying in stranded passengers from abroad will have to apply for a no objection certificate from the State Government providing the sponsor, the number of passengers along with their details apart from an undertaking that the passengers so flying in are corona negative.

With the total number of infected patients in Bengal passing 1 lakh mark the State government has taken certain strong measures that include restrictions on the international flights and the flights coming from the corona hit regions of the country.

Besides, the Government has also taken a decision to impose bi-weekly lockdowns to break the corona chain in the State to some extent.

## Shami's ex-wife gets life threat for praising Ram Puja at Ayodhya

SAUGAR SENGUTPA ■ KOLKATA

Hasin Jahan the estranged wife of India fast bowler Md Shami has lodged a formal complaint with the Kolkata Police after getting life threats from some people for praising the ground-breaking ceremony at Ram Temple site in Ayodhya.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the programme at Ayodhya on August 5 after which Jahan, also an actor and a model congratulated the nation and called for religious unity.

"Soon after she posted her comments some people started trolling her and she was even given rape and murder threats," a close acquaintance said adding Jahan had always been known for outspoken ways.

The actor on Sunday registered a formal complaint with the Lal Bazar police headquarters in Kolkata seeking action against people who had been harassing her on the Net, sources said adding the police were investigating the matter.

Cases under relevant sections of the IPC and IT laws have been registered sources said.

"The offenders have told her that being a woman from a particular community she should not have made such comments," sources said adding however that the actor had no immediate intentions of joining politics.

Besides lodging a police complaint Jahan who hails from Birbhum district of Bengal is also known to have brought the matter to the notice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, sources said.

## AI crash: Capt Sathe's mortal remains arrive in Mumbai, funeral tomorrow

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The body of Capt. Deepak V. Sathe – who was killed in the ill-fated Dubai-Kozhikode Air India Express flight crash – was brought from Kochi to Mumbai in cargo flight on Sunday. His funeral is expected to be held on Tuesday.

Captain Sathe's mortal remains were flown from Cochin International Airport in Kerala to Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), from where the bereaved family members the body was received by family members, his colleagues, Air India officials and aviation fraternity who paid tributes to him.

Capt Deepak's family lives in the Jalayu Vihar complex in the upmarket Powai off Andheri (East) in north-eastern Mumbai. Capt. Deepak is survived by his wife and two sons, Shantanu and Dhananjay – both of whom have graduated from Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-B). His elder son Shantanu – who is currently in the United States, while younger son Dhananjay works for a firm in Bengaluru, while daughter Anjali lives in Mumbai.

Since Shantanu is based in Seattle and is expected to reach Mumbai only by Monday, late Capt Sathe had flown 6,662 of these hours as the commander.

## K'taka Health Minister tests corona positive



Bengaluru: Karnataka Health Minister B. Sriramulu on Sunday said that he has tested positive for coronavirus. He is the fourth Minister in the state to be diagnosed for the disease, apart from Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

"In the wake of flu on Sunday, I have been tested for coronavirus and came positive," he said on social media.

Hospitalised in a state hospital in Shivajinagar, Sriramulu expressed confidence that he will get cured soon, and asked people not to worry.

From the beginning of the pandemic in March, the minister said that he has been extensively touring the state to review the Health Department's work and make arrangements to combat the virus.

Sriramulu said that he has prayed to God to heal him soon and bestow strength to serve people during these hard times.

Meanwhile, all the people who came in contact with him recently have been requested to take precautionary measures.

## &lt;h2

## Tragedy in Kozhikode

The crash of an Air India Express Boeing 737 at Kozhikode is an unfortunate disaster but could it have been avoided?



Indian air crash investigators examining the wreckage of Air India Express flight 1344, a Vande Bharat Mission flight from Dubai to Kozhikode, are likely to have witnessed similar scenes just a few short years ago. Another Air India Express Boeing 737-800 overran a runway at Mangalore airport, just a few hundred kilometres north of the current site. Thankfully, while that crash saw few survivors, it appears that, at the time of writing, a large majority of the passengers on board this plane survived the slide down the end of the runway.

This is probably because the pilot turned off the engine to avert fire. Investigators will have several tools at their disposal from weather reports, radar displays and even the plane's own Cockpit Voice Recorder and Flight Data Recorder. However, the similarities between the two accidents bring to mind the risks of operating at such "tabletop" airports. Both Kozhikode and Mangalore airports are carved into the Western Ghats, leaving pilots little room for error. The information available at this time has revealed that the pilot had already made one missed approach to the airport. Landing in the monsoon in India, when runways are wet, is always a risk and runway "excursions" are common due to the lower braking action available on the slippery tarmac, as any motorist on the roads would be quite aware of. While Kozhikode airport's runway was clearly long enough at 9,000 feet for a Boeing 737 to land safely in most conditions, the distance needed for a landing in extremely wet conditions with a tailwind might have been an ask too far for the aircraft. And unlike Cochin airport, a hundred or so kilometres to the south, this one, by its very layout on the top of a plateau, had little runoff area and no soft concrete surface at the end of a runway for planes to sink into. Now that the crash has happened, every oversight and lapse is being called into account. As it turns out, civil aviation experts had warned of the airport's risk factors about nine years ago. In a letter sent on June 17, 2011, to the then director-general of civil aviation, Capt Mohan Ranganathan wrote, "An aircraft landing on runway 10 in tailwind will experience poor braking action due to heavy rubber deposits ... All such flights ... are endangering the lives of all on board." While no accident happened until now, the report got buried. Even now the Government has claimed that hundreds of flights have landed there in the recent past, overlooking the need to reassess the lay of the land.

There are six tabletop runways in India where landing flights is somewhat difficult as there is no additional space on the runway. Since there are many issues pertaining to safety of aircraft, crew and passengers, many international flights and Airbus A330 and Boeing 777 do not land at these airports. The Kozhikode airport's runway end safety area was expanded in 2018 to accommodate wide-body aircraft. Though it meets United Nations international civil aviation requirements, the agency recommends a buffer that is 150 metres longer than what exists at Kozhikode airport. Some reports also suggest a laxity about routine tests. Apparently no friction test was done at the airport, as is mandatory on runways and taxiways, especially those affected by rains. Flying in India has been incredibly safe over the past decade even as air traffic has exploded with hundreds of new aircraft and millions of first-time passengers. But air travel, while being inherently safe, does have an ability to shock us when something goes wrong. One expects this accident to be thoroughly investigated and faults if any to be rectified, even if that means closing down of certain airports in India or restricting large jet aircraft from flying there. Ranganathan has flagged Patna and Jammu airports as accident-prone and sitting ducks that need immediate upgrades. Aviation is a vitally important transportation option in a country as large as India where millions make their living outside Indian shores. The safety and security of this industry is not only of paramount importance but also a strategic necessity for this nation.

## Breaking stereotypes

UPSC toppers come from fairly modest backgrounds and have shown how the ordinary can manage extraordinary feats



The recently published results of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) civil services examination, 2019, have thrown up some powerful stories of triumph, surpassing gender, caste, economic and religious barriers. Stories of grit and inspiration abound as most candidates who have made the cut have done so under challenging circumstances and modest means. While some never gave up despite repeated failures, there are others who had to overcome physical as well as family limitations to prove that courage is the only

mark of success. The topper, Pradeep Singh, though already an IRS officer, is the son of a farmer from Sonipat. Surprisingly, Jatin Kishore and Pratibha Verma, too, not satisfied with their earlier results, reappeared for the exams and have now become the second and third rankers and the top scorers among women. Overall there are three women candidates in the top 10 list. But setting a new record are 12 candidates from Jammu and Kashmir, including Nadia Beig, the youngest officer from Kupwara, at a time when young people in the blacked out State are suffering on account of lost opportunities. In yet another example of perseverance, a son of a petrol pump worker from Madhya Pradesh has bagged the 26th position. Neither financial struggles nor a missed opportunity last year, when he failed to make it to the list by just one slot, could deter this young officer. Aishwarya Sheoran, who bagged the 93rd position, has become a classic example of beauty with brains. A former Miss India finalist, she has broken the stereotype that models aren't smart enough by clearing the exams in her first attempt. A former child actor, too, is an inspiration for he is a COVID warrior and is ready to become an officer. And Purana Sunthari, a 25-year-old visually impaired woman from Madurai, has proved just how no vision can be out of sight.

Caste and gender barriers continue to be broken. Of the total qualified candidates, 304 belong to the general category and 78 from the reserved (SC, ST and OBC) quotas. The gap is still wide but there is some progress. Women have pushed their way creditably into the top 10 list but overall, the number of women joining the services is still less than 25 per cent, according to Government data. This year, it is 23.7 per cent women, an improvement on the 2018 figures. The biggest takeaway is that the young and hard-working achievers have broken many myths surrounding one of the toughest examinations in the country — that it is meant for the intelligent, those who have excellent academic records, that it is easier for those from engineering and medical fields to clear the exams, that one needs to devote more than 16 hours of the day to do so and that one needs to spend money and time on coaching classes. Yet everybody on the toppers' list this year is a regular youngster. Each has been high on motivation, effort and focus. The mindset has won in the end.

# Unending Ladakh story

The Modi Govt is in a fix today, not because of the negligence of previous regimes but because of its own deliberate neglect of the military. We have failed to learn lessons



DEEPAK SINHA

**A**n interesting anecdote doing the rounds among military veterans' groups on social media pertains to an incident just after the 1971 war. A young officer performing duties of the Regimental Adjutant, the principal staff officer to the Commanding Officer, was approached by an extremely engaging and popular ex-serviceman — who was employed by a well-known corporate — for an authority letter to continue drawing canteen stores from his unit. This was a common occurrence in those times when smart cards were yet to make an appearance. However, on a hunch, the officer decided to obtain verification of his antecedent prior to signing the certificate from the office that maintained departmental records.

Surprisingly, it turned out that the individual was a deserter from the Army and had absconded from his unit during the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 while his unit was deployed in the combat zone. On receipt of this information, as was expected, the ex-soldier was apprehended and questioned. He accepted his guilt and explained that after his unit was overrun by the Chinese, he successfully evaded them and escaped to Bhutan where he got himself a job. One thing led to another and he settled into civilian life and never rejoined the Army. As is customary, he was brought before a court-martial; was found guilty and sent off to serve time in jail. However, the commanding officer being a kindly soul and displaying immense empathy for the convict, convinced his company to retain him on the rolls, while also arranging to look after his family till he had served his sentence. Thus, on his return, the former soldier not only got his job back but was also able to finally shed his sense of guilt and apprehension that had haunted him all those years.

This is a simple straightforward tale of being held to account for one's misdeeds, which fortuitously ended well for the soldier and his family, despite all the trials and tribulations that he must have faced. A contrarian view would suggest that in all likelihood, he had probably been traumatised by his world collapsing around him when his unit disintegrated in battle, leaving him to fend for himself. Given his experience and mental state — where there was no sufficient ground for mitigation — should he not have been absolved of all wrongdoing? Of course, while this question may draw differing conclusions, depending on one's point of view and interpretation of the law, what cannot be disputed is that he was guilty of fraudulently attempting to obtain benefits authorised only to military veterans. He deserved to be held to account. Ironically, the account does not make clear whether the latter aspect was glossed over or even considered.

But here is the thing that the young soldier was undoubtedly an insignificant cog in that vast military machine and yet, he was held to account for the error he had committed.



One wishes that those responsible for derailing the military and forcing it and this country to live through years of ignominy of defeat had also been meted out justice in a similar manner. The sad truth is that they got away without being held accountable as neither resignations — like that of Krishna Menon or General Thapar, the Army Chief — nor deprivation of further promotion, as some others faced, can be called punishment enough. At the minimum, those responsible should have certainly faced disciplinary proceedings, maybe even have had their pensions stopped, as was the case with General AAK Niazi after he surrendered in Dhaka. After all, surrendering 37,000 square km of the territory that we claimed as ours to the Chinese was no small matter. Yet, how did we respond to this humongous disaster? Shamefully, to say the least, the Government did transfer the individual entrusted with the defence of India, the then Defence Secretary O PULLA REDDY, but subsequently nominated him as the founding Vice Chancellor of Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University. Talking of second chances.

Our unwillingness and inability to fix the blame for acts of commission and omission at the highest levels have ensured that no lessons are ever learnt. We have also gone on to perfect the art of deflection as the Kargil dis-

aster clearly showed. There was no reason why Atal Bihari Vajpayee's attempts at engaging Pakistan should have led to complacency on the part of either the intelligence or the security establishment. It was all very well to have blamed it on "systemic intelligence failure" but why nobody thought it necessary to ask the question: While the intelligence agencies may have failed to discern Pakistan's intentions, how was it that the latter occupied our territory with out detection by the Army?

Instead of taking it to task, we made much of our top military brass, treating them as heroes for reclaiming — at great cost one might add — what we should not have lost in the first place. Of course, the Government of the day could not have acted in any other manner as that would have been seen as a blemish on its performance as well.

Naturally, we are again witness to this sordid cycle as the Chinese once again make fools out of us. The same clichéd excuses are being trotted out that unfortunately, the "Wuhan-Mamallapuram spirit" made our security establishment complacent and we were, thus, caught wrong-footed as intelligence agencies were unable to detect Chinese movers or gauge their intentions. The security establishment hopes to save itself the blushes by pushing the blame on its favourite whipping boy, "sys-

temic failure." In this case, the current border management practice that ensures a rather opaque division of responsibilities between the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police.

One can be certain that they will manage to avoid being held to account this time as well. Not least because of the way Prime Minister Narendra Modi has attempted to change the narrative by denying any ingress or loss of territory and instead promoting through his minions "differing perceptions of the LAC between both sides" to fudge the issue. He hopes — and not without good reason given the blind support he enjoys — this will allow him and his Government to carry on as if it is business as usual. Unfortunately for him, the unexpected appearance in the public domain of the Ministry of Defence report on the ingress by the PLA — though now withdrawn — does suggest that there are those within the Government who have serious reservations about his actions and have no compunction in showing him up for dissembling.

Normally, in a bureaucratic and hierarchical system such as ours, it is often the case that those left holding the baby, so to say, are not necessarily the ones responsible for its procreation in the first place. We would certainly not have found ourselves in the present situation if the previous Government, and this one, had

shown even a modicum of interest in national defence and kept their eye on the ball. Modi finds himself in an extremely difficult situation, not because the Manmohan Singh Government was negligent, which it certainly was, but because of his own deliberate neglect of the military since 2014. He made all the right noises but had no time for the military, except for where it helped his own political fortunes.

Similarly, General Rawat would not have found himself caught in this controversy today if he had not been appointed the Chief of Defence Staff after pandering to Modi's wishes. He cannot escape responsibility for having sabotaged the Mountain Strike Corps (MSC) midway through its raising while he was Chief of Army Staff. One may recall that it was after the ingress by the Chinese in the Dapsang Sector in 2013 that the dysfunctional Manmohan Singh Government understood the seriousness of the issue and sanctioned the raising of the MSC. Its raising was given full attention by the Army Chief and was of immense concern to the Chinese because they clearly understood the shift in the intent of the Indian armed forces from a purely defensive posture to a more pro-active one. It changed the concept of Sino-Indian conventional deterrence.

Thus, one can imagine their utter joy when the Modi-Doval-Rawat combine put the spanner in the works and put the MSC into forced hibernation. This was allegedly done because of budgetary constraints, something that apparently had no impact on the unbridled expansion of the Central Armed Police Forces. It is obvious that purely defensive actions on our part will never restore the status quo ante, which we are insisting upon, in the foreseeable future. If we do nothing, the loss of territory will be a body blow to our reputation in the region and internationally.

In the long run, as happened with Nehru, it will be the ruination of Modi. His reputation will suffer, his ability to stay in power will be constrained and he will be reduced to a caricature. Ironically, while Nehru continues to shoulder much of the blame for problems that afflict us today, Modi and his minions will not have that advantage. They will have to bear the consequences for their actions. There is something to be said for poetic justice and that old adage, "As you sow, so shall you reap."

(The author, a military veteran, is a consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation)

## SOUND BITE

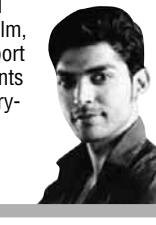
There have been no significant reforms in education for the last many years. As a result, our society started promoting herd mentality instead of imagination and curiosity.

Prime Minister  
—Narendra Modi



If a new actor is launched today, even if in a small film, they (public) should support them, write good comments on their posts and stop crying nepotism, nepotism.

Actor  
—Gurmeet Choudhary



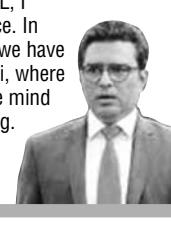
If Democrats continue to hold this critical relief hostage, I will act under my authority as President to get the American people the relief they need.

US President  
—Donald Trump



With MS Dhoni in the IPL, I don't see much difference. In fact, the conditions that we have are just perfect for Dhoni, where it's going to be about the mind and not just power hitting.

Former India batsman  
—Sanjay Manjrekar



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### China cannot be trusted

Sir — Despite several rounds of talks between India and China, no solution appears to be in sight with regard to the border crisis along the Line of Actual Control. Clashes at Galwan were proof enough that China cannot be relied upon. It attacked Indian soldiers without any provocation. To top it all, China's expansionist tendencies and greed for grabbing weaker landlocked territory through unfair means are a never-ending phenomenon. India's relationship with Russia, though on an even keel, cannot be ignorant of the former's support to China. It is doubtful if Russia will extend any help in case of a conflict. It is, thus, imperative that India forges a military pact with the US to keep a check on China's assertiveness, aggressiveness and other nefarious activities.

Rashmi  
Via email

### Debt restructuring

Sir — In view of the COVID-19 pandemic having battered the economy, it was expected that the

### Raging rainforest a climate threat

T he rainforest region of Brazil, Amazon, recorded 6,800 incidents of fire in July, up from 5,318 last year, the same month. Amazon has been a talking point for most experts because it comprises more than half of the world's wetlands. Continued dry spells are a threat to the forests. Raging fires in the region may not entirely be attributed to natural causes such as lightning, heatwave or the eruption of volcanoes. Cattle ranching is the largest driver of deforestation. In the months between July and September, farmers are known to clear their lands for cattle farming and soil fertilisation. Illegal mining in Amazon rainforest, too, has become an "epidemic." Artisanal mining for gold and other minerals in Amazon forests and rivers has been a problem for decades and is usually illegal.

Critics of President Jair Bolsonaro have placed the blame at his doorsteps and his "anti-environment," "pro-agriculture" and "pro-industry" policies. The pro-development image of Bolsonaro has angered conservationists, who feel he is not doing enough to save the forests from man-made disasters. Species of plants and animals in the rainforests slow down global climate warming. Rainforests contribute to a healthy maintenance of the ecosystem. In contrast, wildfires emit a high con-

tent of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and ozone precursors let alone nitrogen oxides and organic materials — all of which are detrimental to the climate. In 2019, the forest fire was termed as a "global crisis" by world leaders. President Bolsonaro's attempt to crack a whip on "offenders" was too late to bear fruit. This season in Brazil is expected to be drier than the corresponding period in 2019. The fires may only get worse in the months ahead.

Ganapathi Bhat  
Akola

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) would come up with another rate cut but it left it unchanged at four per cent. Instead, the Central bank has allowed financial institutions a special one-time dispensation to restructure loans which

are stressed due to the pandemic. Indeed, a rate cut at this juncture would have meant little. Unless demand is generated, units will continue to gasp for survival despite the repayment breather.

The Monetary Policy Committee has also called for the appointment of an expert committee to frame a window under the prudential norms for speedy resolution of stressed loans. Besides, the gold loan-to-value

ratio has been increased to 90 per cent. This will pave the way for a robust rise in the quality and quantity of loans. While extending forbearance, it is imperative for the banks to be diligent and cautious to prevent good money from turning into NPAs.

Shivansh  
Via email

### Deal with compassion

Sir — The Kashmir problem needs to be tackled with sensitivity. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have suffered enough. All possible aid should be provided to them. Kashmir should be transformed into a world-class tourist destination. Establishing good colleges and other technical institutes will help the Kashmiri youth compete equally with the rest of the nation as they are talented and given to innovation. By setting up good medical colleges and hospitals, public health needs can be taken care of, too.

Ashok Malik  
Via web

Send your feedback to:  
[letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## FIRST COLUMN

## October surprise awaits the US?

Maybe Trump will arrange the premature certification of a COVID-19 vaccine, so he can roll it out just before the Nov 3 election



GWYNNE DYER

**A**n "October Surprise" in the US is now almost inevitable, because that will be US President Donald Trump's last chance to get re-elected legitimately. Trump might try to cling to office even if he loses the vote, but it would be a lot easier and neater if he actually won a majority in the Electoral College on November 3. In US political jargon, an "October Surprise" is a news event deliberately created or timed to influence the outcome of an election, particularly one for the US presidency and usually involves foreigners or a threat to the nation. It is planned such that all other issues are forgotten, Americans rally around the flag and the incumbent wins on a surge of patriotism. Or that's the theory, at least.

The same thing happens elsewhere, too, of course and not necessarily in October. That's when it needs to happen in the US to win a presidential election. For instance, a "July Surprise" happened recently in Belarus because of the August 9 presidential election. Alexander Lukashenko, the strongman who rules Belarus, "discovered" Russian mercenaries in his country. It matters little that they were unarmed and on their way to Istanbul, but President Lukashenko told his people that there was a plot. "So far there is no open warfare, no shooting, the trigger has not yet been pulled, but an attempt to organise a massacre in the centre of Minsk is already obvious. Only I can save our country. Vote for me," was Lukashenko's impassioned plea to his citizens.

Trump will need something like that because otherwise the Coronavirus is going to kill him politically. This was not true as recently as early June, because up until then the US was not performing especially badly in dealing with the pandemic. It looked a lot worse because of Trump's bizarre behaviour — the endless, shameless lies, the narcissism, the suggestions that people should inject bleach and so on — but in terms of COVID-19 deaths per million people, the US fatality rate was still lower than other major Western countries, except for Germany and Canada.

The US was late to go into the lockdown, but so were they all, at least compared to most Asian countries. Until recently, if you were a Trump supporter, you could still believe he was doing a good job. It was Trump's rush to end the lockdown, not all the earlier nonsense, that did the real damage. He believed that he would lose the election if the economy didn't revive, but by opening up too fast he managed to revive the pandemic at the same time.

The numbers tell the tale. This week the US will record its 1,65,000th death from COVID-19. That's almost a quarter of all the Coronavirus fatalities in the world. Much worse, US deaths are still going up while casualties elsewhere in the developed world have fallen steeply. That's almost entirely due to Trump.

Take Canada, for example. It is very similar to the US in its economy and demography but different in social and political terms. Canada has universal healthcare and a much less drastic divide between the rich and the rest, for example, which probably explains why the US' cumulative death rate per million is 484, while Canada's is only 237. The history is, therefore, an American death rate twice as high as Canada's: Not great but structurally inevitable. By now, however, Canada has managed to get its casualties down to ten a day, whereas the US is back up to around a 1,000 fatalities a day.

Even allowing for Canada's much smaller population, that is ten times worse. This is what coming out of a lockdown too early did to the US, and it is all down to President Trump. The pandemic is raging once again in the US and there may be a quarter-million deaths there by election day in November. US "deaths per million" are going up three per day, which means that the US will overtake Chile (now at 509 casualties) in less than one week, Italy (582) in a month, Spain (609) in five weeks. It might even catch up with the UK (682) by election day.

Most of those newly-dead Americans will be over 60, so probably they would have been Trump supporters. Their relatives and friends are bound to notice eventually. As it is, Joe Biden's lead over Trump in the polls has already widened to 10 per cent. How could Trump turn that around in the remaining 82 days? His only hope is to manufacture an "October Surprise" involving China, a restaged "Tonkin Gulf Incident" i.e. the one real and one phantom fire fight that embroiled the US in the Vietnam War.

Or perhaps he could manufacture a terrorist "threat" so humongous that it would give him a pretext to declare martial law nationwide. Or maybe Trump will arrange the premature certification of a COVID-19 vaccine so he can roll it out just before the November 3 vote. If it kills a lot of people later on, who cares? He won. Trump knows that if he loses the November election, he will spend the rest of his life in court, possibly even in jail. He will do whatever it takes to win. It isn't over yet.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work'.)

## analysis

07

## POINT COUNTER POINT

JAMMU AND KASHMIR WAS A BROKEN STATE. NOT A SINGLE SOUL CRIED OVER THE DETENTION OF POLITICAL AND SEPARATIST LEADERS IN AUGUST LAST YEAR.

—J&K CHIEF SECRETARY  
BVR SUBRAHMANYAM



SUBRAHMANYAM AND HIS TEAM ARE LEAST EXPECTED TO KNOW HOW THE PEOPLE FEEL. TO QUOTE GANDHI, THEY ARE RULING J&K FROM THE 500TH FLOOR.  
—PDP LEADER AND FORMER J&K MINISTER  
NAEEM AKHTAR

## Nip the NPA crisis, now

The Govt and the RBI must urgently reassess the moratorium policy and limit it only to the hardest-hit, address the delays in IBC resolution and not drive away depositors



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

**A**fter the release of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) half-yearly Financial Stability Report (FSR) on July 24, shares of banks and finance companies were battered at the stock market. Though the private banks (PBVs) like ICICI, HDFC, Axis Bank, Bandhan Bank got scared, the public sector banks (PSBs), too, bore the brunt of the bloodbath on the bourses. The mayhem exposed the structural weaknesses of the Indian banking system and the severity of the Non-Performing Asset (NPA) crisis looming over them.

As the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das emphasised (and his sentiment was echoed by the Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission) the soaring NPAs and the consequent capital erosion of the banks would need immediate recapitalisation of both PBVs and PSBs.

To alleviate the pandemic-created stress on borrowers, the RBI has already placed a moratorium on the payment of loan instalments and deferment of interest payments till August 31. However, the banks are fearing — as articulated by the HDFC Chairman — that even solvent borrowers may take advantage of this relaxation and not repay their loans. This would further worsen the financials of the banks.

The FSR has also acknowledged that there is a major risk that the moratoriums may have serious implications on the financial health of the banks. Overall, about 50 per cent of all loans — 65 per cent of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) borrowings and 56 per cent of retail loans — were under moratorium as on April 30, against only 39 per cent of corporate loans. The PSBs have a larger share — 58 per cent, 82 per cent and 80 per cent respectively for corporate, MSME and individual loans, as against 20 per cent, 43 per cent and 34 per cent respectively for the PBVs.

As far as Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) are concerned, 56 per cent, 61 per cent and 46 per cent of the loans are under moratorium respectively for these categories. The scenario is really disquieting. The RBI has assumed a contraction of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 4.4 per cent, gross fiscal deficit of 10.9 per cent and Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) of 4.1 per cent as the baseline scenario assuming steady recovery from the second-half of the current fiscal. The GDP contraction and fiscal deficit numbers may be a tad too optimistic, given the severe economic disruptions with no end in sight.

The FSR has stated that the Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) stood at 14.8 per cent while their Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio stood at 8.5 per cent in March. But it projected that the GNPA ratio may worsen further to 12.5 per cent by March 2021 under the optimistic baseline scenario and may escalate to 14.7 per cent under a severely-stressed scenario.

The implications of these numbers are indeed very serious. As of March, the total NPAs of SCBs stood at ₹8.62 lakh crore; at the baseline scenario which seems a bit hopeful, this would rise to around ₹13 lakh crore and at the worst case scenario to ₹15 lakh crore, at which level, all undercapitalised and overleveraged banks would cease to be going concerns.

In fact, the pandemic has wiped out all the work done so far by the SCBs by using a large part of their capital to correct their balance sheets

THE RECAPITALISATION BOND ROUTE BY WHICH THE GOVERNMENT ISSUES BONDS TO THE BANKS, WHICH PROMPTLY INVEST THEM IN GOVERNMENT SECURITIES, IS NOTHING MORE THAN AN ACCOUNTING TRICK. APART FROM INCREASING THE GOVERNMENT'S INTEREST LIABILITIES, IT RARELY ADDRESSES THE DEEPER STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF THE BANKS. WITH LOW CREDIT OFFTAKE AND HIGHER NPAS, BANKS WILL BE FORCED TO FURTHER LOWER THE DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES — ALREADY AT THE ROCK-BOTTOM — AND DRIVE DEPOSITORS TOWARDS THE EQUITY MARKET OR GOLD. THIS IS HARDLY A RECIPE FOR REVIVAL



— which was so assiduously pursued by the RBI during the last few years. This has seen a steady decline in their GNPA ratio from 11.5 per cent in March 2018 to 8.5 per cent in March this year. Though this reduced their CRAR, however, it still remained above the Basel III-compliant RBI norms.

Now, the loans are likely to rise to a 20-year high as a result of the crisis triggered by the pandemic.

As the RBI Governor said in the foreword to the FSR, "The financial system in India remains sound. Nonetheless, in the current environment, the need for financial intermediaries to proactively augment capital and improve their resilience has acquired top priority. In the evolving milieu, while risk management has to be prudent, extreme risk-aversion would have adverse outcomes for all."

Under the current crisis, risk aversion, both by banks and borrowers, is only to be expected as evidenced by the banks parking their excess liquidity with the RBI instead of lending. Credit demand has not picked up despite the easing of the lockdown and financial vulnerabilities are likely to be amplified, leading to a further deterioration in the asset quality of the banks due to the piling up of mountains of bad loans.

As a 90-day window is given for paying the loan instalments to keep the loans from being classified as NPAs, the exact position would be known only in December after the expiry of the moratorium on August 31. But there is an urgent need to recapitalise the banks — both PSBs and PBVs — for building stronger buffers for them to be able to absorb the losses.

The recapitalisation bond route by which the Government issues bonds to the banks, which promptly invest them

in Government securities, is nothing more than an accounting trick. Apart from increasing the Government's interest liabilities, it rarely addresses the deeper structural problems of the banks.

While the GNPA ratio of PSBs may increase to 15.2 per cent under the baseline scenario (16.3 per cent under the worst-case scenario), the ratios of the PBVs and even the foreign banks are likely to increase to 7.3 per cent and 3.9 per cent, respectively. Erosion of the capital will shrink the system-level CRAR of the banking sector as a whole from 14.6 per cent in March to 13.3 per cent by next March under the baseline scenario and to 11.8 per cent under severe stress conditions.

Five banks will fail to meet the minimum prescribed CRAR level of nine per cent by March 2021 — five more will be close (under 10 per cent) without merger or recapitalisation which might increase their systemic resilience. However, mergers of PSBs, now practically stalled because of the lockdown, have their own problems. The NPAs of the State Bank of India (SBI) worsened after its merger with associates two years ago, with write-offs and persistent slippages eating into profit and capital both, besides impeding the growth of credit.

Other mergers — Bank of Baroda (BoB) with Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank and Punjab National Bank's (PNB)'s 1993 merger with the New Bank of India also faced many problems. It is unlikely that the current mergers of healthy banks with weak banks will improve the health of the banking system as a whole; in any case, they will not cause any significant reduction of the NPA ratios of the amalgamated banks. Then there is the added danger

of spillover effects from the NPAs of NBFCs, which are still unable to recover from the IL&FS shock of 2018. Bank lending to NBFCs had increased dramatically from ₹3 lakh crore in December 2016 post-demonetisation to ₹8 lakh crore in May this year. Any increase in their NPAs will automatically trigger a contagion, leading to further deterioration of the banking system. The gravity of the situation cannot be overemphasised.

The structural problems with the recovery of bad loans have remained unresolved even after operationalisation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Of the total claims of ₹3.52 lakh crore from 190 companies (till December 2019), ₹1.52 lakh crore (43 per cent) has been recovered, which of course was a significant improvement over the earlier recovery rate of 10 per cent. But only two cases — Bhushan Steel and Essar Steel — accounted for 49.5 per cent of the overall recoveries.

Given the huge number of case loads — 1,961 as of December 2019 — and the time taken for disposal by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the system is already getting clogged like never before. With low credit offtake and higher NPAs, banks will be forced to further lower the deposit interest rates — already at the rock-bottom — and drive depositors towards the equity market or gold. This is hardly a recipe for revival. The Government and the RBI must urgently reassess the across-the-board moratorium policy and limit it only to the hardest-hit, address the delays in IBC resolution and not further alienate and drive away the depositors.

(The writer is a former Director General at the office of the CAG of India and an academic.)

## Did an Islamic State ever exist?

The modern State is a fairly recent European construct and has been borrowed to project a retrospective interpretation about what an Islamic State meant



**T**he roots of the concept of the State lie in the political ideas formulated in ancient Greece and the Roman Republic. Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle wrote of the "polis" (the city State) as an ideal form of association, in which the religious, cultural, political and economic needs of the citizens can be satisfied. The ancient Roman idea of *res publica* is more similar to the modern concept of the State. The *res publica* was a legal system, the jurisdiction of which extended to all Roman citizens, securing their rights and determining their responsibilities.

However, it wasn't until the 16th century that the modern concept of the

State fully emerged in Europe. Between the 17th and 19th centuries, the idea was expanded and developed in the works of philosophers like John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jeremy Bentham and Karl Marx. By the 19th century, the concept of the State as we know it today, had been practically established in various regions of Europe.

According to the noted political anthropologist Professor Irfan Ahmad, till the 17th century, "the State governed by not governing." Seldom did it interfere in most affairs of its subjects. Its main interest was to extract levies and taxes. Its administrative scope was limited. The French philosopher Michel Foucault, claimed that the scope of the State began to expand from the 16th century. The idea of the State in non-Western regions was different. According to Irfan Ahmad, the nature of the State in Muslim-majority regions and in regions being ruled by Muslims was also static. It was only interested in gathering taxes and aiding the monarch and his vassals to

retain their wealth and power.

The State as we know it today, is thus a comparatively recent construct and a product of political and economic modernity. So what do concepts such as "Islamic State" or "Riyasat-i-Madina" (State of Madina) really mean? Such terms are often used by ideologues and politicians in Muslim-majority regions. The thinking behind them is that Islam is inherently political and its sacred texts lay out a blueprint for a State run by laws prescribed by Allah. Those who hold this view insist that such a State came into being with the arrival of Islam that actively regulated every political, economic and social aspect of the community.

Irfan Ahmad writes that till the 16th/17th century, the working of the State, even in powerful Muslim empires, was as limited as it was in non-Muslim realms. He adds that the idea of an Islamic State is actually not more than a 100 years old. According to the works of Egyptian scholars Ali Abdel Raziq and Sa'id al-Ashmawi, theologically, Islam treats faith and the

concept of State separately and, in fact, puts more emphasis on faith and how it can operate as a moral guide. Ahmad writes, "to impose the modern concept of the State on 7th century Arab society is misleading." Because of infrastructural weaknesses, the State could not have expanded its scope beyond a handful of duties, even if it wanted to.

The Syrian academic and historian Aziz Al-Azme, in a widely-debated 1990 essay *Utopia and Islamic Political Thought*, demonstrates that there is no political theory (about a State) in classical Islamic political thought. Fact is, those who insist that there is, are simply projecting the modern concept of the State on ancient and medieval Islamic polities, reimagining these polities as Islamic states which influenced almost every aspect of the lives of their citizens. According to Ahmad, such projections are the result of ideas that first emerged in the early 20th century.

One of the pioneers in this respect was the prolific South Asian ideologue

and Islamic scholar Abul Ala Maududi. Ahmad writes that, as a young man, Maududi was associated with *The Muslim*, a daily that took an anti-British, pro-Congress Party position and promoted Muslim-Hindu unity and a secular set-up in India. However, after 1937, Maududi changed his stance, especially when Jinnah's Muslim League began to press for a separate Muslim-majority State. Ahmad writes that all major political players in British India had become smitten by the concepts of the State and nationalism introduced in the region by the British colonialists. The Muslim League began to speak about a Muslim State, the Congress about a post-colonial secular Indian State and the Leftists about a socialist State.

Rejecting all these concepts as ungodly, Maududi came up with the theory of Government of Allah or Islamic State. He then set out to formulate a new political theology, by interpreting Islamic scriptures in the context of the State. In a 1941 essay, he writes, "In reality, the classical Arabic

word *deen* approximately has the same meaning which the word State has in the contemporary age." Noting that the modern State regulates almost every facet of people's lives, he contemplated the creation of an Islamic State that would regulate every aspect of its citizens' lives according to laws laid down by the Islamic scriptures.

Maududi understood the Muslim League as a secular Muslim national organisation. So, to neutralise Maududi's criticism, Pakistan began to throw his ideas. Yet, Maududi's own party could not gain much traction among voters. This was probably due to the aforementioned ploy by the State and, more so, because from the mid-1970s, even non-religious parties began to adopt ideas from Maududi and fused them with their secular outlook. His ideas in this context reached completion as an elaborate theory in his 1979 magnum opus, *Four Fundamental Concepts of the Quran*.

The theory suggested that an Islamic State existed during the early days of the faith because the sacred

scriptures were treated as an all-encompassing political constitution and that such a State fell away because of corruption and needs to be re-enacted. Interestingly, this is the narrative popularised by the Imran Khan Government. Though Maududi's thesis was inspired by largely European ideas of the State, this does not bother those who take the revisionist historical claims of his theories as fact.

Ever since the 1980s, whenever there are claims and promises made by a variety of ideologies and leaders in the Muslim world, about working towards an Islamic State, it is assumed that it is rooted in the workings of a 7th century Islamic realm. According to Ahmad, objective history does not support this. As Egyptian scholar Nasr Abu Zayd says, "Religious scriptures are at the mercy of the ideology of its interpreter. For a communist, they would reveal communism; for a fundamentalist they would be fundamentalist text, for a feminist it would be a feminist text, and so on..."

(Courtesy: Dawn)

# Trump signs virus relief order for Americans

Washington: President Donald Trump on Saturday signed executive orders extending economic help to Americans hit by the coronavirus crisis after his Republican party and opposition Democrats failed to agree on a new stimulus package.

"We've had it and we're going to save American jobs and provide relief to the American workers," he said at a press conference in his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey.

With double digit unemployment, massive disruption to businesses from social distancing rules, and stubbornly high rates of coronavirus infection, many Americans have been relying on relief measures approved earlier by Congress, but which mostly expired in July.

Trump said his decision to circumvent Congress with executive orders would mean relief money getting "rapidly distributed."

One order aims to get \$400 a week added to unemployment benefits, while two others offer some protection from evictions and relief for student loans.



A fourth measure — opposed by many Republicans as well as Democrats — orders a freeze in payroll taxes.

Trump, speaking in the ballroom of his Bedminster, New Jersey golf club with an audience of club members cheering him and laughing at his colorful insults against opponents, said he was also working on new tax cut ideas.

However, his executive orders are likely to face court challenges, since they short-circuit Congress, which has constitutional power over most spending decisions.

Democrats, Republicans and White House negotiators had worked all last week with-

out coming close to a deal on a congressional relief bill.

Democrats pushed for a massive new \$3 trillion stimulus package aimed at propping up the economy, repairing the tattered postal system in time for the presidential election, and giving the unemployed an extra \$600 a week.

Democrats later announced they could drop the price tag but refused the Republicans' offer of a \$1 trillion package.

Trump, who is down in the polls against Democrat Joe Biden, faces broad criticism over his handling of the health and economic responses to the coronavirus pandemic. *AP*

# Rajapaksa takes oath as Lanka PM, cements family's grip on power

Colombo: Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in on Sunday as Sri Lanka's new prime minister at a centuries-old Buddhist temple after his party won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections that allowed the influential family to consolidate power for the next five years.

The 74-year-old former president and Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) leader was administered the oath of office by his younger brother and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at a gathering of Buddhist monks, representatives of the diplomatic community and other senior officials.

"I am humbled by the opportunity given to me to serve my people again," he tweeted soon after starting his fourth innings as prime minister.

Mahinda Rajapaksa said the trust bestowed on him by the people will inspire him to continue to serve the country. The prime minister vowed that he would ensure that Sri Lanka would embark on a progressive journey during his tenure.

Supporters of the SLPP lit firecrackers to celebrate his swearing-in as the 13th Prime Minister at the Rajamaha Vihara in Kelaniya, north Colombo suburb, at the auspicious hour of 9:28 am local time.

The Rajamaha Vihara, also known as the Kelaniya temple, dates back to 2,500 years. According to the website of the temple, it has often been associated with the rise and fall of Sri Lanka.

The SLPP, led by Mahinda and Gotabaya Rajapaksa, registered a landslide victory in the August 5 general election, securing two-thirds majority in Parliament needed to amend the Constitution to further consolidate the powerful Rajapaksa family's grip on power.

India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Gopal Bagay on Saturday became the first envoy to congratulate the new prime minister when he called on Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Bagay recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had complimented the people and Government of Sri Lanka on the

successful conduct of elections and had acknowledged the impressive electoral performance of the SLPP. *PTI*

# Azar leads highest-level US delegation to Taiwan in decades

Taipei: US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar arrived in Taiwan on Sunday in the highest-level visit by an American Cabinet official since the break in formal diplomatic relations between Washington and Taipei in 1979.

Beijing has already protested Azar's visit as a betrayal of US commitments not to have official contact with the island. China claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be brought under its control by military force if necessary.

Azar is due to meet with the island's independence-leaning President Tsai Ing-wen along with health officials during a three-day visit aimed at highlighting cooperation in the fight against the coronavirus.

Taiwan's government-run health care system has been credited with keeping the number of coronavirus cases to under 500 with just seven deaths, despite its close proximity to China where the virus originated.

China sees Taiwan as a key irritant in its troubled relationship with Washington, with whom it is also at odds over trade, technology, the South China Sea and China's

military pressure against her, including by poaching away several of its remaining diplomatic allies and excluding it from international gatherings including the World Health Assembly.

That, in turn, has increased already considerable bipartisan sympathy for Taipei in Washington and prompted new measures to strengthen governmental and military ties.

Also Sunday, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu met with the first representative of Somaliland to the island ahead of the territory's opening of a representative office in Taipei.

Wu earlier tweeted that Mohamed Omar Hagi Mohamoud had "braved Chinese pressure" — a reference to reports that China had sought to block relations between Taiwan and the region on the Horn of Africa that broke from the rest of Somalia but is not recognized by the United Nations as an independent country.

"The fact 'sovereignty & friendship aren't for sale' deserves international recognition," Wu tweeted. *AP*

# Afghan council frees Taliban prisoners to set up peace talks

Kabul: A traditional Afghan council concluded Sunday with hundreds of delegates agreeing to free 400 Taliban members, paving the way for an early start to negotiations between Afghanistan's warring sides.

The declaration read out in both of Afghanistan's official languages of Pashto and Farsi calls for an immediate start to negotiations and cease fire.

The move looks to bring the United States a little closer to returning its troops and ending its longest military engagement.

No date has been set but negotiations between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban are expected to begin as early as next week and will most likely be held in the middle eastern state of Qatar, where the Taliban maintains a political office.

The Afghan negotiations were laid out in a peace deal signed by the United States and the Taliban in February. At the time of its signing it was touted as Afghanistan's best chance

at ending decades of war. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani praised delegates for their decision, urged the Taliban to stop fighting.

Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the decision "was a good step, a positive step." He said negotiations could start within one week of their prisoners being freed.

As for a cease fire, Shaheen said the Taliban was committed to the deal it struck with the United States and according to that deal "the cease fire will be one of the items to be discussed during the intra-Afghan negotiations."

The council's decision to free the prisoners does not come as a surprise as delegates were urged by the US at the start of the council, or jirga, on Friday to take "this difficult action" so negotiations could begin to bring an end to the war.

"To remove obstacle, to start peace talks and to stop the bloodshed, the Jirga confirms

the release of 400 Taliban prisoners," said Atefa Tayeb, a council secretary who read out the final declaration at the conclusion.

The deal negotiated between the United States and Taliban calls for the government to free 5,000 prisoners and for the Taliban to free 1,000 government and military personnel in its custody as a goodwill gesture ahead of the start of negotiations.

Kabul balked at the release but eventually freed all but the last 400. President Ghani said he was not authorized to free these because of the seriousness of their crimes, and asked for the council to decide instead. He did not detail what the 400 were accused.

Delegates were therefore given the stark choice of either freeing the prisoners or seeing a war that has killed tens of thousands continue. The delegates said they wanted international guarantees that the Taliban would not return to the battlefield.

Washington's Peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad spent more than a year and a half negotiating the deal with the Taliban to provide for the withdrawal of American soldiers after more than 19 years in Afghanistan.

The withdrawal began earlier this year but roughly 8,600 US soldiers remain in Afghanistan and their return

## Pak welcomes Afghan council's recommendation

Islamabad: Pakistan on Sunday welcomed A traditional Afghan council's recommendation to release the remaining 400 Taliban members, expressing hope that the move will help in an early start to negotiations between Afghanistan's warring sides.

The traditional Afghan council concluded Sunday with hundreds of delegates agreeing to free 400 Taliban members.

"We hope that with the implementation of this step

will depend on the Taliban honoring its commitment to fight against other terrorist groups and ensure Afghanistan is not again used to attack the United States or its allies.

The withdrawal of US and NATO troops is not dependent on the success of negotiations between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban. *AP*

The resignation comes after a night of demonstrations against the ruling elite, blamed for the chronic mismanagement and corruption that is believed to be behind the explosion in a Beirut Port warehouse.

Hundreds of tons of highly explosive material were stored in the waterfront hanger, and the blast sent a shock wave that killed at least 160 people, wounded nearly 6,000 and defaced the coastline of Beirut — destroying hundreds of buildings.

Manal Abdel-Samad said in her resignation letter that the public will for change, I resign from the government," Abdel-Samad wrote. *AP*

she regrets failing to fulfill the aspirations of the Lebanese people.

Her resignation comes as about half a dozen lawmakers offered their resignation in protest over government performance.

Local media also reported that another minister, and a close advisor to Prime Minister Hassan Diab, was also expected to resign.

Diab met with his Cabinet reportedly to discuss the resignations Sunday, but there were no comments after the meeting.

"Given the magnitude of the catastrophe caused by the Beirut earthquake that shook the nation and hurt our hearts and minds, and in respect for the martyrs, and the pains of the wounded, missing and displaced, and in response to the public will for change, I resign from the government," Abdel-Samad wrote. *AP*

# Riot declared as fire burns in Portland police union offices

Portland (US): A fire inside a police union building led authorities in Portland, Oregon, to declare a riot and force protesters away from the offices as violent demonstrations continue in the city that had hoped for calm after federal agents withdrew more than a week ago.

A group of demonstrators broke into the Portland Police Association building, set the fire and were adding to it when officers made the riot declaration late Saturday, police tweeted.

Video shot by a journalist shows smoke and flames arising from inside the building.

Several hundred people had gathered outside the offices, which are located about 5 miles (8 kilometers) north of the federal courthouse that had been the target of nightly violence earlier this summer. *AP*

# North Macedonia cops find 94 migrants hidden in truck

Skopje (North Macedonia): Police in North Macedonia say they have found 94 migrants packed into a truck in the country's southeast.

A police patrol stopped the truck with Macedonian national license plates late Saturday near the town of Radovish, 110 kilometers (68 miles) southeast of the capital, Skopje. The truck driver fled from the scene, police said Sunday.

Police found 94 migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan packed into the truck cargo area.

The migrants were detained and will be transferred to a migrant shelter in the southern border town of Gevgelija, pending deportation to Greece, where they came from.

The Greek border with North Macedonia was closed earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

But trafficking networks remain active, ferrying migrants who make their way from Turkey into Greece and then attempt to head north toward more prosperous countries in the European Union. *AP*

# US tops 5 million confirmed virus cases, to Europe's alarm

Rome: With confirmed coronavirus cases in the US hitting 5 million Sunday, by far the highest of any country, the failure of the most powerful nation in the world to contain the scourge has been met with astonishment and alarm in Europe.

Perhaps nowhere outside the US is America's bungled virus response viewed with more consternation than in Italy, which was ground zero of Europe's epidemic. Italians were unprepared when the outbreak exploded in February, and the country still has one of the world's highest official death tolls at 35,000.

But after a strict nationwide, widespread tracing of new clusters and general acceptance of mask mandates and social distancing, Italy has become a model of virus containment.

"Don't they care about their health?" a mask-clad Patrizia Antonini asked about people in the United States as she walked with friends along the banks of Lake Bracciano, north of Rome. *AP*

# Belarus strongman president faces strong election challenge

AP ■ MINSK

casting his ballot.

"Do you want to overthrow the government, break something, wound, offend, and expect me or someone to kneel in front of you and kiss them and the sand onto which you wandered? This will not happen." But some voters were defiant.

"There is no more fear. Belarusians will not be silent and will protest loudly," 24-year-old Tatiana Protasevich said at a Minsk polling place Sunday.

The head of staff for main opposition candidate Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya was detained late Saturday for allegedly participating in unauthorized protests and is likely to be in jail until at least Monday.

"If you provoke, you will get the same answer," he said after

the declaration of results of the presidential election.

Belarusians are voting on whether to grant their authoritarian president a sixth term in office, following a campaign marked by strong demonstrations by opposition supporters frustrated with the country's stumbling economy, political repression and weak response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Incumbent Alexander Lukashenko, in office for 26 years, has made it clear he won't hesitate to quash any attempt by his opponents to protest the results of Sunday's election.

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# New Zealand marks 100 days of virus elimination

Wellington: New Zealand on Sunday marked 100 days since it stamped out the spread of the coronavirus, a rare bright spot in a world that continues to be ravaged by the disease.

Life has returned to normal for many people in the South Pacific nation of 5 million, as they attend rugby games at packed stadiums and sit down in bars and restaurants without the fear of getting infected. But some worry the country may be getting complacent and not preparing well enough for any future outbreaks.

New Zealand got rid of the virus by imposing a strict lockdown in late March when only about 100 people had tested positive for the disease. That stopped its spread. *AP*

Thousands protest against Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in front of his official residence in Jerusalem. *AP*

YOUR TIME'S UP: PROTESTERS TARGET NETANYAHU OVER JOBS, COVID

Jerusalem: Thousands of Israelis rallied outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem on Saturday as anger mounted over corruption allegations and his handling of the coronavirus crisis. "Your time is up," read the giant letters projected on to a building at the protest site, as demonstrators

waved Israeli flags and called on Netanyahu to resign over what they say is his failure to protect jobs and businesses affected by the pandemic. *AP*

scrapping the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

"As a result, the threat of nuclear weapons being used is increasingly becoming real," Taeu said. Noting that the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty entered into force 50 years ago, Taeu urged the US and Russia to show a (asterisk)workable way(asterisk) towards their

nuclear disarmament at the NPT review process next year.

He said that "the true horror of nuclear weapons has not yet been adequately conveyed to the world at large" despite struggle and efforts by hibakusha, or atomic bombing survivors, to make Nagasaki the last place of the tragedy.

He also urged Japan's government and lawmakers to quickly sign the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

# Asia-Pacific may see \$31.4-54.3 bn remittance losses due to Covid-19: ADB

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**A**sia Pacific, which accounts for a third of the global migrant workforce, is likely to face remittance losses of USD 31.4-54.3 billion due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a report.

The Governments need to come up with policy measures to reduce the economic and social fallout arising out of it, the ADB said.

Job losses stemming from Covid-19 are hurting households around the world, but for Asia and the Pacific's 91 million migrant workers — a third of the global migrant workforce — the impacts will be particularly severe, the ADB said in August 2020 brief on 'COVID-19 Impact on International

Migration, Remittances, and Recipient Households in Developing Asia.'

"ADB economists estimate that the region faces remittance losses ranging from USD 31.4 billion to USD 54.3 billion. To reduce the economic and social impacts, policy responses are proposed in areas such as social protection, immigration, labour, and health," it said.

In 2019, six of the 10 largest remittance recipients globally were from this region—India, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Vietnam, the Manila-headquartered multilateral funding agency said.

The countries likely to face more severe effects from the pandemic-induced decline in remittance inflows are the ones where remittance shares to gross domestic product (GDP)

and per capita remittances are high.

These include Tonga, Samoa, and other Pacific countries, with remittances relative to the size of their economies and populations very high.

Central Asian countries such as Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, sending a large number of seasonal and long-term migrants mainly to the Russian Federation and Europe, will also be hard-hit, along with some of the major migrant origin countries such as Nepal and the Philippines, it added.

Remittances to Asia and the Pacific, amounting to USD 315 billion in 2019, are an important and stable source of income for families back home and help strengthen external financing—alongside foreign

direct investment and tourism recipients—in many developing economies, said the report penned by four ADB economists. They boost general consumption as well as investment and help sustain Government debts by contributing to the foreign currency revenue base, said the economists.

Jobs and worker welfare are severely affected by the pandemic globally but some sectors are hurt more than others such as retail and wholesale trade, hospitality and recreation, manufacturing, and accommodation and food service sectors.

These are the sectors largely in non-essential services with frequent face-to-face interactions and the migrant and informal workers are among those facing the most

severe impacts, as they often do not have regular contracts nor strong bargaining power, said the report.

"Migrant workers are more vulnerable from layoffs once prolonged lockdowns and production breaks drive companies out of business."

Also, uncertainty looms about the timing of full recovery, even as lockdowns are lifted, with concerns about persistent weak demand in some economic sectors.

"The wide-scale economic cost of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to reach between USD 5.8 trillion and USD 8.8 trillion globally, equivalent to 6.4 per cent to 9.7 per cent of global GDP, reflecting the spread of the pandemic to Europe, the United States, and other major economies," said the report. The ADB said that

employment in host economies of Asian migrants is contracting significantly.

"The remittance flows to developing Asia is to plunge amid the pandemic as during the first months 2020, remittances began to contract in major migrant source countries...While some migrant workers may feel altruistic and send more money to their families in extremely difficult situations, prevailing weak economic forecasts are pointing toward declining remittances."

However, relative increase in remittance inflows is observed in June in selected countries which can be attributed to lifting of lockdowns in destinations that allowed migrants to remit over the counter and introduction of policy measures that incentivise transfer

by reducing restrictions and transaction fees, the ADB said.

Citing a study of 10 migrant sending countries in Asia, the ADB said remittance-dependent households are at risk of falling into poverty, as it is estimated that a 1 per cent increase in the share to GDP to remittances inflow from overseas is associated with a reduction in poverty gap by 22.6 per cent and poverty severity by 16 per cent.

A study based on micro-data from selected economies in South Asia and Southeast Asia suggests that a 10 per cent increase in remittance inflows leads to a 3-4 per cent rise in real GDP per capita, it said.

Recommending policy actions to the host and source countries, ADB economists said governments of host coun-

tries of migrants need to ensure that migrant workers have access to social protection, including employment-related support and social assistance, as well as health services. They should support employers to help retain and hire laid-off workers, including migrant workers.

Such effort contributes to the smooth recovery of the economy by ensuring workforce availability and the reduction of contagion risks, said the report. Among others, the host and source countries should continue to recognise remittance service providers as one of the essential businesses to allow migrants and families to transact without disruption as remittance money is a lifeline for many poor and vulnerable families left behind.



## 'TRAI to give decision on priority plans within 2 weeks of telcos reply'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**T**RAI expects to finalise its decision on priority plans of Vodafone Idea and Airtel within two weeks of getting detailed responses on its queries from the two telcos, according to a regulatory source.

The source said that while TRAI had "serious concerns" on multiple issues pertaining to the priority plans, it had granted additional time up to August 10 to the two telcos to respond to its fresh round of questioning, as the players themselves had sought more time to reply.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is probing whether assuring minimum, faster or average data speeds is technological feasible or not.

And indeed, if it is, why should telecom operators offering priority/platinum plans not be able to quantify the same, and clear the air around treatment that will be meted out to non-premium customers as well, the source privy to the ongoing enquiry said.

Telcos must clearly quantify the benefits being offered

**TRAI is probing whether assuring minimum, faster or average data speeds is technological feasible or not**

to consumers (of the priority plans) in return for what they are being charged. Subscription to a mobile plan is akin to a 'sale' where consumer is the purchaser of the service and hence the telcos "must quantify exactly what services such users are going to get."

Merely using the term 'better service' is not suffice, the source said.

Asked about the timelines for TRAI to come to a conclusion on the ongoing issue, the source said that the two telcos themselves had asked for some more time earlier this month to answer TRAI's second round of queries, many of which were technical in nature and needed concrete data.

TRAI will finalise its decision on priority plan issue within two weeks of getting

response from the telcos, the extended time for which is Monday (August 10), the source said.

Service quality must be specified for two sets of users now -- priority and general users, and that information too has not been given by the companies, so far, the source added.

Moreover, when the plans were filed, the operators should have drawn the regulator's attention to the fact that these represented differentiated offerings.

TRAI had recently granted additional time to Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea to submit detailed responses on fresh set of questions on premium plans, where queries range from what happens when a non-priority customer is surrounded by priority users during congestion, to limit throughput configured for the two sets of network subscribers.

TRAI shot-off nearly two dozen additional questions to Airtel and Vodafone Idea over the contentious premium plans on July 31, and had asked them to explain their stand backed by data and presentation.

## Indian Railways committed to integrate with GeM portal: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**I**ndian Railways is committed to integrate with the Government e-marketplace (GeM) portal to move all its procurement to the platform, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

The railways' direct procurement of goods for its operations or its public sector undertakings or production units stood at about ₹70,000 crore-₹75,000 crore, the Commerce and Industry and Railways Minister said.

"I am happy to share that GeM and Indian Railways are burning the midnight oil, working day and night to ensure this entire ₹70,000 crore procurement on the GeM platform," Goyal said at the GeM-CII National Public Procurement Conclave 2020.

"Our own belief is that it will save railways not less than 10-15 per cent and that could be a saving of as high as ₹10,000 crore," he added. Railways buys more than 98 per cent of its goods and services in India and moving this purchase to the GeM platform in the next "probably 8-12

months" will help in making procurement process more transparent, seamless, efficient and faster, Goyal said.

"The railways has committed itself fully to integrate with GeM and move all its procurement to the GeM portal there (GeM)...Imagine we will save 1000s and 1000s of man hours of procurement time."

"The amount of elaborate tendering, advertisements, bids, bids opening, reverse auction, all of that become so seamless that our digital system of the railways will flag the requirement on the GeM portal, and it will be available for the whole world to see and more and more people will be enticed to register on GeM as suppliers," Goyal said.

He added that if any supplier or vendor provides bad quality goods, it will be blacklisted not only on GeM, but throughout the government system.

"We will ensure that the entire government system does not entertain that company anymore," he said, adding that at a later stage, GeM will move from goods and services to contracts.

The minister said the government's public procurement would be in the range of USD 100-150 billion (about ₹7.5 lakh crore-₹11.25 lakh crore), and probably more if one combines all the PSUs, state government and local bodies.

He said GeM should play a role in publicising all those products which are not made in India, but are required in India in a big way so that "we can encourage" entrepreneurs to plan to make those products in India, as is being done by railways. He said railways has identified the products which are imported and is working through RDSO (Research Design and Standards Organisation) to develop new vendors for those products.

"We have taken certain game changing reform measures in railway vendor registration also. Number of products have been moved out of vendor registration.

"So mostly safety items are being kept for vendor registration...If you are registered in any one organisation, you are deemed to be registered throughout the railways," he said.

adjudication by tax authorities, if requested for by the relevant taxpayers," it added.

In May, the Govt amended Income Tax rules to state that Indian authorities would "endeavour" to resolve disputes under MAP within a time-frame of 24 months, a move aimed at speedy settlement of cases of MNCs which have opted the alternative dispute resolution process. Nangia & Co LLP Partner Shailesh Kumar said Indian tax authorities have apparently shown their intention to provide a speedy resolution to taxpayers opting for MAP by appointment of two dedicated offices for taking up MAP applications and negotiations.

that are also being examined under MAP. "Since the ITAT is an independent statutory appellate body, which is outside the administrative jurisdiction of the Indian tax authorities; and is the highest fact-finding body on tax matters, the CAs in India shall not deviate from the orders of the ITAT for the relevant year where the dispute is decided on merits," the CBTD guidance note said.

Such MAP cases shall be closed as having been resolved by a domestic remedy.

"However, if the order of the ITAT does not resolve the disputes but only sets them aside to be adjudicated afresh, then access to MAP would be provided again after the fresh

## CAIT launches 'China Quit India' campaign to boycott Chinese goods

**N**ew Delhi: On the anniversary of Quit India Movement, the Confederation of all India Traders (CAIT) on Sunday launched a campaign 'China Quit India' to boycott Chinese goods, while its members held protests across 600 places across the country.

The trader's body said there is an urgent need to check "China's growing footsteps in India and import of Chinese goods". Adding a new dimension to its nationwide campaign 'Bhartiya Saamaan-Hamara Abhihaar', CAIT said it has launched 'China Quit India' movement to boycott

Chinese goods and "held a protest dharna at about 600 places in different states of the country." Expressing concerns over Chinese investment in various Indian companies, start-ups and digital apps, CAIT said there is a need to take necessary action in this regard. It said that Chinese investments in Government projects and various sensitive construction works should be put under government scanner.

On the 78th anniversary of Quit India Movement, it said people across the country had come together under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi to

## CBDT issues guidance note on MAP

### STIPULATES CASES WHERE ITAT HAS PASSED ORDER

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

**I**ndian authorities will not deviate from the resolution order passed by statutory appellate body ITAT in cross-border tax disputes which are undergoing simultaneous resolution through mutual agreement procedure (MAP), the income tax department has said.

MAP is an alternative dispute resolution process under the tax treaties, under which

competent authorities of two countries enter into discussions to resolve tax related disputes. As many as 600 tax disputes have been resolved under MAP between April 1, 2014 to December 31, 2018.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes has come out with a guidance note on MAP which also specifies cases or situations in which India will provide access to MAP. Tax disputes relating to transfer pricing adjustments, determination of existence of permanent establishment, attribution of profits to permanent establishments, characterisation or re-characterisation of an expense or receipt as a taxable expense or taxable income would be covered

under MAP if they result in taxation not in accordance with the relevant DTAAs.

The guidance note also said that India shall provide access to MAP even in a situation where the Indian tax authorities apply domestic anti-abuse provisions. The CBTD also said that in case of orders of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, the Competent Authorities of India shall not deviate from the orders of the ITAT for the relevant year where the dispute is decided on merits. It said that since MAP and domestic remedy proceedings can be availed by the taxpayers simultaneously, there could be instances where the ITAT in India passes an order in respect of the same disputes

that are also being examined under MAP. "Since the ITAT is an independent statutory appellate body, which is outside the administrative jurisdiction of the Indian tax authorities; and is the highest fact-finding body on tax matters, the CAs in India shall not deviate from the orders of the ITAT for the relevant year where the dispute is decided on merits," the CBTD guidance note said.

Such MAP cases shall be closed as having been resolved by a domestic remedy.

"However, if the order of the ITAT does not resolve the disputes but only sets them aside to be adjudicated afresh, then access to MAP would be provided again after the fresh

adjudication by tax authorities, if requested for by the relevant taxpayers," it added.

During the same period of 2019, the company had reported a net income of ₹24.7 billion. For the first half of 2020, it has reported a net income of ₹23.2 billion, compared to ₹4.9 billion reported during the corresponding period a year ago, the company said in a statement.

"Aramco navigated challenging market conditions to record net income of ₹6.6 billion for the second quarter and ₹23.2 billion for the first half of 2020, respectively, compared to ₹24.7 billion and ₹46.9 billion in the corresponding periods of 2019.

This demonstrates Aramco's agility, strength and resilience across market cycles," it said.

Noting that strong headwinds from reduced demand

and lower oil prices reflected in the company's second quarter results, Aramco President & CEO Amin H.

Nasser said that the company foresees a partial recovery in the energy market as economies open up.

"We are seeing a partial recovery in the energy market as countries around the world take steps to ease restrictions and reboot their economies. Meanwhile, we continue to place people's safety first and have adapted to the new normal, implementing wide-ranging precautions to limit the spread of Covid-19 wherever we operate," the CEO said.

He noted that despite the challenges, the company delivered "solid earnings" because of low production costs, unique scale, agile workforce, and unrivalled financial and operational strength.

This helped the company to deliver on its plan to maintain a second quarter dividend of \$18.75 billion to be paid in the third quarter, Nasser told PTI.

BSNL will start offering up to 10 times faster broadband speed at 100 mbps and up to 20 times more data download limit for its customers in Andaman and Nicobar Islands from Monday, the company said on Sunday.

The announcement from BSNL comes a day before the launch of 2,312 kilometre long Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) submarine optical fibre cable project by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Despite many challenges the project is completed in a scheduled timeline and without any cost overrun. Being a first of its kind project in India, BSNL ensured that the laying of submarine optical fibre cable is completed as per global specification to ensure quality," BSNL chairman and managing director P K Purwar said.

BSNL will enhance data speeds across all the plans between 2-10 times after the launch of the project without charging any extra amount

from the customers, according to details shared by the company. "For BSNL wire line segment, copper broadband customers are now provided with higher speeds which is up to 10Mbps and up to 15 times more data download ranging from 30 GB to 750 GB in a month on its existing plans," the statement said.

The data speed restriction after the download limit, will also be enhanced from 512 kbps to up to 2 Mbps in various plans, it added.

## Trend Slayer

### We will find light: Hrithik

Actor **HRITHIK ROSHAN** feels helpless witnessing the series of tragic incidents that has plagued us over the past months.

"It is difficult, yet important to latch onto every ray of hope... A feeling of helplessness engulfs me as I witness a series of tragic events in our world. Beirut explosion. Air India crash. Mauritius environment emergency. Floods and distress. Earthquake. The collapse of the last Arctic ice shelf. All this while we battle a pandemic. My prayers for the peace of the departed souls. Condolences for the grieving families. May we uplift each other in these unfortunate times and stand strong. This too shall pass. We will find light," he wrote on Instagram.



**'I wanted to introduce Jammwalions to push-ups. I thought the best way to do it was to demonstrate'**

**Kalaris Dand to them. It targets the core, back, chest, shoulders, back, legs and triceps. It's the humblest of all workouts. It does not require any heavy equipment or trips to the gym.'**

—Vidyut Jammwal

Bored of tying your hair in a top knot, hiding those dull, lifeless strands? It doesn't help that the monsoons make the hair frizzy, weak and create all sorts of havoc to our tresses.



Actor **KALKI KOECHLIN** tries something she has never done before — colouring her hair at home in a rich hue of mahogany.

"I have heard L'Oréal Paris Casting Creme Gloss Hair Colour is one of the easiest and the best. Not just because it gives you a great colour but also because it makes your hair really glossy," she says.

### 'Co-writing a screenplay'

Singer **MADONNA** has revealed that she has been writing a screenplay lately.

The pop diva has been collaborating with *Juno* writer Diablo Cody. In a black-and-white video Madonna has shared, she can be seen sitting at a discussion with Cody.

"When you're stuck in a house with multiple injuries what do you do? Write a Screenplay with Diablo," Madonna captioned the post.

Their table in front is covered in drafts and different scripts.

Madonna can be heard saying, "All these details are important."

It wasn't all work, though. At one point, the superstar singer was in the mood for some fun and games, with two peanuts up her nose.

**W**ith the COVID-19 pandemic, everyone is compelled to acknowledge the fact that things cannot function the way they used to anymore. As a part of the business community, society and the larger ecosystem, the need to learn to adapt to the new normal has become a necessity. Studies reveal how workplace conducts can be modified and regulated as per the changing requirements as the lockdown is gradually being lifted up.

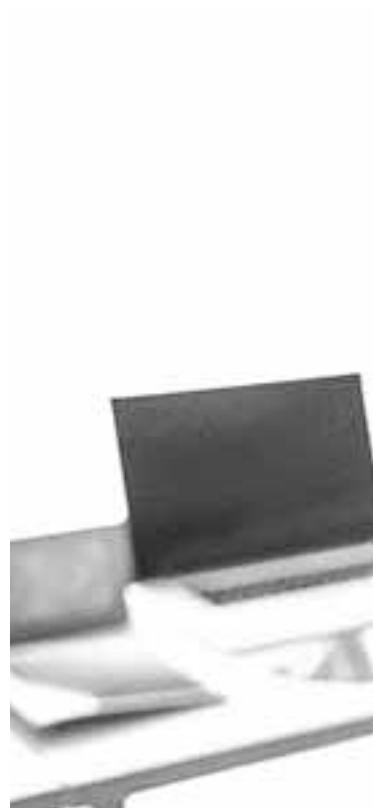
A survey by Pulse studied the key competencies to survive the current pandemic. Its second survey focussed on the priorities and policies HR functions should adopt to help organisations and employees navigate through the current crisis. The third survey now focusses on the relevance of POSH Act and Policy (The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013) in the new normal considering the emerging current realities that have surfaced.

It lists these top priorities for organisations to look at while evaluating the relevance of POSH Act and Policy while redesigning and reshaping their work culture and employee behaviour.

#### MODIFYING THE POLICY FOR REMOTE WORKING

As the workforce continues to adapt to the changing needs of their work environment and undergo dramatic shift in workplace dynamics, organisations should constantly re-look and refresh their frameworks, practices, processes and policies for workplace safety.

Thus, an important aspect to workplace safety is that the POSH policy should be modified to meet the needs of remote or virtual working. During work from home (WFH), the need for POSH training has become a pressing requirement as per the data in the survey.



# Up close with new rules

Organisations need to evaluate their POSH Act and Policy too while redesigning and reshaping their work culture and employee behaviour in times of remote working. By **TEAM VIVA**

policy in offices to ensure safety is not a privilege limited to a few within the workforce.

#### CYBER BULLYING OR VIRTUAL HARASSMENT

The need for HR leaders to review complex scenarios under the POSH Act has become a pressing need. We are connected virtually for long hours when it comes to work life as lines between professional and personal space have blurred.

Emerging challenges have also surfaced with virtual connectivity becoming a part of our everyday work that needs to be addressed. As per Gartner, by 2030, demand for remote working will increase by 30 per cent with "Gen Z" entering the workplace. Cyber bullying or harassment on virtual platforms is a pressing concern that should be addressed in the POSH policy.

#### SENSITISATION AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR "NOT CAMERA-READY" BEHAVIOUR

As a major portion of our workforce continues to work from home, they operate in this workplace while interacting with colleagues and work teams. Therefore, a certain level of sensitisation of managers and other employees on "not camera-ready" behaviour, code of conduct and dress code for video conferences, virtual or video conference guidelines are required to be clearly stated and put in place. It will help maintain a certain level of professional conduct among employees.



#### POSH TRAINING DURING WFH

It is important for companies to conduct training and awareness sessions for employees across the verticals within the organisation. It should include the leadership, managers, employees, newly-recruited staff and interns who are now getting on-board virtually. The need to be sensitised to expected standards of

professional behaviour, redressal mechanism and clear implications of false and malicious complaints need to be taken into consideration with assurance of swift action.

Popular method for facilitating training sessions or activities across industries on the POSH Policy and Act were Face-to-Face. However, even

though social distancing is the norm, the need to sensitise employees across multiple locations should not be undermined. Utilisation of virtual platforms has become an excellent mode of communication and learning with online training and webinars to support and address training needs of employees in an organisation.

## WEBBED



### BIO HACKERS

A medical student enters a top German university on a secret mission to uncover a conspiracy linking a family tragedy to a visionary biology professor. Starring Luna Wedler, Jessica Schwarz and Thomas Prenn, season 1 releases on Netflix on August 20.

### CLASS OF '83

Demoted to an academy job, a cop trains five foolhardy students as assassins in his risky revenge plot against police corruption and the underworld. Starring Bobby Deol, Bhupendra Jadavat and Hitesh Bhojraj, the film releases on Netflix on August 21.



### THE SLEEPOVER

What do you do if your parents are kidnapped by a crew of international thieves? You begin a wild overnight adventure — complete with spy gear. The film releases on Netflix on August 21.



## Discovering the truth

Filmmaker and author **VIVEK AGNIHOTRI**'s new book, *Who Killed Shastri?: The Tashkent Files*, uses the democratic Right to Information to question the mysterious death of a Prime Minister

After his first book, *Urban Naxals: The Making of Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, director and screenwriter Vivek Agnihotri is now set to come up with his second non-fiction book, *Who Killed Shastri?: The Tashkent Files*.

Known for writing screenplays of films like *The Tashkent Files*, *Buddha In A Traffic Jam*, and *Dhan Dhan Goal*, Agnihotri has bound together the elements of the mystery around the legendary Lal Bahadur Shastri's death in the book.

According to the author, this is "the first-ever book to investigate the mysterious death of independent India's second prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, from all possible angles."

Commenting on his book, Agnihotri said, "Four years ago, I figured out that the first fundamental right of a citizen in a democracy has to be the right to truth but how is it possible if we don't even know the truth of our second prime minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri mysteriously."



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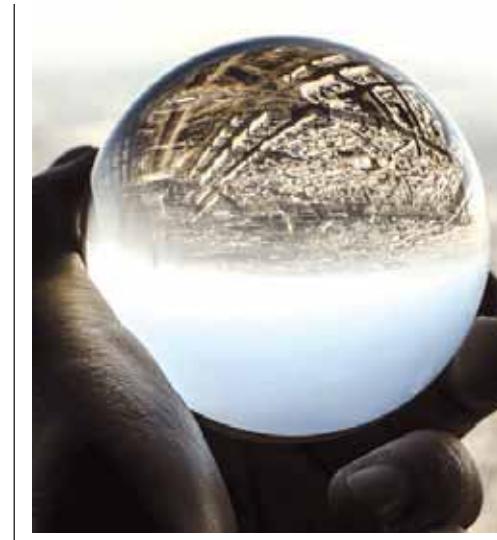
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## BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

We must remember that the current condition of the world is a warning bell to improve ourselves and prepare well for unexpected emergencies, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

The current events, especially growing border tensions between the two Asian countries reflect the present state of world. Likewise, the growing pandemic situation and the Indian government's handling of this and other national issues such as those relating to Kashmir or Assam, indicates the state of the Indian nation. The current events prove how egotism, confrontation and violence have become the rule of the day. The situations in the Western Asia is, indeed, becoming more and more complicated with the passing of each day. It is acquiring new angles and dimensions, and is nearing its ignition point. There are now emerging new alignments and enmities. Many nations are now getting involved into it, either because of the resolutions of the UN Security Council or because of some other reasons. Even if this situation is now defused, it will be only for a temporary phase and will keep smoldering visibly or covertly.

Similarly, there are deep inter-party dissensions, social rifts, ethnic bickerings and economic divides, which have added a new dimension to the present Indian scenario. These are, in fact, un-resolvable because these are in-built. Hence, social scientists call them structural defects in the society which cannot be corrected unless the structure of the society is changed. However, those who are well-versed with spiritual knowledge, would have no difficulty in diagnosing the present maladies that afflict the world in general and the Indian nation in particular. They would understand that the present situation is due to gross selfishness, ego and lack of self-control, all of which are rooted in body-consciousness.

If we look at these happenings from a spiritual point of view, then it becomes very clear as to why are they caused and what are their results. Time and again, it has been said by many religious and spiritual leaders that the world-situation



would soon take a wide turn for the worse so much so that we will have to change our ways of living. A time would soon come when people would flock in large numbers for receiving the spiritual knowledge. Silence and yoga would become the highest power to cure mankind from all kinds of mental diseases. Looking at the series of events across the world, this situation seems to be arriving very soon. Hence, we must all prepare ourselves in advance for such a crisis. And for that, we need to first of all pay greater attention towards self-improvement. Our stage of purity and peace must get strengthened and become unshakable. We must pay full attention to the inculcation of all divine qualities such as humility, patience, tolerance, contentment, honesty, sincerity and more. We must not lag behind even in a single divine attribute for our goal is to become paragon of virtue or a divine being, who has all divine qualities. For achieving this cherished goal, the time left is very less. Hence, if we don't wake up and speed up now, we will not be able to reach our goal. We must remember that the current condition of the world is a warning bell for us to improve ourselves and prepare well for unexpected emergencies.

# Leave no one behind

Virtual classes may have become the new normal for education but what about the students deprived of gadgets, asks KALPANA DHAKU MALAYE

**I**t was the third week of March. The teachers had almost completed the syllabus and the schools were busy preparing for the final exams. Computation of the average of the unit test scores of each student was being done. At that juncture, the novel Coronavirus had advanced and bared its fangs in India.

As a precautionary measure, the government announced the closure of all the educational institutions. The students were briefed on the safety measures and a break till March 31 was declared. However, the risk of contracting the virus called for further closures and restrictions. The students and parents were in a dilemma. Further, on April 1, cancellation of the final exams were announced. Every educational institute was asked to promote the students to the next grade based on their school assessments, projects, periodic tests and term exams. The well-heeled schools started classes via apps like Zoom.

As the reopening of schools remain under a cloud of uncertainty, the state of

the current academic year looks too grim. There seems to be no thoughtful programme or policy in sight for engaging the students meaningfully. Virtual schooling has been implemented all across the country even though a large number of students are deprived of internet connectivity and gadgets like smartphones and laptops. The virtual mode became a one-way communication where the doubts of the students remain unanswered. Amid all this, are we really interested in knowing what students have to say about 'learning from home'? Well, it appears doubtful as not much has been said about it.

This spontaneous virtualisation of education came with various challenges for both the administration and the students. In schools that were not equipped with technology to conduct online classes, teachers had to find for ways to launch home-based learning. Some of them created lecture videos and forwarded them to parents and children. It was like delivering a lecture without keeping any scope for questions. It signaled that

neither the participation of students was taken care of nor their accessibility to online education was thought about.

Another major issue of accessibility emerged in the families where there was only one cell phone and two to three children. It became important for the child to attend classes online as the absentees were reprimanded by the school. On the other hand, parents/older siblings were jittery because when they wanted the handset for work, the child was busy attending the online classes. A kid of a daily wage earner developed an inferiority complex because she couldn't access the file her teacher had sent. It was difficult for her to keep up with the virtual classroom exercises and activities. She faced a lot of disruption in her studies. Initially, the parents tried to pacify her but when she refused to relent, they had to borrow money to buy a smartphone. This story is not restricted to just one family, it's all pervasive. There are millions of stories of such children committing suicide for not being able to access digital education.

The pandemic has posed many barriers in front of our education system — Have teachers been trained to handle technology with ease? How many students are equipped to handle e-learning? What criteria was used to declare a school as a digital institute? According to the latest information, one of the bizarre criteria was if the teachers of the school owned a mobile phone, it was considered to be a digital school.

From a global perspective, "Half of the total number of learners — around 826 million students — kept out of the classroom by the COVID-19 pandemic. They do not have access to a household computer. Almost 43 per cent (706 million) have no internet at home at a time when digitally-based distance learning is used to ensure educational continuity in the vast majority of countries." These figures were compiled on the basis of data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the International Telecommunication Union.

While speaking about online education, one is compelled to compare it with

the offline mode. When children go to school, they gain education not merely through books but vibrant activities and interactions with teachers and friends. The best we were giving children was making education a multi-sensorial experience for them rather than just a digital one. In classrooms, when the teacher narrates an incident, the students unknowingly compare it with their own experiences and become eager to share their stories. All these happenings go into developing the intellect and character of the child. Online education is taking away experiential learning, an integral part of the school setting. It seems that e-learning can never be an alternative for in-person education.

Although virtual classes have become the new normal for education, but what about the students belonging to the underprivileged section of the society?

(The article was written originally in Marathi. It has been translated in English by Alka Gadgil.)

—Charkha Features

## SOAK OR DRIP?

Early morning or late afternoon, when the air is cooler, usually calmer and leaves dry off reasonably fast, are the best times to water with a sprinkler, suggest experts



six inches deep. One inch of water on top of the soil will do this, as measured in straight-sided cans set out with your sprinkler. Or, equivalently, apply about a half a gallon of water over every square foot of ground.

You'll probably do this weekly watering with a sprinkler. Most sprinklers take about an hour to put down that inch of water.

Some gardeners shy away from watering when the sun shines for fear that beads of water on the leaves will act as magnifying glasses and burn the leaves. Not true! (How many plants die after a sun shower?) Midday is not the best time to water because evaporation and wind will carry much of the water off target. Nighttime also is not a good time to water because the leaves stay wet too long, promoting diseases.

Early morning or late after-

noon, when the air is cooler and usually calmer and leaves dry off reasonably fast, are the best times to water with a sprinkler.

### FREQUENT, SHALLOW WATERING IS AN OPTION

The shallow watering and the resulting shallow rooting that I cautioned against are bad only if you can't keep up with the shallow watering. You can keep up with it — and reap other benefits — with an alternative method of watering called drip or trickle irrigation.

The essence of drip irrigation is simply a plastic pipe laid in the garden row, with emitters at intervals out of which water slowly drips.

Dripping takes longer but is more efficient than sprinkling (it was developed for farming the desert by Israeli agricultural scientists), because water can be applied slowly to approximately offset what plants are using. Dripped water is less subject to evaporation and lessens the chance of diseases by not wetting plant leaves. The shallow layers of soil are also where beneficial bacteria, fungi and other soil microorganisms are most active.

Drip irrigation, by pinpointing water near your garden plants, also results in less weeding. A

sprinkler spreads water not only to your garden plants, but also to paths and areas between rows, where it promotes weed growth. Drip irrigation is really more than just plastic pipes with holes in them. The emitters are engineering marvels that drip consistent amounts of water along their lengths and are somewhat self-cleaning. Despite that self-cleaning feature, every drip system should also begin with a sediment filter.

One of the best features of drip irrigation is that makes frequent, shallow watering possible simply by attaching a timer to your hose spigot. I set my timer each spring and hardly think about watering at all until I bring it and the sediment filter back indoors in autumn. Drip lines can be left in place outdoors all year.

Reserve hand watering for the first few days that vegetable and flower transplants are in the ground, and for your weekly deep watering for newly planted trees and shrubs.

It might seem that almost every time you finish your hand watering, rain falls. Cause and effect? No. It's your imagination.

—AP

**Do one thing every day that scares you.**  
—Eleanor Roosevelt

### VIT D TWICE A DAY MAY KEEP VERTIGO AWAY

Researchers have revealed that taking vitamin D and calcium twice a day may reduce your chances of getting vertigo again — a sudden internal or external spinning sensation, often triggered by moving your head too quickly.

"Our study suggests that for people with benign paroxysmal position vertigo, taking a supplement of vitamin D and calcium is a simple, low-risk way to prevent vertigo from recurring," said study researcher Ji-Soo Kim from Seoul National University in South Korea.

"It is especially effective if you have low vitamin D levels to begin with," Kim wrote in a paper published in the journal *Neurology*.

About 86 people of people with this form of vertigo find that it interrupts their daily life or causes them to miss days at work.

### A DRUG BENEFICIAL FOR KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS

Researchers have found that bisphosphonates — a class of drugs that prevent the loss of bone density and used to treat osteoporosis and similar diseases — appear to be safe and beneficial for osteoarthritis patients.

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis and a leading cause of disability worldwide with more than 300 million sufferers with the condition, yet there are no effective treatments to stop the disease or its progression. According to the study, published in the journal *Osteoarthritis and Cartilage*, one of the lesions in OA that causes pain and progression of the structural pathology of the disease is bone marrow lesions.

Researchers believe bisphosphonates may alter bone marrow lesions, and thereby could improve pain in OA and halt its progression. Alternatively, they could also alter the mechanical properties of bone, thereby potentially contributing to detrimental effects.



### DISSINESS WHILE STANDING LINKED TO DEMENTIA

Researchers have found that people who feel dizzy or lightheaded when they stand up may have an increased risk of developing dementia.

The condition, called orthostatic hypotension, occurs when people experience a sudden drop in blood pressure when they stand up, according to the study published in the journal *Neurology*.

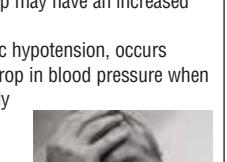
The study found the link with dementia only in people who have a drop in their systolic blood pressure, not in people with only a drop in their diastolic blood pressure or their blood pressure overall.

"People's blood pressure when they move from sitting to standing should be monitored. It's possible that controlling these blood pressure drops could be a promising way to help preserve people's thinking and memory skills as they age," said study author Laure Rouch from the University of California in the US.

According to the study, the people with systolic orthostatic hypotension were nearly 40 per cent more likely to develop dementia than those who did not have the condition.

### NEW TEST PREDICTS DIABETES IN BABIES

Researchers have come up with a new method to predict which babies will develop type 1 diabetes.



According to the study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, the new approach moves a step closer to routine testing for newborns which could avoid life threatening complications.

"We know that while genetics have a strong correlation as a risk factor for family members to develop T1D, most newly diagnosed individuals do not have a known family history," said study researcher Sanjoy Dutta from the JDRF, a US-based NGO.

The new approach doubled the efficiency of programmes to screen newborns to prevent the potentially deadly condition of ketoacidosis, a consequence of type 1 diabetes in which insulin deficiency causes the blood to become too acidic.

### FLU CLINICS MAY REDUCE PANDEMIC IMPACT

Opening clinics dedicated to treating influenza can limit the number of infected people and help to flatten the curve or reduce the peak prevalence rate, say researchers.

While the work focused on influenza, the findings, published in the journal *PLOS One* are relevant for policymakers seeking ways to reduce impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

"Dedicated clinics would have less of an impact than interventions such as vaccination, but at the statewide level, we're talking about cutting the overall number of infections by six figures," said study author Julie Swann from the North Carolina State University in the US.

"And while our work here focused on the H1N1 strain of influenza, the findings are useful as we grapple with how best to respond to COVID-19," Swann added.





## London dreams

Lewandowski scripts another dominating Bayern win over London club, this time against Chelsea to set up Barca clash

Bayern's Robert Lewandowski celebrates with teammate Leon Goretzka after scoring his team's first goal from penalty spot AP

AFP ■ BARCELONA

L

ionel Messi scored a brilliant solo goal as Barcelona

saw off Napoli on Saturday

but they are likely to need something even more special from their captain to beat Bayern

Munich in the Champions

League quarter-finals.

Messi's weaving run and

finish came between an early

Clement Lenglet header and a

Luis Suarez penalty, also won by

Messi, as Barca stormed into a

3-0 lead in the first half at

Camp Nou.

But Lorenzo Insigne gave

Napoli hope just before the

interval and an unconvincing

second period from Barcelo

na

After finishing five points

left them hanging on for a 3-1

win on the night, 4-2 on aggregate.

"A second goal would have

given them a feeling of euphoria

that can hurt you," said

Barca coach Quique Setien.

"It's normal to get a little

nervous."

In winning the penalty,

Messi took a heavy kick from

Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly and

needed treatment.

"It was a heavy knock," said

Setien. "It will have to be treated

but I don't think there is a

problem."

After finishing five points

behind Real Madrid in La Liga, Barca resumed in the

Champions League with doubts

hanging over the form of the

team and the future of their

coach.

And victory against Napoli

eases the pressure but the per-

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Napoli, whose own league

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