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Chinese intrusion info taken off Govt portal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Defence Ministry has pulled out a document from its website giving details about the Chinese 'transgressions' in Eastern Ladakh beginning early May. It was the first time that the Government officially admitted that the Chinese Army had intruded into India leading to the ongoing stand-offs at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The document was uploaded as part of the monthly report on news section of the Defence Ministry website and was there since Tuesday.

However, it was missing on Thursday. There was no official word from the Ministry on this deletion.

Acknowledging for the first time that the Chinese had intruded into India, the report said the present situation arising from 'unilateral aggression' by China continues to be sensitive requiring close monitoring and prompt action based on evolving situation and the present standoff is likely to be prolonged.

Chinese aggression has been increasing along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and more particularly in Galwan valley since May 5. The Chinese side transgressed in the areas of Kurang Nala, Gogra, and north bank of Pangong Tso on May 17-18, the Ministry said in its What's New section on the website.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an all-party meeting in June regarding the volatile border situation in Ladakh had



said, "Neither has anyone intruded into our territory nor taken over any post. Our forces are doing what they have to do to protect the country, whether it is deployment, action or counter-action. Our patrolling capacity has increased due to newly built infrastructure, especially along LAC."

Meanwhile, the deleted document said ground-level interactions were held between the Armed forces of both sides to defuse the situation. A Corps commanders' flag meeting was held on June 6. "However, a violent face-off incident took place between the two sides on June 15, resulting in casualties on both sides."

Subsequently, said the document, a second Corps commander level meeting took place on June 22 to discuss the modalities of de-escalation. "While engagement and dialogue at military and diplomatic level is continuing to arrive at mutually acceptable consensus, the present standoff is likely to be prolonged," the

Ministry said. "The situation in Eastern Ladakh arising from unilateral aggression by China continues to be sensitive and requiring close monitoring and prompt action based on the evolving situation," the document noted.

Incidentally, in an interview to some television channel in early June, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had acknowledged that China has moved troops in "significant numbers". Moreover, during his visit to Leh in July, Rajnath had said he cannot guarantee to what extent the issue with China would be resolved even as the talks are on at military and diplomatic levels.

In an effort to break the logjam, the two countries have held five rounds of Corps Commander level talks since June but there is no noticeable improvement in the situation. China continues to dilly-dally in withdrawing troops from the contentious Pangong Tso (lake) leading to tension. This despite

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the fact that the two Corps Commanders on July 14 parleys agreed for mutual and complete disengagement of troops from the friction points.

Why PM lying? Rahul renews attack on Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the Defence Ministry's admission that the Chinese troops have transgressed into the Indian territory in Eastern Ladakh, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday asked why the Prime Minister was lying over the issue.

"Why is the PM lying?" Gandhi tweeted, renewing his attack on Modi on the issue of the standoff with China.

Rahul has frequently attacked Modi on this issue, inviting sharp reactions from government minister and BJP leaders.

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the fact that the two Corps Commanders on July 14 parleys agreed for mutual and complete disengagement of troops from the friction points.

Covid count soars to 2 million

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when the Government claimed the coronavirus spread has been contained, the number of cases on Thursday crossed over 20 lakh mark in the country. With 20.21 lakh cases, India is behind Brazil which is second spot with more than 28.62 lakh cases and the United States which continues to be the worst affected nation with close to 50 lakh cases.

India has added 10 lakh cases in just 20 days. Globally, over 18.82 million people have been reported to be infected by the novel coronavirus globally and 70,67,79 have died so far. Brazil on May 17 crossed 20 lakh coronavirus cases with 76,000 deaths.

India, the third-most-affected country by total cases and fifth by death toll, has added 30,394 cases in the past six days alone. This is the ninth consecutive day that coronavirus cases have increased by more than 50,000.

On July 28, India had recorded 15 lakh cases. The new five million came in nine days, with an average of 50,000 fresh cases logged each day. The country has reported over 57,000 cases and over 800 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile, The World Health Organization urged the member nations of its Southeast Asia region to maintain essential health services and accelerate resumption of healthcare facilities hit by the pandemic as an integral part of the Covid-19 response.

As per the Government data, five most affected States by total tally of cases are Maharashtra (4,79,779), Tamil Nadu (2,79,144), Andhra Pradesh (1,96,789), Karnataka (1,58,254) and Delhi (1,41,531).

India has added 10 lakh cases in just 20 days and is third-most-hit country and fifth by death toll

Maharashtra reported highest single-day spike of 11,514 cases, followed by Andhra Pradesh 10,328 fresh cases, Karnataka 6805 and Tamil Nadu 5,684 cases.

As the virus claimed another 316 lives in Maharashtra, the State's death toll climbed to 16,792. Mumbai reported 910 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 57 deaths in the last 24 hours.

After Maharashtra, racing closer to the two lakh mark, the coronavirus tally in Andhra Pradesh reached 1.96 lakh on Thursday as another 10,328 cases were added for the second consecutive day. Worsening further, East Godavari reported another 1,351 cases in the last 24 hours.



Health workers take blood samples for a random serological test to check for antibodies against the coronavirus in New Delhi on Thursday

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL

CASES: 20,24,502

DEATHS: 41,631

RECOVERED: 13,75,287

ACTIVE: 6,07,130

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	4,79,779	16,792	3,16,375
Tamil Nadu	2,79,144	4,571	2,21,087
Andhra Pradesh	1,96,789	1,753	1,12,870
Karnataka	1,58,254	2,887	80,281
Delhi	1,41,531	4,059	1,27,124
Uttar Pradesh	1,08,974	1,918	63,402
West Bengal	86,754	1,902	61,023
Telangana	73,050	589	52,103
Bihar	68,148	388	43,820
Gujarat	67,811	2,579	50,524
Assam	52,818	126	35,893
Rajasthan	48,996	757	35,131
Odisha	40,717	280	26,888
Haryana	39,303	458	32,640
Madhya Pradesh	36,564	946	26,902
Kerala	30,449	98	18,333

8 virus patients die in Guj hospital fire

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Eight coronavirus patients died in a fire inside the ICU ward of a private hospital in Ahmedabad city in the early hours of Thursday, officials said.

A para-medical staff member of the hospital was injured in the tragedy.

A cumulative compensation of Rs 6 lakh each for the families of the deceased was announced by the Centre and Gujarat Government.

Relief for Gehlot as HC dismisses petition against merger of 6 BSP MLAs with Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday disposed off a petition filed in the case regarding the merger of six BSP MLAs in the Ashok Gehlot led Congress Government in Rajasthan giving some respite to Gehlot amid the ongoing political crisis in the State.

A division Bench of Rajasthan High Court gave relief to Gehlot and the Congress which is battling rebellion within since over a month now. The BSP and BJP legislators had appealed seeking a temporary freeze on the merger of its six former legislators with Congress Government.

The decision, expected on August 11, will have crucial implications for the Ashok Gehlot Government, which is struggling to hold on to its majority in face of the rebellion by Sachin Pilot and his 18 loyalist MLAs. Gehlot claims he has the support of 102 MLAs, one above the majority mark for the Assembly session scheduled on August 14.

The BJP has 72 MLAs and with the rebel camp and three independents MLAs, numbers of the other side will touch 97.

Plasma therapy findings not promising so far, says AIIMS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria told PTI on Thursday no clear mortalities in interim analysis of a randomised controlled trial done at AIIMS here to assess the efficacy of this mode of treatment.

The much-touted convalescent plasma therapy was hardly effective in reducing mortality risk among Covid-19 patients, according to an interim analysis of a randomised controlled trial done at AIIMS here to assess the efficacy of this mode of treatment.

India slams Pakistan for criticism of launch of construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday strongly rejected Pakistan's criticism of the launch of construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and asked the neighbouring country to refrain from 'communal incitement'. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava also asked Pakistan to desist from interfering in India's internal affairs. "We have seen the Press statement by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on a matter internal to India."

It should desist from interfering in India's affairs and refrain from communal incitement," Srivastava said. "While this is not a surprising stance from a nation that practices cross border terrorism and denies its own minorities their religious rights, such comments are nevertheless deeply regrettable," he added.

He was responding to a question on Pakistan's criticism of the laying of foundation stone of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on the site of the Babri Masjid. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday laid the foundation of the Ram temple in Ayodhya at a grand ceremony. Last November, the Supreme Court paved the way for the construction of the Ram temple at the site where the 16th century Babri mosque was demolished in December 1992.

Minor's rape: Girl stable after surgery, Kejriwal visits AIIMS, offers ₹10 lakh help to family

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal visited the AIIMS on Thursday to enquire about the health conditions of a 12-year-old girl, who was allegedly sexually assaulted, and said his Government will provide a financial compensation of ₹10 lakh to her family.

The girl is stable after surgery, says AIIMS doctor. Earlier, in a tweet, the Chief Minister said the inci-

dent has shaken him to the core, adding that such criminals roaming free cannot be tolerated. Talking to reporters after his visit to the AIIMS, Kejriwal said the condition of the girl is serious, adding that he spoke to Police Commissioner S N Srivastava, who told him that the police are trying to nab the accused.

He said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government will ensure strict punishment for the accused by engaging the best lawyers in the case.

Manoj Sinha new J&K L-G, Murmu appointed CAG

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After the surprise exit of Girish Chandra Murmu as Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, President Ram Nath Kovind Thursday appointed former Union minister Manoj Sinha in his place to handle the administration of the trouble-torn union territory.

A day after his resignation from the L-G post, Murmu was appointed as CAG by President on Thursday evening. Murmu's tenure will be till November 21, 2024 as CAG, till age 65. The 1985 batch Gujarat Cadre IAS, hailing from Mayurbhanj in Odisha was Principal Secretary to Narendra Modi when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat.

Before becoming the L-G, Murmu was Expenditure Secretary. He will take over CAG's post on August 9 after the retirement of current incumbent Rajiv Mehriishi.

The appointment of a grass root politician, who enjoys Prime Minister Modi's confidence, is expected to fill the political vacuum in Jammu and Kashmir at this crucial juncture. Due to sustained anti-terrorist operations and elimination of top commanders of different terror outfits, the



Centre is aiming to kick start the stalled political process, especially in the Kashmir valley in the coming months.

A large number of mainstream Kashmiri politicians, already released from detention, are growing 'restless' in the absence of political activity.

They have even accused the Central Government of running its political agenda without allowing them the space to operate and even preventing their movement out of their houses. "Presence of full time politician in the Raj Bhawan is expected to fill the vacuum and bridge the widening gap between the Government machinery and the common masses," said a political commentator.

BJP Sarpanch killed by ultras

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Sending out a chilling reminder to the security forces 'unidentified' terrorists on Thursday carried out yet another bloodiest attack on grass root Panchayat workers in which one BJP sarpanch was killed in Vessu village of Qazikund block in South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

Police identified the slain BJP sarpanch as Sajad Ahmad Khanday who camping in a secured migrant camp.

Detailed report on P5

Guj cadre DIG heads CBI SIT on Sushant

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Re-registers FIR of criminal conspiracy, abatement to suicide against Rhea

The CBI on Thursday registered a case in connection with the death of film star Sushant Singh Rajput and entrusted the probe to a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

Rajput's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty among others is an accused in the case.

Deputy Inspector General and IPS officer of Gujarat cadre Gagandeep Gambhir will supervise the probe into the sensational case that had led to a turf war between the Bihar Police and Mumbai Police over jurisdiction.

Gambhir will report to Joint Director Manoj Sasiidhar, officials said. The move comes after the Bihar Government recommended a probe into the matter by the Central agency. "CBI has today registered a case

related to the death of Rajput on the request of Bihar Government and further notification from the Centre and taken over the investigation of the case, earlier registered at police station Rajiv Nagar, Patna vide FIR no.241/2020 dated 25-7-2020," the CBI said in a statement.

The CBI further said the case was registered against six accused and others and investigation is underway. "We are also in touch with Bihar Police," a CBI spokesperson said. Taking cognisance of the Bihar Police FIR in this connection, the Enforcement Directorate has

already launched a probe to investigate the money laundering angle in the case. Besides Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty, her relatives Indrajit Chakraborty, Sandhya Chakraborty and Showik Chakraborty also her associate Samuel Miranda and Shruti Modi and others have been named as accused in the case.

The case was registered under Indian Penal Code section relating to criminal conspiracy, abatement of suicide, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, theft, criminal breach of trust, cheating and criminal intimidation.

It seems to be suicide case. It is suspected that he hanged himself some two days back.

We have sent the body for an autopsy," Malad police station's senior inspector George Fernandes said. Sharma, who also worked in serials such as "Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki", "Yeh Rishta Kya Karam Hai" and "Wo Rehne Wali Mehlon Ki", lived in a rented flat in Chincholi Bunder locality in Malad (West).



Bihar Police team officials arrive back from Mumbai after meeting with Inspector General and submitting reports in Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death investigation in Patna on Thursday

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His body was discovered by the building's watchman, who peeped through the kitchenwindow and saw him hanging.

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298 new Covid-19 patients detected in State

Tally surges to 8,552 of which 5,427 have recovered

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

The Covid-19 tally in Uttarakhand surged further on Thursday with the State health department reporting 298 patients of the disease. It resulted in a jump in the number of cases as the patient count mounted to 8552 in the State.

The authorities discharged 194 patients from different hospitals of the state after their complete recovery on Thursday which increased the number of recovered patients of the disease to 5427.

The recovery rate in the state is now at 63.46 per cent with 4.80 per cent of total samples tested positive for Covid-19. The doubling rate of the disease in the state is now at 28.14 days. On Thursday, 68 patients were detected in Dehradun out of whom three



are healthcare workers. In Udhampur, Nagar district 56, Haridwar 38, Uttarakashi 34, Nainital 33, Tehri 30, Bageshwar 21, and Chamoli nine and in Almora five patients were reported.

Two patients each were detected in Pauri and Pithoragarh districts each. Sitarganj MLA Saurabh Bahuguna had to be hospitalised in New Delhi after he

was found positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday. In Udhampur, Nagar district three healthcare workers and returnees from Saudi Arabia were among the positive patients detected on the day.

In Uttarakashi district 34 more Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel were found infected on the day. A day earlier 30 ITBP men in the district were found infected by

the disease. The authorities discharged 53 patients in Haridwar, 36 in Dehradun, 34 in Udhampur, 32 in Nainital, 14 in Almora, nine in Uttarakashi, six in Pauri, four in Champawat and two each in Rudrapur, Tehri and Chamoli districts on the day.

The State now has 298 active patients of the disease with Haridwar continuing its top position in the table of active cases with 733 cases closely followed by Udhampur, Nagar district which has 714 active cases.

Nainital is in third position with 563 active cases while Dehradun is in fourth position with 447 active patients of Covid-19. Uttarakashi has 157, Pithoragarh 99, Bageshwar 56, Champawat 52, Tehri 48, Pauri 43, Almora 36, Chamoli 25 and Rudrapur 16 active cases each of Covid-19.

INFECTION RATE GOES NORTHWARD

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

In a worrying sign for the State Government and health department, the infection rate in Uttarakhand has gone up to 4.80 per cent in the last three weeks. On July 16, the infection rate was 3.99 per cent.

The four plain districts of Haridwar, Udhampur, Nagar, Dehradun and Nainital continue to paint a dismal picture with a big increase in their infection rate in recent days. Nainital district has the highest infection rate (7.74 per cent) in the state. Here a

total of 1339 samples have reported positive out of total 17309 tests done so far. Haridwar and Udhampur Singh Nagar districts have infection rates of 6.53 and 5.70 per cent respectively. Tehri has an infection rate of 5.44 and Dehradun 4.99 per cent. Recent surge in cases has also brought Uttarakashi up in terms of infection rate.

Here the infection rate is 3.67 per cent. With only 101 positive cases among out of 6648 samples tested so far, the Chamoli district has the lowest infection rate (1.52 per cent) in the State.



Political acumen

Contrary to the popular perception, TSR continues to surprise everyone with his political acumen. Recently the CM virtually put to rest a speculation about an impending cabinet expansion when he stated that the expansion has been delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic and it would be done after the situation normalises. Three cabinet berths are waiting to be filled in Uttarakhand for a very long period now and with a surfeit of candidates eager to join the special suit for oath taking ceremony coupled with the political permutations and combinations, the decision is a not an easy one. Many political pundits believe that TSR would not go for expanding his team and his reference to pandemic shows that the aspirants would have to wait for some more time. Interestingly with this statement, the CM in a subtle yet firm manner also conveyed a message to the chief of the saffron party in Uttarakhand (who has been making utterances on the issue) that cabinet expansion is his (TSR's) prerogative.

Power Play

The technocrats often lament about the overt preference given to the bureaucrats and growing tendency of the Babudom to encroach upon whatever little turf they are left with. The techies are right in their place in having this presumption however one cannot deny that they themselves are to be blamed for much of their predicament. In one such instance happened recently in the Himalayan state, a young IAS officer was handed over the reins of two of the three power corporations. These positions of Managing Director (MD) were hitherto held by the technocrats and for the first time the state government has foisted a bureaucrat on the power corporations. The ostensible reason being that the state administration found no candidate suitable for these assignments considered plum after a selection process but is clear that Chief Minister TSR who himself holds the portfolio of power was forced to appoint a Babu at helm due to rampant mismanagement and accusations of corruption in private corporations which were set up with an idea to make Uttarakhand a power surplus state.

In high spirits

The recent appointment of a controversial yet efficient officer on the coveted chair of the head of the bureaucracy in the state has emboldened a distinct group and its presence has increased in the corridors of power. The grapevine has it that this group consisting of some officials, scribes and others is patronized by the top Babu. It would be interesting to note the activities of this faction in coming days and how the political leadership of state tackles the subject but it would be advisable for the new boss to take a leaf out of the book of his predecessor who received accolades for his upright ways and abhorrence for favoritism.

BJP trying to take credit for Ram Mandir: Anugrah Narayan

First in a series of district level virtual conferences of Uttarakhand Congress held

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

The in charge of Uttarakhand Congress Anugrah Narayan Singh has accused the BJP of trying to take credit for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

He said that it was the Supreme Court (SC) which gave its decision in the favour of Ram temple and any government in power would have constructed the temple after the order of SC.

He was addressing the party leaders and workers of the Nainital district on Thursday. The programme was the first among a series of the district level virtual conferences in the State. Anugrah said that the Congress party in Uttarakhand acted like a responsible opposition during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It launched an App which helped many people in different parts of the country. He said that the party demanded a package for those who lost their jobs during the pandemic but the state government was paying no heed on the demand.

The former chief minister and general secretary of All India Congress Committee (AICC) Harish Rawat appreciated the initiative of the party to hold virtual conferences.

He suggested that the party should organise virtual rallies in the State. Rawat said that the BJP wants that the assembly election of 2022 in Uttarakhand is a 'Modi Vs Congress' affair but the Congress should make it a Trivedi Singh Rawat Vs Congress fight.

He said that the BJP is trying to divert attention from the hunger, unemployment and price rise but the Congress party should concentrate on ensuring that the public is informed about the failures of the State Government. Addressing the conference, the Pradesh Congress Committee

Congress virtual rally a flop show: BJP

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

Terming the virtual rally of the Congress a flop, the Bharatiya Janata Party opined that though the Congress initiated the BJP but neither its workers nor the people wanted to listen to the Congress.

BJP State vice president and media in-charge Devendra Bhasin, referring to the Congress' virtual rally said that it was a flop show.

He said, "The Congress initiated the virtual rallies held by the BJP but the effort flopped due to shortage of party workers and the apathy of the public. If the Congress disagrees, it should release official data regarding it."

Rejecting the allegations leveled at the State Government by the Congress leaders, Bhasin said that the

Congress leaders are day-dreaming when they claim that their party will form the next government in Uttarakhand.

The State Government Union Minister Trivedi Singh Rawat and BJP under its state president Banshidhar Bhagat are performing effectively and strongly.

It will be a big achievement if the Congress leaders are able to gather their scattered forces and able to save even their current position given the number of their MLAs.

There is something wrong with party leaders if they are unable to see the development taking place in the State.

However, the public is watching it all and is with the BJP, added Bhasin.

MSY cell formed in CM office

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

A cell has been formed in the Chief Minister's office to measure progress for better implementation of activities under Mukhyamantri Swaraj Yojana (MSY).

The Rural Development and Migration Commission vice chairman, Sharad Singh Negi has been made head of this cell while Mahendra Singh Kunwar of HARC and CM's economic adviser Alok Bhatt have been made its members. It will be recalled that MSY was initiated on lines of Pradhan

Mantri Swaraj Yojana to facilitate self employment for more people and provide such opportunities for natives who have returned to Uttarakhand.

Provision for loan and grants was made to facilitate work in construction and service sectors under this scheme. With various departments being linked to the MSY, cell in CM's office has been formed to ensure coordination with departments.

Linking the self employment schemes of various departments with this scheme, special focus has been laid on

horticulture, agriculture, micro food processing, animal husbandry, poultry, organic farming, etc.

The head of the cell, Sharad Singh Negi informed that efforts will be undertaken to boost self employment in mountainous districts of State. Coordination will also be established with various departments undertaking self employment schemes so that maximum possible number of youth are able to receive benefit of self employment, he added.

UJVNL powerhouses achieve record generation amid Covid

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

The month of July has been an important month for UJVNL in view of power generation. UJVNL Limited's Maneri Bhali-II and Mohammadpur powerhouses achieved record monthly generation in July this year. Apart from this, UJVNL also surpassed its generation target for July.

The UJVNL Limited managing director Sandeep Singh said that amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the Dharasu powerplant of Maneri Bhali-II Hydro Electric Project situated on the Bhagirathi river in the border district of Uttarakashi generated 208.95 million units of energy in the month of July which is the highest ever generation in a month of this project since its commissioning.

As per available records the previous highest ever generation of any month of this project was 206.44 million units which was done in June 2016. The previous highest ever generation of July was 192.16 million units which was done in July 2011. Singh further said that Mohammadpur powerplant situated on Upper Ganga Canal in Haridwar district generated 5.312 million units of energy in the month of July this year which is the highest ever generation of this powerplant for the month of July in any year. The previous highest ever generation of July month of this project was 4.842 million units which was done in July 2019.

Singh also informed that overall UJVNL's power plants also exceeded the monthly target of 584.50 million units by generating a total of 608.422 million units of power in the month of July which is 23.922 million units higher than the monthly target.

He congratulated the officials and employees of UJVNL and said that despite the worldwide spread of Covid-19 the record generation shows the dedication and hardwork of the corporation employees.



Publicise women and child welfare schemes, stresses Arya

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

In a review meeting with the Officials of the districts, the State Minister for Women Empowerment and Child Development, Rekha Arya directed officials to publicise information about the government schemes and programmes related to orphans and destitute women across the State.

According to Arya, it is necessary to create sensitivity toward such children and women who have been isolated from society and hence, they should be helped and benefit through various government schemes. The idea of



providing a training programme to the staff of child welfare centres and others to bring the positive changes in children psychologically was also discussed in the meeting. Besides this, the sponsored programmes for children in several districts were also

reviewed by Arya. Among the officials from various districts of the State, the director of Dehradun women welfare directorate, Yogendra Yadav and the chief probation officer (CPO) Mohit Chaudhary also attended the meeting.

DAV INTER COLLEGE MAKES OFFER TO CHILDREN AFFECTED BY FINANCIAL WOE

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

In a letter written to the Director of Uttarakhand school education department, the chairperson of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), Usha Negi asked the department to provide support to such schools which are capable of providing quality education which is the motive of Atal Adarsh Vidyalaya. According to Negi, she received a letter from the principal of Karnpur located DAV

Inter College, in which he had stated that those parents who are unable to continue the studies of their children in private schools due to financial crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic can admit their children to DAV inter college where they will be provided with quality education in English language at the charges set by Government. The school has well qualified 43 teachers for all the subjects and sufficient classrooms besides a huge library and science laboratories.

As stated by the principal in letter, Negi said that the DAV administration is also ready to give free admission to those female students who are not getting 25 per cent reservation after class VI under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act.

Furthermore, Negi said that when such schools come forward to provide quality education to children in such crisis, they should be supported by education department too.

Impractical guidelines have stalled tourism, complain hoteliers



PNs ■ NAINITAL

Facing difficulties due to the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on their business, members of the hotel association in Nainital met the local MLA Sanjeev Arya here on Thursday.

The association head Dinesh Sah informed the MLA about the problems being faced by those in the hotel and tourism business due to the lockdown enforced to check the spread of Covid-19.

He said that the impractical guidelines issued by the State government the tourism business has come to a standstill which has increased the threat of unemployment in the future.

Sah told the MLA that tourists should be allowed to visit the state after undergoing a rapid antigen test at the state border. The quarantine period for tourists coming from outside the state should be reduced from seven days to three days. Arya said that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused problems across the nation.

He said that the Covid problem is likely to last for a long time. The MLA further said that he would get the issues of the hoteliers raised through cabinet minister Yashpal Arya in the cabinet meeting slated to be held on August 13. A solution to their problems will be ascertained soon, he assured.

Arya further said that a demand will be raised to the state government considering the convenience and safety of the people.

MCD to resume work from Friday after official tests Covid +ve



PNs ■ DEHRADUN

After a health inspector of the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) was found positive for Covid-19, the entry for the general public in the corporation was barred by the municipal commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey on

Thursday.

The officials said that after the report of a health inspector was found positive on Wednesday, the offices of the corporation were sanitised and thereafter, no entry was allowed to any outsider to keep the risk of contagion at minimum.

While talking to The Pioneer, Pandey said that the

MCD installs mask vending machine

PNs ■ DEHRADUN

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun installed a face mask vending machine on Thursday provided by VP Industries for public use.

According to the officials, the use of masks is crucial in current times and through this vending machine, anyone can get a mask by putting Rs five into the machine.

The municipal commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey inaugurated the first mask vending machine in the corporation and informed that three more such vending machines will be installed in the campus in the next few days.

The corporation had also installed a few automatic hand sanitiser dispenser machines



a few months ago in premises but some of them have been non-functional for some weeks now.

suspected officials and employees of the corporation who probably came into direct contact with the Covid affected health inspector will be tested for Covid-19. He also

informed that the corporation will resume all its work from Friday and the public will be allowed to enter too. According to the officials, 10 employees who had come in

direct contact with the officials were sent to home quarantine after having their samples taken and other suspected contacts will be tested for virus soon too.

Now GPS-embedded ventilators for Covid-19 patients



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Life-saving ventilators for Covid-19 patients are now being embedded with Global Positioning System (GPS) chips to ensure they are not misused or diverted and their movement is tracked on a real-time basis.

The Union Health Ministry has created a dashboard for tracking the real-time status of the indigenously-manufactured ventilators being dispatched, delivered and installed for monitoring and feedback, said Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan.

"We can track the location of each of these devices as we get to know in real-time if a ventilator is changing location," he said.

On the issue of giving nod for export of ventilators, the official said that just about 0.27 per cent of total active Covid-19 cases are on a ventilator across the country. "At any given time, not more than 1 per cent of patients are sick enough to need ventilator support," said Bhushan.

The Government has set up a high-powered committee to address issues and encourage the domestic industry to manufacture ventilators and ramp up their production.

Based on expert projections in March, the Health Ministry decided to procure about 60,000 ventilators for Covid-19 patients. About 18,000 ventilators have been so far supplied to states, central government hospitals, and Defence Research Development Organisation facilities, said the senior official.

They have been installed in at least 700 hospitals across the country. Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) rolled out the first locally-made ventilator on May 30.

Bhushan said about 96 per cent of the 60,000 ventilators being produced are indigenous and most of them have been sponsored by the PM CARES Fund established to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The Make in India (indigenous) ventilators have a share of more than 96 per cent by volume and more than 90 per cent by value," The ministry's technical

Spread of Covid-19 contained in country, says Min Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday asserted that the spread of Covid-19 has been contained in the country, pointing out how half the total cases are from three states only and another 30 per cent from seven others.

His comments come even as India is all set to breach the 20-lakh mark of Covid-19 cases with over 40,000 deaths and record number of cases at over 50,000 infections being reported daily in the past few days.

Dr Harsh Vardhan was speaking at a virtual meeting of WHO's Regional Director, South East Asia, Poonam Khetrpal Singh with Health Ministers from the region on maintaining essential health services and public health programmes in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The strategy of containment has been successful in that 50 per cent of the cases are from three states and 32 per

cent of the rest are from seven states. The spread of the virus thus has been contained," he said.

The Minister said that the lockdown was effective in slowing down the rate of growth of cases and gave the government time to augment the health infrastructure and testing facilities.

"From one lab in January, India has 1,370 labs today. Indians anywhere can access a lab within three hours travel time. 33 of the 36 states and UTs (Union Territories) exceed WHO's recommendation of testing 140 people per million per day."

Harsh Vardhan also said that the country was "preparing for the pandemic as soon as China informed the World Health Organisation on January 7", over three weeks before the first case emerged.

India had reported its first coronavirus case on January 30 when a student from Kerala, who was studying in China, Wuhan University, came back to India and tested positive for the deadly virus.

Harsh Vardhan also stressed that earlier viral outbreaks like the Avian Influenza, H1N1, Zika and Nipah had provided institutional memory in designing containment and management strategies.

India's proactive and graded multi-level institutional response to Covid-19 made it possible to have very low cases per million and deaths per million in spite of having a high population density, and low fractional GDP spending, per capita doctor, and hospital bed availability as compared to other developed countries," he contended.

Despite India's population and low fractional GDP, the proactive and graded multi-level institutional response to Covid-19 by government has made it possible for the country to maintain "very low cases and deaths per million" population, the Union Health Minister said.

"India was preparing to fight the pandemic as soon as China informed WHO about it on January 7. Dr Harsh Vardhan said.

Centre releases ₹890.32 cr as second instalment of 'COVID-19 Emergency fund' to 22 States, UTs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has released ₹890.32 crore as the second instalment of the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness package to 22 States and Union Territories, the Union Health Ministry said on Thursday.

The amount of financial assistance to each state and Union Territories is based on their COVID-19 caseload.

Those who received financial assistance in the second instalment include Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Sikkim, the ministry said in a statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the Rs 15,000 crore package as part of the 'Whole of Government'

approach wherein the Centre is leading the COVID-19 response and management, and supporting the states and UTs through technical and financial resources.

The second instalment of the aid will be used to strengthen public health infrastructure for testing, including procurement and installation of RT-PCR machines, RNA extraction kits, TrueNat and CB-NAAT machines, bolster infrastructure for treatment and development of ICU beds, installation of oxygen generators and procurement of bedside oxygen concentrators among others.

It would also be used for engagement, training and capacity building of necessary human resources and incentives to healthcare workforce and volunteers, including ASHA workers on COVID-19 duties, the Ministry said, adding that wherever necessary, volunteers registered on

the COVID Warriors portal may also be engaged in coronavirus duties.

The first instalment of Rs 3,000 crore was released in April to all States and UTs to aid and enable them ramp up testing facilities, augment hospital infrastructure, conduct surveillance activities along with procurement of essential equipment, drugs and other supplies, the Ministry said.

As part of this package, states and Union Territories have been strengthened with 5,80,342 isolation beds, 1,36,068 oxygen-supported beds and 31,255 ICU beds.

Also, 86,88,357 testing kits and 79,88,366 Vital Transport Media (VTM) have been procured by them. As many as 96,557 human resources for COVID-19 incentive has been given to 6,65,799 human resources.

The package has aided provision of mobility support to 11,821 staff, the Ministry said.

PCI holds three-day health screening camp

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Press Club of India (PCI) organised a three-day health screening camp for its 4,500 members and their

families from August 4-6, 2020. The screening campaign is part of the special initiative of Tech Mahindra, a leading provider of digital transformation, consulting and busi-

ness re-engineering services and solutions, to screen members for risk factors of COVID-19 through temperature and antibody test, blood pressure and blood glucose test.

Students move SC, seeks postponement of JEE (Main), NEET-UG exams



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Referring to the coronavirus pandemic and floods' havoc in several parts of the country, a group of students on Thursday filed a petition in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking postponement of JEE (Main) April 2020 and NEET-Undergraduate examinations, which are scheduled to be conducted in September.

The plea has sought quashing of July 3 notices issued by the National Testing Agency (NTA), by which it was decided to conduct Joint Entrance Examination (Main) April 2020 and National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-Undergraduate exams in September.

The plea, filed by 11 stu-

dents belonging to 11 States, said that the authorities be directed to conduct these exams only after the normalcy is restored. As per the public notices issued by the NTA, JEE (Main) April 2020 is scheduled from September 1-6, while NEET UG 2020 exam is scheduled for September 13.

The plea, filed through advocate Alakh Srivastava, has also sought direction to the authorities to increase the number of examination centres for these exams. "Conducting the general examination across India at such perilous time, is nothing else but putting lives of lakhs of young students (including petitioners herein) at utmost risk and danger of disease and death.

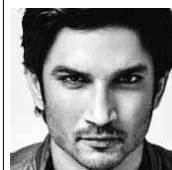
The best recourse at this

stage can be to wait for some more time, let COVID-19 crisis subside and cooperative conduct these exams, in order to save the lives of the students and their parents," the plea said.

It claimed that NTA, which conducts entrance exams for admission in higher educational institutions in India, has decided to conduct JEE (Main) April-2020 through online mode and NEET UG-2020 exams through offline mode at 161 centres across India.

It alleged that NTA has indefinitely postponed the National Council of Hotel Management Joint Entrance Examination-2020, which was scheduled to be conducted on June 22, in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide: ED grills Rhea's associate Samuel Miranda



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday questioned actress Rhea Chakraborty's associate Samuel Miranda about the finances of Rajput, sources said.

ED had lodged a money laundering case against Rhea Chakraborty and her family



members after Rajput's father filed a complaint with the Patna police and accused the deceased actor's girlfriend of swindling his funds to the tune of Rs 15 crore.

Earlier, the ED had registered a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act after taking cognisance of the Bihar police FIR.

Miranda's questioning

comes a day ahead of Chakraborty's grilling as she has been summoned by the agency to appear before it on Friday in Mumbai.

Earlier, the agency had grilled Rajput's Chartered Accountant Sandeep Sridhar who had in his statement before the Mumbai police claimed that no major transactions were made to Rhea

Chakraborty from the late actor's account.

Miranda's statement was recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. Miranda has been named as an accused in the case.

Miranda was reportedly named by Rajput's brother-in-law and IPS officer OP Singh in his WhatsApp message to Mumbai Police DCP Paramjeet Dahiya. OP Singh wanted the Mumbai police to informally interrogate Samuel Miranda, according to Dahiya.

According to OP Singh, if Miranda was kept in custody informally for a day, then he would have spilled the beans about Chakraborty who was allegedly controlling Rajput's life, reports said.

Miranda, according to all accounts, was recruited by Chakraborty as Sushant's house manager and was looking after the employees and house expenses.

Bhushan seeks to present addl evidence to SC



New Delhi: A day after the Supreme Court reserved its verdict, activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan Thursday moved a plea seeking to present additional evidence if the court is not satisfied with his submissions that the contempt was not made out against him for his two tweets allegedly against judiciary.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra, which on July 22, had issued show cause notice to Bhushan after initiating the criminal contempt against him for his two alleged derogatory tweets against the judiciary, had reserved the verdict on Wednesday.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave defended Bhushan before the bench, which also comprised Justices R Gavai and Krishan Murari, and had said on Wednesday that the tweets were against the judges regarding their conduct in their personal capacity and did not obstruct administration of justice.

Referring to the plea, Bhushan said he had earlier submitted a preliminary reply to explain his tweets and the law laid down on the issue to highlight that the contempt notice was not sustainable.

Several high-level exchanges between India, Russia scheduled

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A number of high-level exchanges between India and Russia is set to take place, including the annual bilateral summit in October when President Vladimir Putin is expected to visit, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday.

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

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Putin had spoken on July 2 when the PM had congratulated him on the suc-

cessful national vote on constitutional amendments in Russia.

"Then in the last week of June, Raksha Mantri (Rajnath Singh) had visited Moscow. The Indian military contingent had participated in the 75th anniversary of the victory in the 2nd world war. Yesterday when foreign

secretary (Harsh Vardhan Shringla) and the (Russian) deputy foreign minister spoke, they took stock of all these recent exchanges and the idea is to keep the momentum of these regular exchanges going on because due to the COVID situation, we have not been able to have visits," he said.

Goa: Part of tunnel wall collapses, Konkarn Rly trains diverted

PTI ■ PANAJI

A portion of a tunnel wall at Pernem in Goa collapsed in the early hours of Thursday due to heavy rains, following which number of trains on the Konkarn Railway route had to be diverted via Londa in neighbouring Karnataka, an official said.

There was no report of any casualty and work to restore the track was underway, Konkarn Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) spokesman Baban Ghatge said.

A five-metre portion of a wall inside a tunnel at Pernem in North Goa district collapsed around 2.50 am. The traffic in this section has been suspended till further advice, KRCL said in a press note.

Hence, trains running on the section have been diverted via Londa, Ghatge said, adding that no train has been cancelled.

Goa has been witnessing incessant rains since the last few days

The trains which have been diverted include Ernakulam-H.Nizamuddin Superfast Special Express train, Thiruvananthapuram-Central Lokmanya Tilak Special Express, Thiruvananthapuram-Central Rajdhani Special Express, H.Nizamuddin-Ernakulam Superfast Special Express and Lokmanya Tilak Thiruvananthapuram Central.

Goa has been witnessing incessant rains since the last few days and some low lying areas have been facing a flood-like situation.

Raj HC provides relief to Union Minister Shekhawat in scam case

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Providing relief to Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in a cooperative society scam case, the Rajasthan high court on Wednesday gave the ADJ court order that directed the magistrate court to send a criminal complaint for further investigation to the Special Operations Group (SOG).

The complaint had named Shekhawat and others as the alleged accused in the scam and sought further investigation by the SOG into their role.

A single judge bench of Justice Satish Chandra Sharma while passing the interim directions also admitted the criminal miscellaneous petition filed by one Kewal Chandra Dakia, who is co-accused along with Shekhawat.

Dakia's counsel Mahesh Jethmalani argued

that there were specific allegations against the accused and they were required to be heard when the lower court passed the order.

The bench admitted the petition and granted an interim order.

A city additional district judge (ADJ) court last month had directed that a private complaint be investigated by the SOG with relation to the money trail that ended at Navprabha Buildtech Pvt Ltd.

Later, a magistrate's court also rejected an application to include him in the chargesheet.

The applicants then approached the ADJ court, which issued directions that their complaint should also be probed. The SOG has already sent a notice to the minister in connection with a probe into a separate case pertaining to audio clips which purportedly indicate efforts to lure MLAs away from the Congress.

India being briefed on all relevant matters: MEA on Afghan peace process

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the Afghan peace process gains momentum, India on Thursday said it is being apprised about all relevant matters and that the Indian envoy in Afghanistan is in touch with the leadership of that country.

On Friday, Afghanistan's capital Kabul is set to hold a grand gathering called 'Loya Jirga' to decide the fate of hundreds of prisoners, mostly members of the Taliban, as it was a key demand of the terror outfit to join peace talks.

Loya Jirga is a highly respected traditional consultative body of Afghanistan and their meet is an issue internal to Afghanistan," external affairs ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said at an online media briefing.

He was asked about India's views on the scheduled gathering of the traditional

India has been a key stakeholder in the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan

body comprising Afghan elders, community leaders and politicians.

"Our policy is very consistent in supporting the government of Afghanistan," Srivastava said, adding the Indian envoy in Kabul has been in touch with the leadership of the country.

"He is being briefed on all relevant matters. We have also been briefed by other interlocutors who are part of the process," he said.

India has been a key stakeholder in the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. It has been supporting a national peace and reconciliation process which

is Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.

India has been keenly following the evolving political situation after the US signed a peace deal with the Taliban in February. The deal provided for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, effectively drawing curtains to Washington's 18-year war in the country.

The US has lost over 2,400 soldiers in Afghanistan since late 2001.

India has also been maintaining that care should be taken to ensure that any such process does not lead to any 'ungoverned spaces' where terrorists and their proxies can relocate.

India has been calling upon all sections of the political spectrum in Afghanistan to work together to meet the aspirations of all people in that country including those from the minority community for a prosperous and safe future.

New L-G for Kashmir

Will Manoj Sinha be able to fill the political vacuum and get things moving or will he just be another conformist appointee?



That Kashmir is drifting away with a current of people's angst — what with the widening chasm of trust deficit and clampdowns even one year after the abrogation of Article 370 — is evident from persistent militant activity and targeted killings. With no signs on the ground of the promised development, economic revival or civil engagement, its integration with the mainstream is increasingly looking like an exercise in political egoism, a tool that is disempowering than engaging, a punishment for history than an incentive for moving on. The spate of hitback killings of BJP leaders and sarpachans is worrisome as the office-bearers are seen as extensions of Central authority. BJP sarpanch Sajad Ahmad Khanday was shot dead in south Kashmir's Kulgam district yesterday. It comes close on the heels of similar attacks over the past couple of months. A BJP-affiliated panchayat member, Arif Ahmad Khan, was also shot in Kulgam early this week, while last month, former BJP district president, Waseem Bari, his father and brother were killed as militants fired on them from close range. In June, Congress sarpanch Ajay Kumar Pandita was killed in Anantnag district. Only 7,528 of the 19,582 panch and sarpanch seats in Kashmir went to polls in 2018. Yet most of those elected are hiding out in hotels in Srinagar for fear of being attacked for participating in an electoral process initiated by the Centre. The BJP had hoped to build an alternative political pyramid with friendly leaders at the local level and devolving power to them. But that was not to be. Over 12,000 posts are still empty, affecting local administration and despite the former State's changed status, nobody is ready to engage till all known elected representatives are freed from detention. With credible leaders redefined as public enemies, as bad as militants, and basic rights and connectivity denied to locals, there is confusion, disenchantment and fatigue everywhere, one that can congeal to become a violent force if left to fester. Perhaps, that's the reason why the Government is sending a seasoned politician like Manoj Sinha to be the new Lt Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. A low-key, subtle performer, he is probably being sent to test the waters and work out ways of connecting with people without disturbing the BJP's overall schematics in the Valley. That's a delicate exercise requiring fine negotiation skills. Most importantly, he could use his administrative depth and experience to fill up the political vacuum in the Valley. Although his predecessor GC Murmu was an establishment man, he was essentially a bureaucrat with a focus on policy, not politics. And he could not build a rapport with local bureaucrats. Besides, he did shoot his mouth off on two sensitive issues that the Government should rightly consider but would not talk about much at this stage. First was his comment on the restoration of 4G internet in the Valley, saying he was not afraid of how people of Kashmir would use it. This went against the Government's rationale that the services were shut because they could be misused by militants. He also advocated early elections in the Valley, running ahead of both the Government and the Election Commission, which would have liked to take a call on this in a measured manner and at a time of their choosing. This speaking out of turn almost amounted to embarrassing the Government and showed it as a reluctant decision-maker.

Sinha undoubtedly has a political acumen that could be banked upon for handling the sensitivities in Kashmir. Especially if implementation of the uniform civil code is on the agenda. And he happens to be in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's good books. His appointment is crucial at a time when political activity is picking up with the release of local leaders, some of whom are voicing strong opinions. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah has already claimed the moral high ground and with Saifuddin Soz scaling the walls of his home to call out the Government's "no detention" claim, the Government needs a politician to articulate its position. Known to be an amicable person, who is equally skillful in interacting with the media, which has been muzzled ruthlessly, Sinha fits the bill. At least he can be accommodative without appearing to be too conformist. But the Government has to realise that it cannot make any claim of transformative intent till it gets some kind of mediatory presence of local parties. The failed panchayat polls are proof enough. Demonsing leaders has been costly as some of them have been lionised among locals. The BJP did raise the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP), drawing rejects from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and NC, but it looks more sorry than credible. Sinha might be the interlocutor who could connect to people's representatives and get them to meet the Government half way constructively provided they didn't play a dual strategy with Pakistan. He could still use Omar to work a middle ground. But first, the Centre should restore normalcy and mainstream internet connectivity. The youth are already feeling punished for being left out of the digital education revolution and we cannot let them be radicalised. The economy is in shambles with disruptive clampdowns affecting the supply chain and the services sector. Even the traditional performing sectors like the apple trade, tourism and handicrafts have wilted and there is nothing that seems worthy of big ticket investment. There must be an enabling climate or Kashmir could go into a perennial freeze.

Monumental apathy

Unpardonable callousness in storing ammonium nitrate causes Beirut's worst blast and the scars may take a long time to heal



It may not have been a terrorist attack, most expected in a conflict zone as flagrant as Lebanon, but is a man-made disaster no doubt. One that could have been avoided. Even as the people of Beirut pick up the pieces of their lives that have been shattered by the massive blast on August 4, anger is rising against official negligence, apathy and callousness. This simmering anger comes on the back of an official admission of carelessness by Lebanese authorities that led to the Hiroshima-type explosion in the port, flattened more than half of Beirut, killed at least 135 people, injured thousands and left many more homeless. Nearly 3,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate were stored without safety measures in a warehouse since 2014. Just six months ago, inspectors had warned the authorities against piling up the consignment and predicted a massive explosion. Yet, the port officials sat on the stockpile till it blew up and devastated whatever was left of an already comatose city that has been through the rigours and ravages of civil war, repeated bombings, a corrupt Government and the pandemic.

Now, as a firefighting measure, the Government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab has put a few Beirut port officials under house arrest. There is also a probe going on to find out how such highly explosive materials were stored less than 100 metres from residential areas. But this is not enough to assuage the anger of the people who are writhing under a bankrupt economy. They need answers, someone to be held accountable for this unnecessary suffering. They need the Diab Government to step up rescue and relief work, provide more hospital beds, restore regular power supply, mend the infrastructure to import and store essential goods at the earliest before a scarcity of food and other goods hits them. The world needs to come to Lebanon's aid as it has suffered enough. Its institutions of governance may be democratic but the Parliament does not represent the interests of the Lebanese people. Power has been divided between militarised factions, a fiefdom of the 1975-90 civil war and the result is a barely functional statehood. The Diab Government has failed to halt the nation's slide towards bankruptcy and Lebanon is on the brink of failure. The International Monetary Fund and other lenders don't want to sink money into a corrupt machinery where a small group of power brokers put their personal and financial interests above the nation's stability. The blast has not just exacerbated Lebanon's plight, it has ripped its soul.

opinion

Religion vs culture

Never mind the differences between the deductive and inductive approaches. For domestic peace to prevail, we need to co-exist, respect each other's limits than be confrontationalist



PRAFULL GORADIA

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan hit the nail on its head last week when he said that some people make the mistake of equating culture with religion. The former is about a consciousness and identity that set us apart as a people and wholly unrelated to the individual faiths we might practise. Yet some commentators look at things from a Western or Semitic frame of reference. The subject of logic has two broad sections, namely deductive and inductive. The former section begins reasoning with a clear-cut premise without any explanation. For example, Judaism asserts the Jehovah is god; Moses the Prophet and Torah the scripture. What follow are logical corollaries of this premise, all of which the believer must expect to accept during his/her journey to heaven, which ends on Doomsday.

Allah, the merciful, is the god of Muslims. Muhammad is the last Prophet and the Quran the final message for all those who consider Abraham as the first Prophet of all. The Quran is supplemented by the Hadith or traditions and the Sunnah, which records the lessons of the Prophet's life. Between these scriptures, the *momin* or the faithful Muslim would get a complete prescription for how to live life individually as well as collectively. There is, as it were, no need to look left or right. The Islamic scriptures lay out all possible dos and don'ts, the *halals* and *harams* about which the believer does not need to ponder or hesitate. The logic of the religion flows like a river.

Christianity preceded Islam, and among the Abrahamic religions, has more followers than either Islam or Judaism on paper. Islam acknowledges Jesus but as a Prophet and not as a son of God. Moreover, governance is covered by religion; whereas the Bible assigns politics to Caesar, as the emperor was called in those days. As a result, separating the Church from the State was possible when the "Reformation" came in the 16th century. However, the religion of Christ has grown into many denominations, each having a somewhat different theological view. By contrast, Islam stopped *Jihadi* or reinterpretation of theology, which was reflected in the Sunni (about 90 per cent Muslims) attitude to the temple issue.



So what lies at the core of the Hindu-Muslim equation in India? There are differing views on the subject. MA Jinnah had said that Pakistan was born the day the first Hindu was converted to Islam. In contrast, MK Gandhi had told the then British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in London in 1931 that Hindu-Muslim riots are coeval with British rule. The rule ended 73 years ago but riots still continue; remember the Partition was meant to be a solution to the problem. In that context, Jinnah's separatism did take the Islamic pressure off the other communities. He, however, had in mind a complete exchange of population, as designed by the League of Nations and implemented in 1923 between Greece and Turkey. BR Ambedkar endorsed this proposal but Congress leaders paid no attention to the idea.

Coming back to logic, the deductive section is clearly upturned, given the premise followed by the corollaries and reasoning. Abrahamic faiths follow this approach. Inductive logic is the reverse; there is no given premise. The facts, data and sentiments are gathered from the ground, the people and the reasoning move upwards until a conclusion is arrived at. This is free reasoning; nothing is given.

Hinduism, Indic faith or what is often referred to as the *Sanatan Dharma*, or eternal faith or virtue, follows the inductive path. Which would

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THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE APPROACHES IS CLEAR AND SHARP. THE FORMER INSISTS ON ITS VIEWPOINT AND DOES NOT CONCEDE THE OPPOSITE CONTENTION; HENCE FIGHTS AND WARS HAVE BEEN FREQUENT. FOR THE DEDUCTIVE TO BE AT PEACE WITH THE INDUCTIVE IS MORE DIFFICULT. THIS IS THE HINDU-MUSLIM SYNDROME

explain the multiplicity of Hindu denominations. One of the few common factors that runs through all of them is *karma*, leading to *bhagya* or fate; deed causes destiny. This equation is as near as faith can get close to science or physics; for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

To illustrate the liberality of the inductive approach, let us take a hypothetical example. Let us assume four Hindus from four directions of India discussing the subject of "roses." The person from the east could claim that "roses" are always white. One from the west could contend that "roses" are always red and no other colour. The northerner would insist that he and his friends have only seen pink "roses." The south Indian would probably laugh and contradict all the three, saying "roses" are yellow and he has seen none other. The argument could go on for a while but would not lead to a quarrel. There would not be any agreement on the colour of the roses but the four would most likely agree to disagree.

If a person worshipping an Abrahamic religion were present at the debate, he could insist that roses are red; the other colours are probably weeds or perhaps flowers other than roses.

This fundamental difference between the deductive and inductive approaches is clear and sharp. The former insists on its viewpoint and does not concede the opposite contention; hence fights and wars have been frequent. For the deductive to be at peace with the inductive is more difficult. This is the Hindu-Muslim syndrome.

Remember that the dethroning work was performed by the British East India Company; Robert Clive in the east vanquished Nawab Sirajuddaula in 1757. Lord Wellesley saw the conclusive end of Tipu Sultan in 1799 while Lord Dalhousie pushed out Nawab Wajid Ali Shah for the company to take over Awadh in 1856. These were the three corners of India. The western or fourth corner, comprising Rajasthan and Gujarat, remained mostly with the local principalities. Gwalior, Indore, Kolhapur and others survived as princely States until independence in 1947.

Uncannily, there have not been Hindu-Christian riots although there have been incidents of Muslims killing Christians, especially in Pakistan. What the circumstance is in that country we do not know. We do know though that we need domestic peace and there is no alternative but to co-exist respecting each other's limits than being confrontationalist. And to do so is not too difficult. As we are bound by Indic culture.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

If this lad was Virat Kohli, everyone would be talking about him but because he is Babar Azam, no one is talking about him.

Former England captain — Nasser Hussain

I've skipped many steps that many people have had to fight for. I've gotten chances that many people wouldn't have gotten easily. I've fast-tracked into this system already.

Actor — Janhvi Kapoor

The world has seen China become more aggressive during the pandemic. It has deployed troops along the LAC with India and is acting out in a way that is inconsistent with international norms.

US Defense Secretary — Mark Esper

If the Congress had a clear stand on secularism, the country would not have faced the present fate. I don't find anything new in the approach of Rahul or Priyanka.

Kerala Chief Minister — Pinarayi Vijayan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice should prevail

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Closure for Sushant" (August 6). The Centre's decision to order a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into Sushant Singh Rajput's death has emboldened hopes for justice. Despite having a good professional reputation and high integrity, the Mumbai police so far has not been up to the mark in probing this case. It was surprising that the Mumbai police and the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) forcibly quarantined Vinay Tiwari, the officer from Bihar who came to Mumbai for a detailed investigation of the case. People lost trust because of these feeble approaches, necessitating a CBI probe. One hopes that justice shall prevail.

Tushar Anand
Patna

Reality beyond temple

Sir — It is true that as far as Ayodhya is concerned, "history" is being made and crores of Indians cannot believe that this

Trolls and their impact on social media

Of late, it has become an unpleasant tad for some social media users to target celebrities and post unfavourable comments about them. Most often such utterances are found to be irritable and repugnant. This is why sometimes celebrities lose their cool and are forced to stoop to the level of these people whose only aim is to get publicity and pose as a "hero" in the social media domain. In recent times, we have seen Indian superstar and Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan being targeted by some who have been commenting on his actions unsparingly and that, too, using immodest and indelicate words. A rude twitter troll even asked Abhishek Bachchan how he would fend for himself when his father was hospitalised after he tested positive for Coronavirus. Abhishek took his usual, graceful but impactful stance and said that he hoped for their good health. What these "commentators" forget is that by using derogatory remarks just for momentary fame, they themselves are degrading themselves on a public forum.

Freedom of expression is permitted but then many do not understand that using abusive and provocative comments does not come under this right. A response to such cheap commentary often leads to further conflicts that at times even lead to legal procedures and court battles. Let us learn from Big B, who often responds even to provocative comments in a decent and wise manner.

M Pradyu
Kanpur

Pakistan at it again

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Now Pak in map war" (August 6). That Pakistan has released a territorially misleading map, which includes much of Kashmir and Jangladesh into its territory, shows its desperation. Brazen actions like these smack

of Chinese connivance in the backdrop of the standoff along the LoC. This move drew a sharp reaction from New Delhi as it dubbed it an "exercise in political absurdity." But this time, we need to firmly refute its claims and reassert our territorial sovereignty.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

Corona spiral

Sir — It seems only a matter of time for India to attain the dubious distinction of topping the global charts of daily COVID deaths. Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, which reported the highest number of cases until now, have managed to bend the virus curve. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are the new hotspots. Sadly, many of these States are less equipped to tackle the virus load. Central coordination and support will be needed to fight the virus in the hinterland.

Shambhavi
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Race to space is hotting up

Investments in long-term space programmes require change in strategic, far-reaching thinking, which unfortunately is clouded by politics



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Why go to the stars? Because we are the descendants of those primates who chose to look over the next hill, because we won't survive here indefinitely," wrote science fiction authors James and Gregory Benford.

Take a moment off from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis to look up and wonder what lies beyond that beautiful cloud-filled August sky. And that is where the Indian space programme or "space diplomacy" should come in. While we were busy looking at the pandemic's impact, not many noticed the three intra-planetary objects launched across the globe. The first was the Hope orbiter from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), followed by Tianwen 1 by China and finally the Perseverance by the US. All three are expected to reach destination Mars by February 2021, thereby opening up a whole new chapter of Star Wars. No matter who reaches there first, or what their stated objectives are, the world is again welcoming a "highly-contested and thereby, surveillance-hungry and of course trillions of dollars worth of yet-to-be-explored space" right above our heads. The battle for global dominance has just gone into space.

Leading the race for interstellar supremacy is China, which has openly stated its objective of joining the elite space club with self-reliant rockets, satellites and telescopes by 2049. The Mars Mission is part of a larger plan which aims to set up a space station orbiting Earth in the next two years. China has already shot most rockets into space with "shrouded ambitions" in 2018 and its BeiDou-2 navigation system has an impressive array of satellites, mapping every corner of the globe, providing an alternative to the European and US navigation systems. Meanwhile, China has taken the Moon seriously and wants to establish a lunar research centre within the next decade.

So why does an edge in the cosmic sphere suddenly become so important, specially if it is led by terrestrial players, hungry perhaps, for new territories? First, it is about a strategy to occupy as much of the outer space as one can for global dominance. Remember the Cold War-era Moon rush between the then superpowers? Today a host of citizen services beginning with the internet, electricity, common city navigation via the GPS, high-tech military surveillance and missile and torpedo navigation can all be beamed from a satellite, with needle-edge precision, onto any tech-enabled receiver.

We are all aware of China's lust for territorial colonialism — barely hidden under a veil of loans and infrastructure development projects — targeted towards those willing to barter away their sovereignty. In fact, the BeiDou-2 navigation system is an excellent example of how China aims to keep an eye on its strategically-chosen warfare partner countries and the globe. China knows that future space wars will not be fought on terra firma. The second reason for China's space rush is to lay claim to trillions of dollars worth of unmined minerals, precious metals and rare earths that can be found just a few kilometres above the Earth, floating around in space and in our galactic neighbourhood, the Moon. A mineral-rich asteroid or comet if somehow pushed back to Earth can cover and provide for billions of dollars worth of space missions.

Clearly it is a heady combination of new horizons with dominance in existing spheres and India has just begun to look at opening its space programme to private players. The desire is to have indigenous companies like Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic and Space X — all of which are funded by billionaires who made their fortunes elsewhere — be a part of the race to space.

Investments in long-term space programmes require change in strategic, deep, far-reaching thinking, which unfortunately is mostly clouded by politics on the ground. In the land of great physicists and mathematicians like Bhaskaracharya, Aryabhata and CV Raman, there is a black hole of lost opportunities and scientific temper. Independent India was left plundered and poor by the colonisers. It has taken more than 50 years for India to be able to truly start telescoping between ancient knowledge with modern-day quantum theories to start rebuilding its starships.

It is here that the true human and monetary resources of the country need to be pooled together for an "Indian Century." A deep focus on marketing and glamourising space studies with ample doses of creative imagination, mixed with scientific knowledge, would be a good start for young minds at school. After all, the Indian interstellar traveller of the future is perhaps still at school. Similarly, billions of worth of long-term bets without any visible returns in the near future can only be achieved by a clever mix of private enterprise and the taxpayer's money. Remember NASA can easily be dubbed as the most criticised and perhaps expensive space organisation in the world, yet it made communicating with anyone around the globe at the touch of a button possible. Mark Twain said, "There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesome returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact."

(The writer is a policy analyst)

BHOOMI PUJAN CEREMONY FOR THE RAM TEMPLE IN AYODHYA SHOULD BE SEEN AS A CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL UNITY, FRATERNITY AND CULTURAL AFFINITY.
—CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA

POINT COUNTERPOINT



WE DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY PRIYANKA GANDHI ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RAM TEMPLE. HER STATEMENT IS OUT OF PLACE.
—IJML MP PK KUNHALIKUTTY

A rural Indian spring

The harbinger of this change is a unique policy experiment in village-level governance, the Panchayati Raj Act, which has brought transformative results for village women



MOIN QAZI

In the last two decades, the gender landscape in rural India has been green and women are now on the cusp of a powerful social and political revolution. The harbinger of this change is a unique policy experiment in village-level governance, the Panchayati Raj Act, which has brought transformative results for the weakest of the weak, the village women. In a country that has a bad record in matters of gender equality, India has set a stellar example by becoming a crucible for one of social democracy's most innovative experiments in gender justice. Women now steer local governance in thousands of villages.

This revolution led to the discovery of several hidden gems and one of them is Shalini Shelke, an intrepid and passionate woman with a unique brand of earnestness and determination. She has galvanised the poor, unlettered women in Sangamner, a remote corner of India's deep hinterland. Sangamner is the site of the confluence of three rivers: Pravara, Mhalingi and Adhala in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra.

Now a 49-year-old firebrand, Shalini was one of those emerging backyard leaders, who realised early on that powerful things could happen if marginalised communities were themselves involved in finding solutions to issues plaguing them. She is now a crusader for a number of social causes. By giving marginalised women a stake in the outcome of their communities, Shalini and her band of workers are trying to unlock human potential, both for themselves and for thousands of women in villages around Sangamner.

Shalini was 20, barely out of college, when she became a social activist and entrepreneur. Although she had mentors and friends to support her, the journey was hard. She taught herself advocacy and business skills in a male-dominated culture. "Being a woman in this space is challenging," says Shalini. She recalls how "scary" it was when her initial efforts landed her in trouble but relatives and friends rallied around and chipped in.

She had seen women of her mother's generation bearing multiple burdens. The drudge work that goes into cultivation is mostly done by women. They till the land, sow the seeds, de-hull the grains, attend to livestock and also act as primary caregivers to their families, that include children and elders. We all are aware of this but do little to change some of the harsh realities of our country. But Shalini was made of sterner stuff and instead of being resigned to *status quo*, she decided to upend it.

Shalini's voice is one among many pushing for women's rights. In recent years, women have felt more empowered to call out men's wrongdoings, leading to conversations about the power dynamics that women are subjected to in the home and beyond. In many ways, it is still a man's world, yet women are working to change that in their communities. Change is seldom easy. The patriarchal status quo is deeply entrenched, especially in traditional societies where challenging the system comes at a hefty cost.

Shalini's journey began with the founding of Nirmiti Mahila Udyojik Sahakari Sanstha (called Nirmiti for short) in 2001 in Sangamner. It supports local communities to transition from a supply-led to a demand-driven approach and harnesses resources from the departments of agri-

“IN RECENT YEARS, WOMEN HAVE FELT MORE EMPOWERED TO CALL OUT MEN'S WRONGDOINGS, LEADING TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE POWER DYNAMICS THAT WOMEN ARE SUBJECTED TO IN THE HOME AND BEYOND. IN MANY WAYS, IT IS STILL A MAN'S WORLD. YET WOMEN ARE WORKING TO CHANGE THAT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. CHANGE IS SELDOM EASY. THE PATRIARCHAL STATUS QUO IS DEEPLY ENTRENCHED, ESPECIALLY IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES WHERE CHALLENGING THE SYSTEM COMES AT A HEFTY COST.”



culture, tribal welfare and other Government agencies. Through their multiple roles and responsibilities, women are learning, adapting and reinventing themselves along the way. The society now has about 900 members with a yearly turnover of about ₹90 lakh.

A chance encounter in 2003 helped Shalini make her mark as a business leader and also put me on a wonderful journey. I was posted in Mumbai to head my bank's State operations in micro-finance. Shalini was heading a federation of self-help groups (SHGs) of women in Sangamner. She was also a prominent face on various platforms in Mumbai and Pune for rural women. I was amazed at her understanding of global economics, particularly her ability to analyse local issues in the international context. I continue to marvel at the logical precision with which she presents the economic and social case of marginalised women.

It was around this time that Shalini and her colleagues decided to set up an organic fertiliser manufacturing unit. One of the primary livelihood activities of women in her federation was the collection of neem seeds, which were processed and then supplied to manufacturers of fertilisers and pesticides. Shalini and her associates decided to set up their own production facilities to enhance employability for locals. The loan processing was fast-tracked and the money released in time, thanks to Shalini's perseverance. However, due to her lack of experience and the technical inadequacy of the team to whom the job of assembling the plant was outsourced, the unit couldn't take off.

It was a major setback but Shalini fought back. She and her partners didn't let the bank down either. They paid off the entire loan from their own savings. Shalini has grown wiser in the process and has preferred to spread her risks evenly by opting for joint ventures.

While pursuing her entrepreneurship journey, Shalini didn't lose sight of her primary mission: Advocacy for broader social issues of poor and discriminated women. In 2006, she started a magazine to channel the voices of these women. It is named *Bahini*, after a local poetess Bahinabai Chaudhari, who was herself unlettered but composed inspiring verses. The coverage of rural issues in the mainstream media is very spotty and *Bahini* filled an important space. It has a distinct activist flavour and serves as a hyper-local platform. The region's arid expanse overflows with social and economic strife. This has been channelled into the magazine's writings where issues are reported and analysed from a woman's perspective.

In 2011, magazine brought about immense change in the lives of the readers. It has been able to capture the groundswell of discontent and package the subtle nuances of the discourse in a highly palatable form. It has been able to highlight the perspectives of women so that they are equipped in their effort to upend the feudal system that kept their women ancestors trapped in servitude.

Shalini has also tapped business opportunities for women to have a reliable and consistent source of income. In 2011, the co-operative set up a canteen at the girls' hostel in the local university campus. The canteen caters to 500 girls, providing nutritious, hygienic meals made from locally-grown crops and vegetables. Three years later, the Nirmiti started canteen services for the students of the Lok Panchayat Rural Technology College in Sangamner. In 2016, Nirmiti set up its own Co-operative Credit Society. It has 1,237 members with a share capital of ₹20 lakh and fixed deposits of ₹1.25 crore.

Shalini's entrepreneurial dreams found sturdy wings when she collabo-

rated with an acclaimed food company to set up a bakery. Reema Sathe, a well-known entrepreneur, has mentored this project which provides employment to farmers, workers at the baking unit and retailers. Nirmiti has also been able to use the time-honoured native knowledge of seeds to build a cadre of "seed mothers" who are now the stewards of biodiversity, protecting the genetic wealth of the country through "seed vaults." They are conserving the indigenous seed heritage and preserving heirloom races of crops.

Now, more than ever, these women, many of whom escaped poverty through the SHG route and know what it is like to be destitute and poor, are living up to their motto of self-help and solidarity. For these women and communities, crisis is not new. They have lived through failed crops, unpaid debts and recurring droughts which they have faced almost every single year. Nirmiti's approach of self-reliance and self-empowerment has helped strengthen the innate resilience of these women that is steering them through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shalini has come a long way since she started out. She shepherds a federation of almost 350 SHGs, all of which are actively engaged in a variety of socio-economic activities. Her success story underscores the importance of giving poor people access to loans, savings accounts and other financial services that can help them create businesses and reach their full potential. It is worth understanding that sheer grit and a helping hand can sometimes blaze trails where none seems possible. "It feels so good," beams Shalini. "I really feel like a seasoned business leader." Women leaders like Shalini present us with shiny, silver glimmers as they steer their communities through these tenuous times.

(The writer is a well-known development professional)

India is choking its rivers with sewage

The country must establish new STPs to increase the current 37 per cent treatment capability to at least 80 per cent of the waste generated



KOTA SRIRAJ

While crossing the Kalindi Kunj bridge over the Yamuna in Delhi, have you ever wondered about the reason for the white, frothy foam floating on the river's surface? This toxic foam, that is usually seen in abundance in July, prompted the National Green Tribunal (NGT)-appointed special committee to instruct the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to submit a report to it on the issue. The report concluded that sewage flowing into the Yamuna contained an abnormally high amount of detergent. This, coupled with the churning of the waters at the barrage, led to the formation of the toxic foam on the river's surface. The problem was compounded by the

presence of traditional laundries along the banks of the river and 23 drains from Delhi directly discharging sewage, effluents from industries, riverside laundries and tanneries, ashes of the dead and even bodies of those who are not cremated. The Yamuna is no exception and has endured pollution of all kinds, for centuries. The most visible form of a river catching fire intermittently, thus adding to air pollution. This level of pollution in our water bodies raises pertinent questions about the role and efficiency of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)



that are primarily installed to treat the water and ensure that the pollution remains in a controllable range in our water bodies and rivers. In 2014, the Ministry of Environment and Forests stated that 70 per cent of India's STPs were dysfunctional and the main reason for this was the high cost of maintenance and the ever-growing gap between the sewage to be treated and the capacity of the STP to handle it. Six years down the line, the situation is not any different. The facts present a grim picture and a break for India's long-suffering rivers seems far off as nearly 70 per cent of the sewage treated in India does not meet the acceptable standards and there is a 78.7 per cent gap between sewage generation and the STP's installed capacity to treat it. Even if the additional 1,742.6 million litres a day (MLD) of sewage treatment capacity is factored in, that is either in the planning stages or under construction, there will still be a gap of 72.7 per cent in the sewage treatment capacity in the country.

The situation is expected to get worse, as according to a report by the CPCB, sewage generation in India is 61,000 MLD or enough to fill 24,800 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Against this, we have a paltry sewage treatment capacity of 23,277 MLD. Adding to the problem is the absence of a centralised sewerage system that allows for correct channelling of sewage output. The 12th Five-Year Plan Report on Urban Development highlighted that a shocking 4,861 cities and towns in India do not have a basic central sewerage system. Large cities such as Bengaluru find themselves in this list as nearly 50 per cent of the city's households do not have a proper sewerage system that is connected to a central system. This naturally means that these households channel their sewage to the nearest water body.

The impact of all this pollution on water bodies is devastating to say the least. Aquatic life and biodiversity suffer irreparable damage and so do humans who are dependent on the water bodies for their livelihoods. There is an urgent need for the Government to set up special action

committees that can look at the underlying causes for the inoperable STPs and those that require repairs to be functional again.

To save our rivers, there is a need to attach top priority to the establishment of new STPs that can increase the current 37 per cent treatment capability to at least 80 per cent of the sewage generated. This can be done by opening the STP sector to entrepreneurship platforms and providing the necessary technical expertise, funding and subsidies on encouraging terms. This will serve the twin purpose of creating employment-generating enterprises, besides also narrowing the gap between sewage generated and sewage treated. India needs an action-oriented initiative to turn around the urban rivers and water bodies that are plagued by pollution such as the toxic white foam seen on the Yamuna's surface. Till such action is taken the white foam on our rivers will be a reminder that we have failed our rivers.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

FOREIGN EYE



MAPPING OPTIONS

Repression, custodial killings, internet blackout, whichever way one looks at it, India has truly lost the people of Kashmir. Does Pakistan have policy options to address this situation? Marches and highway re-namings are all fine but insufficient to be dressed up as strategic policy. The challenge for the foreign policy establishment is clear — and it is not situated inside the comfort zone. (Dawn editorial)

FOR 2020 PRESIDENTIAL POLL

Republican, Trump campaign raise \$1 bn

Washington: The Republican Party and the Trump campaign have collectively raised over \$165 million in July, surpassing the billion-dollar threshold with a total haul of \$1.1 billion.

The joint re-election effort continues their cash in hand advantage, with an over \$300 million war chest, the Republican National Committee (RNC) announced on Wednesday.

"With 90 days until victory, our teams and supporters are in overdrive working to re-elect President (Donald) Trump and Republicans up and down the ballot," said RNC chairwoman Ronna McDaniel.

According to the RNC, July's massive haul is not only a record for the month, but also eclipses the total raised in any single month of 2016.

July was also the largest online fundraising month ever for the re-election effort, it said.

"The enthusiasm behind President Trump's re-election continues to grow as July's



massive fundraising totals prove," said Bill Stepien, Trump 2020 campaign manager.

"Voters express their support for President Trump in many different ways and donating to his campaign is one of the most personal, because they feel invested in his success and the future success of the country. The President's support continues to increase while Joe Biden just posted a down fundraising month from his basement," he said.

The RNC recently announced the hiring of an additional 300 field staffers, bringing the total Trump

Victory operation to over 1,500 — double that of Biden's field operation.

With a grassroots army of 1.8 million Americans, the Trump Victory field effort is on pace to surpass the 2.2 million volunteers that helped re-elect President Barack Obama in 2012, the media release said.

Seeking re-election for his second consecutive term, Trump, 74, is pitted against Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, 77, in the November 3 presidential elections.

Most of the opinion polls show that Biden is several points ahead of Trump. PTI

'See you in court': ACLU files nearly 400 cases versus Trump

New York: The day after Donald Trump's election in November 2016, the American Civil Liberties Union posted a message to him on its website: "See you in court."

As president, Trump hasn't personally squared off against the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) from the witness stand, but the broader warning has been borne out.

As of this week, the ACLU has filed nearly 400 lawsuits and other legal actions against the Trump administration, some meeting with setbacks but many resulting in important victories.

Among other successes for the ACLU, it prevailed in a U.S. Supreme Court case blocking the administration from placing a citizenship question on the 2020 census. It also spearheaded legal efforts that curtailed the policy of separating many migrant children from their parents.

"The assault on civil liberties and civil rights is greater under this administration than any other in modern history," said the ACLU's president, Anthony Romero.

"It's meant we've been living with a three-alarm fire in every part of our house." Since the day Trump took office, the ACLU — according to a breakdown it provided to The Associated Press — has filed 237 lawsuits against the administration and about 160 other legal actions, including Freedom of Information Act requests, ethics complaints and administrative complaints.

Of the lawsuits, 174 have dealt with immigrant rights, targeting the family separation policy, detention and deportation practices and the administration's repeated attempts to make it harder to seek asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The other lawsuits address an array of issues such as the ACLU's agenda: voting rights, LGBT rights, racial justice and others. In one long-running case, the ACLU succeeded in not letting the administration's policy of barring young immigrant women in government custody from getting abortions.

"Donald Trump has provided a full employment program for ACLU lawyers on all of our issues," Romero said. AP

FB, Twitter pull Trump posts over virus misinformation

Washington: Facebook Inc has taken down a post by US President Donald Trump, which the company said violated its rules against sharing misinformation about the novel coronavirus.

The post contained a video clip from an interview with Fox & Friends earlier on Wednesday, in which Trump claimed that children are "almost immune" to COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

"This video includes false claims that a group of people is immune from COVID-19, which is a violation of our policies around harmful COVID misinformation," a Facebook spokesman said.

A tweet containing the video that was posted by the Trump campaign's @TeamTrump account and shared by the president was also identified by Twitter Inc for breaking its COVID-19 misinformation rules.

A Twitter spokesman said the @TeamTrump account owner would be required to remove the tweet before it could be taken down. AGENCIES

Joe Biden launches new national ad aimed at Black Americans

Detroit (US): Joe Biden's Democratic presidential campaign has launched a new national ad focused on Black Americans, urging them to stand up to President Donald Trump the way their ancestors stood up to "violent racists of a generation ago."

The one-minute ad, which was shared exclusively with The Associated Press before its digital and television release on Thursday, is meant to drum up support among Black Americans, a key constituency for Biden, ahead of November's general election.

The ad, titled "Better America," also alludes to the swipe at Trump, without mentioning the Republican president by name.

"We must choose to fight for that better America," the narrator states. "And just like our ancestors who stood up to violent racists of a generation ago, we will stand up to this president and say, 'No more,' because America is better than him. So we choose to be bigger. We choose to be bolder. We choose to bring back justice, respect and dignity to this country. We choose Joe Biden to lead us all towards that American promise together." African Americans have largely supported Biden's presidential bid and have been credited with single-handedly transforming the Democratic presidential race and cementing his status as front-runner after his decisive primary win in South Carolina. But Black Americans, who form one of the party's most loyal voting blocs, have been hit doubly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic — they have died from the virus at disproportionate rates across the country and they've borne the brunt of its economic fallout. And in recent months, historic protests against police brutality and systemic racism have changed the national discourse around race, thrusting it to the top of the presidential campaign. The ad is part of the Biden campaign's planned \$280 million digital and television ad buy that was announced Wednesday and will run through the fall. AP

Sri Lanka election: Early results show Rajapaksa clan heading for landslide win

Colombo: Sri Lanka's powerful Rajapaksa family-run Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) appeared to be heading for a landslide win in the country's twice-postponed parliamentary election, according to early results announced on Thursday.

The SLPP has polled more votes than its rivals, scoring over 60 per cent of the total votes in the 16 seats declared so far from the South, dominated by the Sinhala majority community. The party won 13 seats out of 16.

In Galle district, the SLPP won seven out of nine seats, while in the neighbouring Matara district they did even better by winning six out of seven seats on offer.

The nearest rival is the new party formed by former presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa who has released his mother party, the United National Party (UNP), of former premier Ranil Wickremesinghe to the fourth place even below the Marxist

Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

The SJB has won only three seats from both districts. In the polling division results from other districts where counting is in progress, the SLPP has taken unassailable leads, sources said.

In the Tamil minority dominated north, the main Tamil party - Tamil National Alliance (TNA) - despite bagging a few polling divisions had also suffered unexpected reversals at the hands of SLPP's Tamil allies - the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP).

The counting began in the morning after the polls were closed on Wednesday.

As the counting of votes began, SLPP founder and its National Organisation Basil Rajapaksa - who is the youngest brother of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa with the eldest being Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa - said that the party is all set to form a new government. PTI

Survivors mark 75th anniversary of world's 1st atomic attack

Hiroshima: The dwindling witnesses to the world's first atomic bombing marked its 75th anniversary Thursday, with Hiroshima's mayor and others noting as hypocritical the Japanese government's refusal to sign a nuclear weapons ban treaty.

Mayor Kazumi Matsui urged world leaders to more seriously commit to nuclear disarmament, pointing out Japan's failures.

"I ask the Japanese gov-

ernment to heed the appeal of the (bombing survivors) to sign, ratify and become a party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," Matsui said in his personal declaration.

"As the only nation to suffer a nuclear attack, Japan must persuade the global public to unite with the spirit of Hiroshima." His speech highlights what survivors feel is the hypocrisy of Japan's government, which hosts 50,000

American troops and is protected by the US nuclear umbrella.

Tokyo has not signed the nuclear weapons ban treaty adopted in 2017, despite its nuclear pledge, a failure to act that atomic bombing survivors and pacifist groups call insincere.

The US dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people. AP

LEBANON PROBES BLAST AMID RISING ANGER, CALLS FOR CHANGE

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

The blast Tuesday, which appeared to have been caused

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

It also may have accelerated the country's coronavirus outbreak, as thousands flooded into hospitals in the wake of the blast. AP

Afghan council to decide whether Kabul releases 400 Taliban

Kabul: Afghanistan officials say a traditional consultative council will convene on Friday to decide whether the last 400 Taliban prisoners will be released as part of a peace agreement, even as its Health Ministry says half of Kabul's residents are infected with the coronavirus.

The Taliban have rejected any changes to the deal they signed in February with the US. That deal calls for 5,000 Taliban prisoners to be freed by Kabul and the Taliban to free 1,000 government personnel, including security officials, ahead of negotiations to map out a framework for a future Afghanistan. The release of the 400 prisoners is the final hurdle to the start of negotiations.

The Taliban have freed the 1,000 prisoners they were holding, and US and NATO soldiers have already begun withdrawing troops in line with the agreement. AP

No hoopla: Virus upends Trump, Biden convention plans

Washington: At the last minute, President Donald Trump and his Democratic rival, Joe Biden, are searching for places to impressively yet safely accept their parties' presidential nominations as the spread of the coronavirus adds fresh uncertainty to the campaign for the White House.

Trump said Wednesday he's considering giving his Aug. 27 acceptance speech on the grounds of the White House, a move that could violate ethics law.

Biden, meanwhile, scrapped plans to accept the Democratic nomination on August 20 in Milwaukee, where the virus has spent more than a year planning a massive convention.

Presidential conventions are a staple of American politics and have played out against national traumas as significant as the Civil War and World War II. AP

Obama's Medicaid expansion keeps gaining ground under Trump

Washington: President Donald Trump is still trying to overturn "Obamacare," but his predecessor's health care law keeps gaining ground in places where it was once unwelcome.

Missouri voters this week approved Medicaid expansion by a 53 per cent to 47 per cent margin, making the conservative the seventh to do so under Trump.

The president readily carried Missouri in 2016, but the Medicaid vote comes as more people have been losing workplace health insurance in a treacherous coronavirus economy.

That leaves only a dozen states opposed to using the federal-state health program for low-income people as a vehicle for covering more adults, mainly in jobs that don't provide health care. AP

Indian-American doc wins Democratic Congressional primary in Arizona

Washington: Dr Hiral Tipirneni, an Indian-American emergency room physician, has won the Democratic party primary for the US House of Representatives in the US state of Arizona. New polling showed that Tipirneni is just three points down to the Republican incumbent David Schweikert. The seat is said to be a Republican stronghold.

"I am honoured to be the nominee in Arizona's 6th Congressional District. For nearly a decade, our district has been represented by a DC politician who puts the profits of his special interest corporate donors over positive change that will make life better for working families here in Arizona," Tipirneni said. Tipirneni was three years old when her family immigrated from India to this country to pursue the American dream. PTI

No idea how I'm not dead: Journalist recounts horror of Beirut twin blasts

Beirut: All I could think about was finding the cat.

It was an irrational sentiment but I kept thinking: If I could find Sunday, then everything would surely be OK. I don't even normally like pets, and have no idea how during lockdown, I fell in love with this ginger cat who's constantly swishing her bushy tail.

I kept imagining that dramatic tail lying flat, her eyes glazed over, dead under a beam. But if Sunday was alive, I decided, then maybe my close friend, a fellow journalist, was

too. Normally I would have been with him, speeding to the scene on his motorcycle like we often do when news breaks in Beirut. So when I saw him on Tuesday, the city's port was on fire, I grabbed my helmet and changed into a pair of jeans.

My boyfriend asked why I was going. He said the fire didn't seem like big news. "Why are you wasting your time?" he asked as I walked into the living room. Then everything blew up.

Every door inside my

apartment, hinges and all, was ripped out of the walls. So was my air conditioner. My big fan split right in half. My massive living room windows shattered. The glass didn't just shatter; the windows themselves flew clean off. I genuinely, even now, have no idea how I am not dead. I stood in a whirlwind of nails and glass and splintered wood, I saw Sunday for a split second. Then we heard loud humming that sounded like planes and within moments, the second blast hit. AGENCY

PUBLIC NOTICE / TENDER NOTICE						
Sr. No.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT / OFFICE	NAME OF WORK / NOTICE / TENDER	OPENING DATE / CLOSING DATE (TIME)	AMOUNT / BID (APPROX.) in Rupees	WEBSITE OF THE DEPARTMENT	NO. OF TENDER
1	Chief Technology Officer	Appointment of an agency for Meter Reading, Splicing and Bill Distribution for Consumer under UHBVH jurisdiction.	Closing date: 16-08-2020 (12:00 hrs) Opening date: 20-08-2020 (at 10:00 hrs)	10,00,000/-	atenders.hy.in	334/PRO/2020

Premium Merchants Limited
 Regd. Office:- Omase square, Plot No. 14, 5th Floor, Jasola District Centre
 Jasola, New Delhi-110025
 CIN:- L51909DL1985PLC021077, Tel:- +91 11 61119658
 Email Id:- premiummerchants123@gmail.com, website:- www.pmltd.in

Extract of Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended on 30th June, 2020						
(Rs. in lakhs)						
Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter Ended on		Year Ended on		
		30.06.2020 (Audited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)	30.06.2019 (Unaudited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)	
1	Total Income from operations	15.06	(3.95)	2.40	50.71	
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extra-ordinary items)	13.43	(25.03)	(2.81)	23.95	
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	13.43	(25.03)	(2.81)	23.95	
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	10.04	(17.99)	(0.36)	27.30	
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/ (Loss) for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	14.12	(818.64)	6.77	(773.35)	
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital (Face value Rs. 10 each)	99.80	99.80	99.80	99.80	
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the audited Balance Sheet of accounting years 2019-20 and 2018-19	-	-	-	5,828.99	
8	Earning Per Share (Rs) (Face Value Rs. 10)	1.01	(1.80)	(0.04)	2.74	
9	2 Diluted	1.01	(1.80)	(0.04)	2.74	

Notes:-
 1) The above is an extract of the detailed form of unaudited results filed with the stock exchange under regulation 33 of SEBI (Listing obligation and Disclosure Requirement) Regulation, 2015. The full form of the Unaudited results are available on company's website www.pmltd.in (under the process of renewal) and on the website of the Stock Exchange www.mse.in.
 2) The detailed audited results and this extract were reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of directors in their meeting held on 06.08.2020

By order of the Board
 For Premium Merchants Limited
 s/-
 Balbir Singh
 Director
 Date:- 06.08.2020
 Place:- New Delhi
 DIN:- 00027438

SUPRA INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES LTD.
 Regd. Off: 1212, Nandan Char 85, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019
 CIN: L5990DL1985PLC019587
 Website: www.supraindustrialresources.in
 Email: supra1985@gmail.com or supra@supraindustrialresources.in

NOTICE
 Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 23 read with Regulation 47 of Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosures Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Friday, 14th August, 2020, at 11:00 A.M. at Registered office of the company, at 1212, Nandan Char 85, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019 to inter alia, consider and approve the Unaudited Financial Results of the Company for the quarter ended 30th June, 2020 along with the Limited Review Report of the Auditors for the corresponding period.

Pursuant to this and as per the amended SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) (Amendment) Regulations, 2018, the Trading ban for dealing in shares of the Company for all its Designated Persons and their immediate relatives was closed from Wednesday, 1st July, 2020 and will be opened after 48 hours from the announcement of the Unaudited Financial Results of the Company for the quarter ended 30th June, 2020 to the Stock Exchange. You are requested to take a note of the closure of the Trading Window as above.

For Supra Industrial Resources Limited
 s/-
 Anurag Malik
 (Company Secretary and Compliance Officer)
 Date: 05.08.2020
 M. No. 446652

GULSHAN POLYOLS LIMITED
 CIN:L24231UP2000PLC034918
 Regd. Off: 9th K.M., Jansath Road, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh
 Ph:-0131-3201231, Fax: 0131- 2661378, website: www.gulshanindia.com
 Extract of Un-Audited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30th, June 2020

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS Q1 FY 2020-21						
Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended		Year ended		
		30.06.2020 (Unaudited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)	30.06.2019 (Unaudited)	31.03.2020 (Audited)	
1	Total Income from Operations	12103.56	13,553.90	16906.33	62174.49	
2	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period (Before Tax, Exceptional and / or Extraordinary Items)	718.78	336.15	978.16	2742.22	
3	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period Before Tax (After Exceptional and / or Extraordinary Items)	718.78	336.15	978.16	2742.22	
4	Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period After Tax (After Exceptional and / or Extraordinary Items)	518.17	278.20	728.94	2058.40	
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (Comprising Profit/ (Loss) for the period (After Tax) and other Comprehensive Income (After Tax))	518.17	259.19	728.94	2039.39	
6	Paid-up equity share capital (Face Value of Rs. 1/- each)	469.17	469.17	469.17	469.17	
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	-	-	-	30059.90	
8	Earnings Per Share for Continuing and Discontinued Operations (Basic & After Extraordinary Items) (Face Value of Rs.1/-each)	1.10	0.59	1.55	4.39	
9	Diluted	1.10	0.59	1.55	4.39	

NOTES :-
 1 The Auditor has conducted Limited Review of these Financial Results. The results were reviewed by the Audit Committee. The Board of Directors has taken on record the financial results at its meeting held on August 06, 2020.
 2 The statement has been prepared in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standards) Rules, 2015 (IND - AS) prescribed under Section 133 of the Companies Act, 2013 and other recognised accounting practices and policies to the extent applicable.
 3 The Company's operations and financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2020 have been adversely impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown announced by the Government of India due to which the operations were suspended for part of the quarter and gradually resumed with requisite precautions. The results for the quarter are, therefore, not comparable with those for the previous quarters.
 4 Figures for the previous period have been regrouped/ rearranged wherever necessary to make them comparable with current figure.

For and on behalf of the Board
 s/-
 Dr. C. K. Jain
 Chairman and Managing Director
 Date : 06th August, 2020
 Place : New Delhi

RBI extends debt restructuring for MSME to March

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In view of the continued need to support the viable MSME entities on account of the fall-out of Covid-19, the Reserve Bank on Thursday extended the one-time debt restructuring for small businesses by another three months to March 2021.

Besides, the central bank has also relaxed some of the existing provisions for availing this scheme by the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

With Covid-19 continuing to disrupt normal functioning and cash flows, the stress in the MSME sector has got accentuated, warranting further support, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the central bank's bi-monthly monetary policy outcome.

"Accordingly, it has been decided that stressed MSME borrowers will be moratorium restructuring their debt under

the existing framework, provided their accounts with the concerned lender were classified as standard as on March 1, 2020.

This restructuring will have to be implemented by March 31, 2021," he said. As per the existing scheme, the borrower account had to be standard as on January 1, 2020.

Asset classification of borrowers classified as standard may be retained as such, whereas accounts which may have slipped into NPA category between March 2, 2020 and date of implementation may be upgraded as 'standard asset', as on the date of implementation of the restructuring plan.

However, the RBI asked banks to maintain additional provision of 5 per cent over and above the provision already held by them for accounts restructured under these guidelines.

The RBI has also retained

the aggregate exposure limit of the existing guidelines. As a result, the exposure limit also including non-fund based facilities of banks and NBFCs to the borrower should not exceed Rs 25 crore as on March 1, 2020.

Commenting on the MSME sector plays an important role in the growth of the Indian economy as it contributes over 28 per cent of the GDP, more than 40 per cent of exports, while creating employment for about 11 crore people.

Commenting on the scheme, PwC Partner Kuntal Sur said it is a good move by the RBI and would help MSMEs impacted by COVID-19 to get time and space to service debt when cash flows are under pressure due to uncertainty. Noting that a restructuring framework is already in place for MSMEs, he said it was subject to restructuring being implemented up to December 31. The scheme covers Mahindra & Mahindra and SBI.

In contrast, City Union Bank rose by 2.50 per cent, ICICI Bank gained 1.97 per cent, HDFC Bank 1.24 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank 0.44 per cent, IndusInd Bank 0.39 per cent, and Federal Bank 0.19 per cent. The BSE Bank index closed 0.71 per cent higher. From the auto pack, TVS Motor Company rose by 2.22 per cent, Tata Motors 1.13 per cent, Maruti Suzuki India 0.49 per cent, Hero MotoCorp 0.26 per cent, and Ashok Leyland 0.10 per cent.

Rate-sensitive bank, realty, auto stocks close mixed on RBI policy day

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Interest rate-sensitive bank, realty and auto stocks closed on a mixed note on Thursday after the RBI left interest rates unchanged but maintained an accommodative stance to shore up growth.

Shares of Bandhan Bank declined 3.57 per cent, RBI Bank 0.49 per cent, Axis Bank dipped 0.43 per cent and SBI 0.29 per cent on the BSE.

In contrast, City Union Bank rose by 2.50 per cent, ICICI Bank gained 1.97 per cent, HDFC Bank 1.24 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank 0.44 per cent, IndusInd Bank 0.39 per cent, and Federal Bank 0.19 per cent.

The BSE Bank index closed 0.71 per cent higher. From the auto pack, TVS Motor Company rose by 2.22 per cent, Tata Motors 1.13 per cent, Maruti Suzuki India 0.49 per cent, Hero MotoCorp 0.26 per cent, and Ashok Leyland 0.10 per cent.

However, Mahindra & Mahindra dipped 0.75 per cent, Bajaj Auto 0.67 per cent and MRF 0.42 per cent.

The BSE auto index closed registering a marginal rise of 0.07 per cent.

Among realty companies, Prestige Estates Projects jumped 8.49 per cent, Suntek Realty 5.48 per cent, Oberoi Realty 2.94 per cent, Sobha 0.57 per cent and DLF 0.21 per cent.

Godrej Properties fell 1.48 per cent, Indiabulls Real Estate 1.35 per cent and Mahindra Lifespace Developers 0.31 per cent.

The realty index closed with a gain of 1.15 per cent.

"The status quo was largely on the expected line. The apex bank is closely monitoring the impact of various measures announced in the past year, and the MPC decided to keep the policy rate on hold," Das said.

He said the central bank would offset requirement for a durable reduction in inflation to use the available space to support the revival of the economy. The committee unanimously decided to continue to keep its accommodative policy stance "as long as necessary to revive growth."

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Lockheed Martin shares new partnership opportunities with Indian suppliers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin shared information about new partnership opportunities with the Indian companies during the five-day virtual annual suppliers conference that ended on July 31, said an official statement on Thursday.

These opportunities with the Indian industry are in areas like space, aeronautics, rotary and mission systems (RMS) and missiles and fire control (MFC), the company said. "A highlight from the company's RMS group is future work with MH-60R (naval helicopter) for India."

There is no offset requirement for the programme, and so as part of that, Lockheed Martin will put more indirect work over in India, it stated. During the February visit of US President Donald Trump, India announced a purchase of 24 MH-60R helicopters, worth around USD 2.6 billion.

Lockheed Martin on Thursday said its RMS team will work with capable Indian companies over the next 7-8 years and provide opportunities to the industry to integrate into the global supply chain.

"RMS Supply Chain team already works with several Indian industrial partners in India and plans to expand that list, strengthening its commitment to the country," it added.

In April last year, the Indian Air Force issued an RFI (request for information) or an initial tender to acquire 114 multirole fighter aircraft at a cost of around USD 18 billion, which is billed as one of the world's biggest military procurement in recent years.

The top contenders for the deal include Lockheed's F-21, Boeing's F/A-18, Dassault Aviation's Rafale, the Eurofighter Typhoon, Russian Su-30MKI and Saab's Gripen.

No layoffs so far but surging Covid-19 cases in some States cause for concern: Bata chairman

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bata India Chairman Ashwani Windlass on Thursday said it has not laid off any employee so far, but admitted that there is not much clarity on "where the footwear market is heading" amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

As of March, Bata India had 9,762 employees across functions and locations, of which 4000-4500 are on third-party contract, he said.

"There is no layoff till date, Bata has friendly HR policies," Windlass told shareholders at the 87th annual general meeting of the company. "I don't think we have complete clarity about where we are heading, intermittent lockdowns and the surging pandemic in some states are of concern. At the end of the current quarter, we will be better placed to analyse and calibrate our strategies," he said.

The management has taken a number of measures to safeguard and reopen stores, while according top priority to employee and customer safety, company officials said. "Actual demand recovery shall be concurrent with the overall recovery of the economy, which is inching up now."

Complete reinstatement of pre-Covid state of affairs is still sometime away," the chairman said in his address at the virtual AGM. Bata India has achieved 35-40 per cent of the pre-Covid business levels, he said.

"Moreover, the RBI moratorium will help bolster the huge supply chain for Bata," Windlass told PTI. Of the footwear major's 1,500 stores across the country, around 85 per cent are now open, he said, adding, the manufacturing units are also operating smoothly, while adhering to health and safety protocols.

FICCI, OYO develops online certification course for hospitality industry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body FICCI and Hospitality firm OYO on Thursday said that they have joined hands to develop and design an online training and certification course specifically for the hospitality industry.

"The course will focus on redesigning the sanitisation protocols and minimising person-to-person contact for a hotel in line with the standard operating procedures announced by the tourism ministry," according to a joint statement.

The course will help budget, mid-segment and boutique hotels and homestays in India as well as hospitality professionals to maintain and improve their safety and hygiene standards in line with government and industry benchmarks, it added.

OYO Hotels and Homes founder and Group CEO Ritesh Agarwal said, "The certification course will enable hospitality professionals and hotels across the country to determine new ways of working, understand government guidelines and align with best practices and re-imagine operations in a manner that helps both customers and employees feel safe, secure and comfortable."

"FICCI will enable and support the implementation of information technology (IT) infrastructure and the online delivery platform for the online certification course, the statement said. OYO has developed and designed the course materials for the programme, it added.

"This course has been designed to help develop a uniform set of self-regulating guidelines," FICCI Secretary General Dilip Chenoay said.

India Inc, experts welcome RBI announcements

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Announcements made by the Reserve Bank, particularly the one on resolution of loans, have been welcomed by the industry as well as market players and experts.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday announced a loan restructuring window for corporates following the demand from bankers and the industry.

Restructuring will be allowed as per the prudential framework issued in June 2019, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said.

Last week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said the government is working with the RBI on the need for restructuring of loans to help the industry tide over the impact of COVID-19.

GDA board meeting pass many important resolutions

PTI ■ GHAZIABAD

A total of 12 proposals were presented in the 156th board meeting of the GDA on Thursday, of the Ghaziabad Development Authority, most of which were passed.

The special thing is that in the board meeting, the sector rate was frozen by 31 March 2021 to dispose of the undocumented properties.

The mitigation policy 2020 was also approved. The meeting was chaired by Manda Lakshmi and GDA Chairman Anita Seen Meshram. In addition, the Board approved the mitigation policy 2020.

GDA Vice President Kanchan Verma said that the GDA board, after deliberations, has made a decision to make an inquiry on the proposal to terminate the interest due to non-intimation of the outstanding amount to the



allottee in the Authority's scheme and recover it from the employee concerned. Declining the proposal to amend the cyber use of the proposed educational land use in the map of the Kaushambi Residential Scheme, dismantling the cyber hub in view of the land use of the land blocks to be kept educational only and the desired area for the cyber hub is not complete.

The proposal has been approved. On the proposal made in connection with the progress of high-tech and integrated township schemes being implemented in Ghaziabad.

Wipro partners Intel to enable remote IT support

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Services major Wipro on Thursday said it has partnered Intel to enable its LIVE Workspace solution with the latter's vPro platform that will help customers do business continuity by enabling remote IT support and solutions.

Wipro integrated the Intel vPro platform into LIVE Workspace, a suite of digital workplace services to provide remote manageability of devices, a statement said.

This extends to users at home or in the office and provides enhanced protection and security against firmware-level attacks, it added.

The combined solution provides practical business continuity services to enable enterprises to rapidly design, deploy, and manage a true remote work experience.

Business optimism for Jul-Sep quarter slips to record low: Report

New Delhi: Business optimism for the July-September quarter slumped to a record low due to

sharp rise in Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and staggered easing of restrictions, according to a report.

Dun & Bradstreet Composite Business Optimism Index for the July-September quarter fell to a record low of 29.4.

The index registered a decline of 40.6 per cent over the last quarter.

The BOI covered about 350 senior executives in June this year.

"The spike in the number of positive Covid-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and the staggered easing of restrictions affected the business optimism levels," said Arun Singh, Global Chief Economist, Dun & Bradstreet. All six optimism indicators -- volume of sales, net profits, selling prices, new orders, inventories and employees -- have registered a decline as compared to the previous quarter, the report said.

Exchange's subsidiary can administer, supervise registered investment advisers: Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A growing number of registered investment advisers, markets regulator Sebi on Thursday said a wholly-owned subsidiary of the stock exchange (stock exchange subsidiary) to administer and supervise IAs registered with Sebi, the regulator said in a circular.

Besides, the regulator put in place the criteria for grant of recognition to a stock exchange's subsidiary and its responsibilities.

"Considering the growing number of registered Investment Advisers (IAs), it is decided to recognize a wholly-owned subsidiary of the stock exchange (stock exchange subsidiary) to administer and supervise IAs registered with Sebi," the regulator said in a circular.

Under IA Regulations, Sebi can recognise any body or

body corporate for the purpose of regulating IAs. It further provides that Sebi may, at the time of recognition of such body, delegate administration and supervision of IAs to such body or body corporate on certain terms and conditions.

Sebi said the recognition of stock exchange's subsidiary will be based on eligibility of parent entity.

The parent entity should be in existence for a minimum of 15 years, should have a minimum net worth of Rs 200 crore, should have nation-wide terminals as well as investor grievance redressal mechanism, including arbitration, the circular said.

Besides, the stock exchange needs to have investor service centres (ISCs) in at least 20 cities. Sebi said the exchange will either form a subsidiary or des-

ignate an existing subsidiary for the purpose of regulating IAs. The subsidiary will put in place systems for grievance redressal, administrative action against IAs, maintain data, share information with Sebi.

The subsidiary needs to have the necessary infrastructure like adequate office space, equipment and manpower to effectively discharge its responsibilities.

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ignate an existing subsidiary for the purpose of regulating IAs. The subsidiary will put in place systems for grievance redressal, administrative action against IAs, maintain data, share information with Sebi.

The subsidiary needs to have the necessary infrastructure like adequate office space, equipment and manpower to effectively discharge its responsibilities.

PUBLIC NOTICE
I hereby inform the Public at large that my Clients (1) Shri Kamlesh Kumar Jain (2) Shri Om Prakash Jain (3) Shri Sushant Jain (4) Shri Kamlesh Kumar Jain (5) Shri R.K. Sharma (6) Shri R.P. Sharma (7) Shri R.K. Sharma (8) Shri R.K. Sharma (9) Shri R.K. Sharma (10) Shri R.K. Sharma (11) Shri R.K. Sharma (12) Shri R.K. Sharma (13) Shri R.K. Sharma (14) Shri R.K. Sharma (15) Shri R.K. Sharma (16) Shri R.K. Sharma (17) Shri R.K. Sharma (18) Shri R.K. Sharma (19) Shri R.K. Sharma (20) Shri R.K. Sharma (21) Shri R.K. Sharma (22) Shri R.K. Sharma (23) Shri R.K. Sharma (24) Shri R.K. Sharma (25) Shri R.K. Sharma (26) Shri R.K. Sharma (27) Shri R.K. Sharma (28) Shri R.K. Sharma (29) Shri R.K. Sharma (30) Shri R.K. Sharma (31) Shri R.K. Sharma (32) Shri R.K. Sharma (33) Shri R.K. Sharma (34) Shri R.K. Sharma (35) Shri R.K. Sharma (36) Shri R.K. Sharma (37) Shri R.K. Sharma (38) Shri R.K. Sharma (39) Shri R.K. Sharma (40) Shri R.K. Sharma (41) Shri R.K. Sharma (42) Shri R.K. 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Trend Slazer

I'm not here for fame: Radhika

Actor **RADHIKA APTE** says she does not want to get stuck in something convenient or be satisfied, and she is not chasing fame.

"I'm not here for fame. I do like the perks sometimes, but I don't take success and failure seriously because these are temporary and all very relative," Radhika said.

"You can't take either seriously, but you can't just ignore them. They are very important aspects in your journey — you need appreciation, you need to pat your back many a time, you have to love the appreciation as well and you have to also learn from your failure and not get dejected. So I have a balanced approach," she added.



'Music has been my sanity. It is an integral part of my life and I feel blessed to be able to share it. Edge is an attempt at portraying and owning your inner chaos and loving parts of yourself that are imperfect. When you stop looking at perfection in others, the journey of understanding and accepting yourself begins.'

—**Shruti Haasan**

Looking ahead in time, actor **URVASHI RAUTELA** feels history books in the future will need to dedicate an entire chapter to the year 2020.



From forest fires to the COVID-19 pandemic and now a blast in Beirut, the year has seen one disaster after the other.

"My prayers are with Beirut, Lebanon. I am heartbroken by the loss of life in this tragic event. Solidarity to all those affected and those working tirelessly to help. I can't even imagine the predicament of the people witnessing this out there," she said.

Katy on her split with Orlando

KATY PERRY and actor **Orlando Bloom** are now a happy couple, but they have gotten through a lot of hell, says the singer.

"It's really about an individual journey that makes the whole thing better. We both had to decide to go on that journey separately because it's not my half and your half that makes a whole. It's my wholeness and your wholeness that makes this whole thing happen," Perry said.

In the track *Champagne Problems*, Perry sings about overcoming their toughest times. "It's a song that really talks about how intense it's gotten and how many things we have had to go through. Yes, we have problems. Everybody has challenges in a relationship," she said.



The unlock diaries

A survey, conducted by a dating app, finds out the reasons behind infidelity during the lockdown

A lot of love stories have blossomed in last few months of the lockdown and the new couples are eagerly waiting to meet their loved ones. From the outset, it's hard to judge when this global health crisis is going to leave the country but one thing is for sure, love is unhindered from the outside surrounding and blooming like never before.

A dating app, Gleeden, conducted a survey after the beginning of 'Unlock 1.0' and found out that about 75 per cent of its users are willing to meet their love interests if provided an opportunity. The survey was rolled out among 1,000 of its newly joined users and was conducted across metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune. The findings from the survey are pretty exciting and it also addresses the encounter side of the reasons behind infidelity. Here is a glimpse of the same.

The heart is always dicey

Can you cheat on your spouse and still love them at



the same time? Well, the answer to this question is as tricky as the question itself and the users are no exception. About 45.6 per cent of them think that their shared intimacy won't affect their current relationship, while 47 per cent of them believe that they cannot share the same level of emotions with two different people. A minute 7.4 per cent are indecisive about their stand on shared intimacy with their spouses.

Why partners cheat

Infidelity is considered as a taboo worldwide and there are a lot of factors leading up to the same. Lack of intimacy and compatibility in a relationship are just the kick-starters to the ultimate fate. Interestingly, it has been found out that 37 per cent of people cheat their partners because they want to try out something new or spice up their existing relationship. About 36 per cent of people commit infidelity because they are in

love with someone else other than their spouses, while for the remaining 27 per cent, the decision of committing infidelity was taken when they realised that their current partner is not the right match for them both emotionally as well as physically.

Blame it on the night

It has been found that people usually try to make new connections while attending a social gathering or at a club party; it can range

from an office function to a reunion. About 23 per cent of the people admitted that they look for new relationships or flings in a party gathering, while 22 per cent of the people would prefer it on a vacation or while travelling. For 19 per cent of them, the best time is when their spouse is not at home or is out for a business trip. Also, about 12 per cent of the people are willing to find new connections within their office premises, while the remaining 24 per cent of the total users are willing to try out multiple measures to find out their love interest.

Keep it casual

It seems that casual relationships are the need of the hour for 38 per cent of the app users, who would like to get into a new relationship without making serious future commitments. About 23 per cent of the users still believe in the old school romance and are looking for future life partners. Interestingly, about 39 per cent of users are only interested in one-time affairs and are not looking for anything serious.

From the scratch

Actor **TAHIR RAJ BHASIN** says that every project has taught him to focus on being true to the process

Actor Tahir Raj Bhasin is an outsider with no connections in the industry. He debuted with *Mardaani* to show his acting prowess as a villain and since then, Tahir is delighted about how his career has been shaping up. After making a mark in *Mardaani*, which earned him the Best Supporting Actor and Best Villain awards, Tahir decided not to look back. His powerful performances in the subsequent films like *Manto*, *Chhichhore* and many more made him grab projects like *83* and *Loop Lapeta*. He is thrilled about the fact that he has shaped his own destiny in the Bollywood.

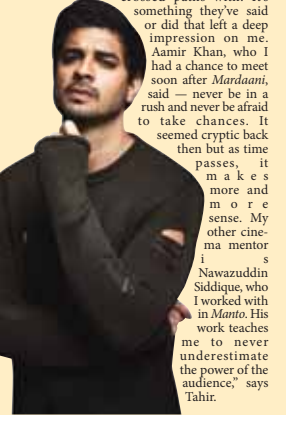
"I'm very proud of the journey I've had in Bollywood. When you start from the scratch, you value the recognition that your work gets and the opportunities you've earned because they are built solely on the basis of your talent. I consider the parts I've done so far to be a personal collage of experiences," he says.

The actor credits the directors he has collaborated with for having faith in him. "I've been fortunate enough to work with some amazing filmmakers. This has led to my growth as an actor and as a person. Every project has taught me to focus on being true to the process. What matters is making a part fun to watch and authentic. The next exciting turn of my career is going to be equally challenging. *Loop Lapeta* is a thriller comedy and pairing up with a talent like Taapsee (Pannu) is something I really look forward to."

Tahir discloses his journey in cinema makes him proud. "The part in YRF's *Mardaani* challenged me to stretch my abilities as I was a starting opposite an icon like Rani Mukerji. The uniqueness of the part made it a great one for me. From doing that to shifting gears in a light hearted college drama *Chhichhore* and now to a romantic lead in *Loop Lapeta* is incredibly fulfilling and gives me a sense of pride in the journey so far," he says.

Tahir also reveals who his biggest inspirations are. "People who I count as mentors in cinema aren't always the ones with me on a day to day but are magnetic people who I've briefly crossed paths with. It's something they've said or did that left a deep impression on me."

Aamir Khan, who I had a chance to meet soon after *Mardaani*, said — never be in a rush and never be afraid to take chances. It seemed cryptic back then but as time passes, it makes more and more sense. My other cinema mentor is Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who I worked with in *Manto*. His work teaches me to never underestimate the power of the audience," says Tahir.



A DANGEROUS MASTER

Partially automated driving systems don't always work, so the auto club recommends that car companies should limit their use

Two tests by AAA during the past two years show that partially automated driving systems don't always function properly, so the auto club is recommending that car companies limit their use. Researchers with AAA recently tested systems from five manufacturers over a distance of 4,000 miles (6,400 kilometres), and said they encountered problems every eight miles (13 kilometres).

Most of the issues involved systems designed to keep vehicles in their lane, but the tests discovered that many had trouble spotting simulated broken-down vehicles in their path. About two-thirds of the time the test vehicles hit the broken-down car, at an average speed of 25 mph (40 kph), according to the study.

It was AAA's second round of tests on the systems. Researchers said little had changed from a test of four other vehicles in 2018, prompting the recommendation that automakers stop including the technology on more models. "AAA has repeatedly found that active driving assistance systems do not perform consistently, especially in real-world scenarios," said Greg Brannon, AAA's director of automotive engineering.



ing. "Automakers need to work toward more dependable technology including improving lane keeping assistance."

Also the systems, which combine control of acceleration, braking and steering, often quit working with little notice to drivers, AAA found. That could cause a dangerous situation if the driver isn't fully engaged and has to make an emergency decision.

AAA tested five vehicles at several research centres with drivers and instruments monitoring their performance. Included this year were a 2019 BMW X7 SUV, a 2019 Cadillac CT6 sedan, a 2019 Ford Edge SUV, a 2020 Kia Telluride SUV and a 2020 Subaru Outback SUV. Their systems have names like Kia's "Highway Driving Assist," Subaru's "EyeSight," Ford's "Co-Pilot 360," Cadillac's "Super Cruise," and BMW's "Active Driving Assistant Professional."



The results were similar to those found in 2018 testing by AAA of four other vehicles including a 2017 Tesla Model S with the company's "Autopilot" system.

BMW, General Motors and Subaru issued statements saying their systems aid drivers and are not meant to be fully autonomous. Messages were left seeking comment from Ford and

Kia. Subaru said its system "is designed to assist the driver, not replace the driver, when confronting hazards," while GM said it designed the Super Cruise system so it makes sure the driver stays engaged.

"Super Cruise undergoes rigorous testing and validation, and we continue to remain confident in the system," GM's statement said.

BMW said it appears the X7's system performed as designed in AAA's testing. "BMW requires that the driver remain fully at attention in order to intervene in the case of an emergency situation (such as a car stopped in the lane as simulated in the AAA study)," BMW said.

AAA said most owners manually explain that the systems have trouble spotting stationary objects. The most recent tests show that the systems aren't improving much, even as

automakers move them into more mainstream models. Brannon said that can be a problem.

People who bought systems when they first came out generally were early adopters who know more about technology, Brannon said. But as the systems make their way into more mainstream models, people who are less tech-savvy will be driving them, he said.

"People are really less familiar and less likely to really engage in understanding how the systems work," he said. "That just assume they do work. That could be a really dangerous assumption."

Also, research has shown that people become overly reliant on the technology, which could be dangerous when the systems don't work, he said. Also, there's a standard way for the vehicles to notify drivers that the systems are disengaging. Some just have a green light on the dash, while the Cadillac's steering wheel vibrates and a green light goes to flashing red, he said.

In real-road tests, all of the systems had trouble keeping the vehicles in their lanes, and they came too close to other vehicles and guardrails, AAA said. Test track examinations of three vehicles, the Kia Telluride, BMW X7 and Subaru Outback, found that all had trouble spotting a simulated broken-down vehicle in their lane most of the time, Brannon said.

The Cadillac system couldn't be tested on the track because General Motors limits use to divided highways, while the Ford system also wouldn't work on the track. But both systems had problems on real roads, Brannon said.

He said that problems with the system could slow the adoption of fully autonomous vehicles because owners who experience the driver-assist technology may not trust it.

RAISE THE BAR AT HOME

Here are some must-follow tips to set up your personal bar and enjoy your favourite cocktails at home. By ASMANI SUBRAMANIAN

A well-set bar is one thing every grown-up home should have. It is not just about honing skills to hosting some family and friends over for drinks, but also about taking some time out for yourself and enjoying a drink at home. Well, this applies the most to the times we are living in now. By setting up a bar at home, you wouldn't be missing your favourite cocktail at your most-visited outlet. The bar can also add an expected element of design to your home. But it will definitely be a space that will inspire you to try new things and upgrade your mixology skills.

WHERE TO BEGIN FROM

Creating a bar isn't as intimidating as it may seem. An important step is deciding what you want to stock your bar with. However, there are a few more things to consider before making the jump from a few bottles of spirits and a chilled beer in your refrigerator, to several variety of liquor, mixers and tools on display in your home bar.

If space is a constraint to create a full built-in wet bar, you could always have a portable bar designed that will help you to move the essentials to the area of your gathering. A well-made cocktail trolley is the best fix. Be it a make-shift bar or a cocktail trolley, both are readily available in leading e-commerce portals to add to your cart. If nothing else, transform your already available wooden console table into a bar top table by just adding a simple yet aesthetic serving tray.

Once you have narrowed down on some space for your bar, the next step is to set a budget aside to arrange for all the must-haves including your choice of spirits, bar tools, bitters, glassware, mixers and garnishes — that is where the visual appeal kicks in!

WHICH SPIRITS TO GO FOR

The budget that you decide on will help you set a base for the spirits that will bring your home bar to

life. I suggest adding different types of spirits to enjoy on various occasions and settings. It'll also help you master your skills at cocktail making as you will have a multitude of liquor categories to experiment with. Expert tip: Stock up on distinct flavours that will meet the wider spectrum of your audience.

THE ABSOLUTE MUST-HAVES

Scotch Whisky — A variety of scotch whiskies, which have a distinct maturation element to them such as the Black Dog Triple Gold Reserve, a classic single malt such as the Singleton of Glendullan and a limited-edition collectable collection such as the Johnnie Walker Black & Origin Series, are the liquors that add an extraordinary essence to the bar.

Trust me, there is no single way to enjoy whisky. It can be consumed in the manner you want and recent trends suggest that scotch cocktails are a great way for the new generation to venture into knowing whisky. Try to explore whisky cocktails and experimenting with flavour notes available. If it's a social occasion like a brunch with a close group of friends or even a cozy movie night indoors, a Highball will accompany the mood perfectly. Expert tip: One such highball is also Johnnie Ginger — Simple, understated and easy to create at home.

Take a tall glass (highball) and fill it with ice. Add 45 ml of Johnnie Walker Red Label, top with ginger ale and drop in a slice of fresh ginger, orange or cherry to garnish.

Vodka — Another spirit perfect for cocktails. I would recommend having your choice of vodkas in your freezer. Frozen Smirnoff is great to try with any mixer but if you are looking for more complex flavours and wish to try your hand at a *Bloody Mary* cocktail, Ketel One Vodka will make it a well-rounded drink.

Gin — It is a great accompaniment when it comes to brunching. No one can go wrong with a classic gin cocktail. Tanqueray London



Dry Gin will be a best choice to fix up a refreshing gin and tonic. Take 30 ml Tanqueray, 60 ml tonic, lots of ice in a wine glass with your choice of citrus fruit sliced up to garnish.

Other additional spirits which you can stock up your bar with are Rum and Tequila to serve at your indoor gatherings.

Vermouth — An element added to your bar for you to make a great martini with your choice of vodka.

Bitters — For enjoying your very own Negroni.

Important tip: Once you have set up your home bar, do try your hand at experimenting with mixology but remember to drink responsibly.

ESSENTIAL BAR TOOLS

Few things that you would need to enhance your mixology skills and serve some great cocktails for your friends and family are essential bar tools, glassware, shrubs and syrups.

Cocktail shaker: A cocktail shaker is essential to make sure you blend in all the ingredients of your cocktail. I would recommend that you invest in a three-piece shaker, which has an in-built strainer and helps in serving a drink, especially when you're short of time. If you are just starting out and don't have one, a 500 ml recycled bottle with a wide mouth works just as well and can result in preparing three serves at a time.

Jigger or peg measure: As a responsible host, it is always wise to measure every drink. This is especially useful in portioning out your cocktail when you are trying out a



new recipe.

Pourers: Use a pourer while pouring your drinks into a glass to avoid spillage.

Cocktail strainers: A Hawthorne or Julep Strainer, that is simple in design, is handy to use for stirred cocktails. For those that are shaken, use a fine strainer (tea strainer) to filter the ice that breaks into ice chips while shaking or to separate fresh fruit and herb sediments that may float in your drink.

Muddler: While using local/seasonal fresh fruits and herbs in your drink, use a muddler to bring out the utmost freshness and juice of the ingredients.

Citrus press / Mexican elbow juicer: For all those who love their sour cocktails, use the right tools

wooden chopping board and sharp knife is useful while slicing fruit. A small knife and peeler helps to peel citrus fruits for garnishing. A *Cosmopolitan* is never the same without a fresh orange twist.

Bar spoon: A bar spoon is good to stir your martinis or to muddle the sugar cube in an *Old Fashioned*. Chopsticks also come in handy for stirring.

Mixing glass or pint glass: Who doesn't love a well-made, stirred, dry martini or a negroni in a fancy mixing glass? A pint glass or a recycled bottle works just as well.

Chopping board and knife: A

while making a sweet lime soda. A measure of gin makes it a Tom Collins or Gin Fizz.

Juice containers or punch bowl: This helps when you are hosting an intimate gathering for friends and family where you can pre-mix the cocktails and store them in the fridge.

Spill mat and kitchen towels: Very useful in keeping the surface clean as bar tops tend to get wet with spilt liquids pretty often. A mat keeps the moisture in check.

Ice cube tray: Ice is the most important element in a cocktail and big ice cubes help the drink stay chilled for a longer duration. Small paper cups or 100 ml steel tumblers make good alternatives. Expert tip: Don't add your ice until you're ready to shake or stir, melted ice makes the drink too weak and unenjoyable.

Glassware: The right glassware gives the best first impression of a great drink. Research reveals that beautiful glassware not only enhances the perception but also has a lasting impact. Here are some recommendations.

□ A highball glass is great for tall drinks like whiskey highballs, mojitos and vodka with OJ.

□ For cocktails like *Old Fashioned* and straight drinks, a rocks or whiskey glass is preferable.

□ Some wine glasses for red/white wine or a gin and a tonic.

□ A martini or a cocktail glass, which brings in the bond moment is a must-have.

□ A beer glass serves as an excellent utility glass through the evening.

Mixers: Stock up on mixers that you enjoy to create simple and easy

cocktails. This also works well for your guests who may look for something other than an alcoholic drink. Here are some mixers that one must have.

□ Aerated drinks like soda water, tonic, ginger ale, lemonade

□ Fresh and chilled fruit juices like orange, cranberry, pineapple, tomato

□ Sweet and sour mix like margaritas, whiskey sours

□ Equal parts of fresh lime or apple cider vinegar and sugar syrup work well too

□ Having a selection of honey, preserves, shrubs and flavoured syrups in your pantry brings in complexity to your drink and never fails to wow your guests

□ Spices and herbs help you add some the unique flavours to your drink

□ Through local seasonal fruits, you can make a whiskey sour right at home, throw in a bit of ginger to add plenty of complexity to the drink

□ Using citrus fruits for garnishing are brings a sense of freshness to your drink. It's always great to have a bundle of kaffir lime leaves or mint leaves as a brilliant garnish, uplifting the entire cocktail experience.

Essential bitters: What salt does to food, bitters do to your cocktails. Try stocking up on an Angostura bitter in your bar. If you can't find one, use your favourite spices, steeped tea or spent coffee in vodka gives your drink its own homemade tincture.

Well, one last tip: Drink and enjoy responsibly!

(The writer is the Brand Ambassador, Diageo India.)

R E C I P E S

ALMOND PUMPKIN KEBAB

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pumpkin: 500 gm
- Green chillies (chopped): 1 1/2 tsp
- Garlic and ginger (chopped): 2 tsp
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Cracked coriander: 1 tsp
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Nutmeg powder: 1/8 tsp
- Chat masala: 1 tsp
- Dry mango powder: 1 tsp



STRAWBERRY, WALNUT & DATE SMOOTHIE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Strawberries (halved): 200 gm
- California Walnuts: 50 gm
- Pitted dates (roughly chopped): 3
- Natural yogurt: 100 gm
- Milk: 100 ml

METHOD

- Place all the ingredients in a smoothie maker or blender and blitz until smooth.
- Pour into two glasses.
- Serve sprinkled with extra chopped walnuts.

Courtesy: Chef Sabysachi Goarai.

TRICOLOUR LADDOO

WHAT YOU NEED

- Desiccated coconut: 1.5 cup (additional 1/4 cup for garnishing)
- Sweetened condensed milk: 1/2 cup
- Clarified butter: 1 tsp
- Cardamom powder: 1 tsp
- Milk: 1 tsp
- Saffron (for orange colour): 2 tsp
- Pistachio powder (for green colour): 2 tsp

METHOD

- In a non-stick pan, heat ghee and add coconut. Stir it on medium heat until it turns golden brown.
- Take it out and add condensed milk in same pan, mix it well for a minute.
- Now add coconut in it and mix well until it observes the moisture. Keep stirring



constantly, then add cardamom powder and mix well until the mixture becomes thick.

- Further take three equal portions of the mixture in different bowls.
- Add saffron milk in one, pistachio powder

in second and keep the rest natural white. Cool down the mixture completely and make laddoos from it.

Courtesy: Head Chef Ritesh Shabani, Madchef.

SMOKED SALMON FISH CAKES

WHAT YOU NEED

- Smoked salmon: 400 gm
- Mashed potatoes: 300 gm
- Melted butter: 2 tsp
- Wholegrain mustard: 2 tsp
- Fresh dill (chopped): 1 tsp
- Fresh parsley (chopped): 1 tsp
- Fresh chives (chopped): 1 tsp
- Lemon juice
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Flour (seasoned): 1/2 cup
- Eggs, beaten: 2
- Breadcrumbs: 1 1/2 cups
- Oil: 100ml

METHOD

- Preheat the oven to 190 degree Celsius.
- Place the salmon in a roasting dish, cover with foil and place in the oven for 15 minutes to heat through.
- Flake the salmon with a fork and place in a large bowl together with the mashed potatoes, butter, and mustard. Mix well.



- Add the dill, parsley, chives, lemon juice and zest. Season well with salt and pepper and mix thoroughly.
- Divide the mixture into 12

portions and form into balls. Flatten each ball to about 1cm thick.

- Dip each fishcake in the seasoned flour, then the beaten egg and finally the breadcrumbs

to coat each one.

- Fry the fishcakes in 2 tsp oil over medium-high heat for five to eight minutes on each side until golden brown and crispy.

Courtesy: Le Creuset.

SINGLES

HERODES RETAIN BOTAS FOR NEXT SEASON

LONDON: Valtteri Bottas has signed a new deal with Mercedes, keeping him at the Formula One team until the end of the 2021 season. Bottas, who was runner-up to Hamilton last year, joined Mercedes in 2017 and has so far notched eight wins and 12 pole positions with the team.

OLYMPIC RINGS TEMPORARILY REMOVE OLY RINGS

TOKYO: The Olympic rings monument installed in Tokyo Bay for the 2020 Summer Games was temporarily removed for maintenance on Thursday and will return in December when Japan heads into the final stretch of preparations for the rescheduled event. The monument, which was installed seven months ago and stands 15.3m tall and 32.6m wide, will be cleaned and undergo a safety inspection before being re-installed.

HAN CITY SIGN AKE FROM BOURNEMOUTH

MANCHESTER: Manchester City have signed Dutch defender Nathan Ake from Bournemouth. Ake has just turned 25 and has a five-year deal, keeping him at City until the summer of 2025. The 25-year-old said he is delighted to have joined City, a club he feels offers him everything he needs to win trophies and have a successful career.

FRIEDKIN GROUP COMPLETE ROMA TAKEOVER

ROME: US-based Friedkin group has reached an agreement with the current owners of Serie A club Roma to buy the former league champions for \$501 million euros. Roma said in a statement that owner and club president James Pallotta has signed the necessary preliminary contracts to Dan Friedkin, the current chairman and CEO of The Friedkin Group, on Wednesday night.

GARCIA JOINS ATK MOHUN BAGAN FC

KOLKATA: Spanish mid-fielder Edu Garcia has signed a two-year deal with newly merged ATK Mohun Bagan FC, the franchise of the ISL announced on Thursday. Having represented Bengaluru FC in 2017-18, Garcia returned to the ISL for the second half of the 2018-19 with ATK and scored the winning goal against Chennaiyin FC to guide them to a record third title last season.

MCA WRITES TO CM SEEKING NOD FOR PRACTICE

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has written to Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, seeking his approval for its players' practice at the indoor facility of the Bandra Kurla Complex. The Maharashtra Government has so far not allowed any team sport to resume in the state and they have also not given a go-ahead for the resumption of training of individual cricketers.

LEDLEY KING HIRED AS MOURINHO'S ASSISTANT

LONDON: Tottenham has appointed former captain Ledley King to become an assistant manager under Jose Mourinho. The 39-year-old King spent his entire 19-year playing career at Tottenham and has been a club ambassador since retiring in 2012. The former center back made 323 appearances and lifted the League Cup as captain in 2008 which is the club's last major trophy. King has joined Mourinho's backroom team in place of tactical analyst Ricardo Formisinho, who has left the club.

KYRGIOS LIKELY TO PULL OUT OF FRENCH OPEN

MELBOURNE: Nick Kyrgios dropped a huge hint on Thursday that he will skip the French Open, saying the chances of him travelling to Europe this year were "slim to none". "It's a very slim chance I'll play in Europe. Almost slim to none to be honest," he said. The Australian last week pulled out of the upcoming US Open in New York due to the coronavirus pandemic.

'Babar belongs in league of Kohli, Smith, and Williamson'

MANCHESTER: Former England captain Nasser Hussain feels it's time the cricket world catches the moniker 'Fab Four' to 'Fab Five' by including Pakistan's Babar Azam in the same league as Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson.

Australian run-machine Steve Smith and England captain Joe Root complete the quartet of modern day greats.

"They keep going on about the 'Fab Four' (Kohli, Steve Smith, Kane Williamson and Joe Root) — it's the 'Fab Five' and Babar Azam is in that," Hussain said on Sky Sports.

Babar, who has been Pakistan's best batsman in the past few years, started the first Test against England at Old Trafford on a bright note, scoring an unbeaten 69 off 100 balls by the time bad weather stopped play on Wednesday.

"I think it is a real shame and it is in part a consequence of Pakistan playing away from home, playing in the UAE all the time in front of no one. Pakistan hiding in the shadow of Indian cricket, not going over and playing IPL cricket, not playing India."

Babar's cover drives have some similarities with Kohli's and some consider him even better in his execution.

"If this had been Virat Kohli, everyone would be talking about it but because it is Babar Azam, no one is talking about it," Hussain said during commentary. "He is young and he is elegant. He has got all the swagger," he added.

PTI

BCCI, Vivo suspend IPL partnership for 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"The Board of Control for

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

The company, on its part, stated that the association is being paused.

"The Board of Control for

sponsorship rights for five years from 2018 to 2022 for a reported sum of ₹2190 crore, approximately ₹440 crore per annum.

It is learnt that the two parties are now working out a plan in which Vivo might come back for a fresh three-year period starting 2021 on revised terms. However, a top BCCI official offered a divergent view.

"Here we are talking about diplomatic tensions and you

expect that after November, when IPL ends and before the next IPL starts in April 2021, there would be no anti-China sentiment? Are we serious?" the veteran official said.

The anti-China sentiment in the country peaked after the violent face-off between the Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh, India lost 20 soldiers in the clash, while China also acknowledged unspecified casualties.

The stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) caused outrage across India with several calls for boycott of Chinese companies and products.

The BCCI is now likely to float a tender for new IPL title sponsors as mandated by its constitution.

However, the end of this (sponsorship) deal could spell losses for the franchisees as they get a substantial share from the sponsorship pool.

Half of the annual Vivo spon-

sorship money is distributed equally among eight franchisees which comes to ₹27.5 crore.

"As of now, it will be very difficult for the BCCI to match the sponsorship amount at such short notice. Therefore both BCCI and the franchisees should be prepared to lose out on some money

BCCI more but each franchisee will lose out to the tune of ₹15 crore," the official said.

"This year will be difficult for everyone but the show must go on," the official said.

Inter, Man Utd reach Europa quarters

AFP ■ GELSENKIRCHEN

Manchester United edged MLS K2-1 and Inter Milan beat Gefate 2-0 on Wednesday in rescheduled ties due to the coronavirus pandemic to clinch places in the quarter-finals of the Europa League.

United had a 5-0 lead from their first leg played in March and will face Copenhagen who enjoyed a 3-0 victory on the night over Istanbul Basaksehir.

Antonio Conte's Inter Milan will face either Steven Gerrard's Rangers or Bayer Leverkusen with the Germans holding a 3-1 lead going into Thursday's match.

Despite United's comfortable lead from March 12's first leg, the visitors caused problems early on.

Andrej Kramaric hit the crossbar with a powerful header after 10 minutes at an almost empty Old Trafford before Peter Michorl fired wide just after the quarter of an hour mark.

The Linz-based outfit had to wait until the second half to break the deadlock as defender Philipp Wiesinger rifled into the top corner from outside the box after 55 minutes.



Man Utd's Jesse Lingard reacts during Europa League match against LASK. AP

Their celebrations were short-lived as Jesse Lingard equalised on the counter-attack for United three minutes later.

Anthony Martial claimed the match-winner with two minutes to go despite LASK goalkeeper Alexander Schlager guarding a foot to the France striker's shot.

Inter's meeting with the La Liga side was played over just

one leg in Gelsenkirchen to save time ahead of next week's last eight to be held in Germany.

They advanced to the next round as Rome's Lukaku became the club's first player to score in five straight European appearances since Brazilian striker Adriano in 2004.

Lukaku slotted home after Alessandro Bastoni's long ball

Sanchez joins Nerazzurri for free

AFP ■ MILAN

Manchester United's Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez has signed a three-year contract with Inter Milan, the club announced on Thursday.

No transfer fee was involved in the deal as United seemed to be in a hurry to offload the forward who could not reach the heights of his previous years at Old Trafford. He was also reportedly earning in excess of \$500,000 pounds per

week at Manchester United.

"Alexis Sanchez has joined the Nerazzurri on a free transfer," the Serie A side said in a statement.

The 31-year-old, who had been loaned to Inter this season, signed a contract until June 30, 2023, the club added.

Sanchez scored four goals for Antonio Conte's Serie A runners-up behind Juventus.

Everyone at Manchester United wishes Alexis Sanchez all the best in his future career as he joins Inter Milan on a permanent transfer," the Premier League club said.

of a clearance inside his own area.

Elsewhere, 2009 champions Shakhtar Donetsk booked a last-eight spot against Basel of Eintracht Frankfurt after three goals but veteran center-forward Jorge Molina missed the resulting penalty.

Christian Eriksen made sure of Inter's spot after 84 minutes with his first touch after Dakonam Djene made a mess

Man City has unfinished business in CL: Laporte

Man City vs Real Madrid

Manchester City's growing silverware collection, defender Aymeric Laporte said ahead of his side's last-16 second leg against Real Madrid on Friday.

City have dominated English football in recent years under Pep Guardiola, although they finished second to Liverpool in the Premier League this season. But they yet to add Europe's most coveted prize to their trophy cabinet.

"City have unfinished business in the Champions League, we have been talking about it for a long time, it's the thing we are missing," Laporte told Spanish newspaper AS on Thursday.

"Last year we won four trophies in the same season but couldn't win the Champions League, so if it's our turn this year, perfect."

They were knocked out in the quarter-finals last year on away goals by Tottenham after having a last-gasp effort ruled out by a VAR review. They were beaten on away goals by AS Monaco in the last 16 in 2017.

"I don't know what we've been doing wrong as the team has been the same in the last few years. Away goals have been key. Last year Tottenham scored the same number of goals as we but eliminated us," added Laporte.

"We have all the ingredients to do great things. The team is really up to it, we don't have to change much, we just need a little more luck. We have lacked that final spark which I'm sure we'll find soon."

City hold a 2-1 lead over Real going into Friday's second leg at an empty Etihad Stadium and will be without their top scorer Sergio Aguero through injury.

Real will be missing captain Sergio Ramos, who was sent off in the first leg.

"Everyone knows Aguero, he's an important player to be missing just like theirs. All the goals that he has scored and the career he's had since he was young speak for themselves," added Laporte.

"He's one of the best strikers I've ever seen but we believe in our other team mates. Sergio Ramos is also a very important player but we want to show that we can play better than them."

Agencies

AP

Shan's 156 drives Pak to 326

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Century-maker Shan Masood and Shahab Khan snatched the initiative for Pakistan from England with a 105-run partnership on day two of the first Test at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Pakistan lost three cheap wickets and scored only 18 runs in the morning session, but Masood and Khan were transformed after the lunch break.

They scored 27 runs in the first five overs after lunch, then England took the second new ball. But the Pakistan pair, especially Khan, was too confident to be confined again.

They were positive and rotated the strike, and the runs flowed as Pakistan added 125 runs in the middle session and reached 312 at tea.

Masood was a career-best unbeaten 151 and Khan was out for 45, one of three wickets to fall in the session.

England pacer Jofra Archer had a hat-trick ball but Shaheen Afridi was not bowled.

Masood, out 77 at lunch, was comparatively zippy as he scored 23 runs in 26 balls to achieve his third century in three innings.

The first century by a Pakistan opener in England came at a cost of 251 balls, with 13 fours.

It followed his previous career-best 135 against Sri Lanka in December in Karachi and 100 in Bangladesh in February in



Pakistan's Shan Masood raises his bat to celebrate scoring a century during the second day of the first Test. PCB/Twitter

Rawalpindi.

The partnership with Khan was aggressive and frustrating England until Khan came down the pitch at spinner Dom Bess, mis-hit and Joe Root took the catch at mid-on.

Archer trapped Yasir Shah on 5 and Mohammad Abbas on the next ball for a duck. Knowing he was running out of partners, Masood attacked and moved to his best Test score

winding Bess over midwicket, then smashing him back over his head for another six.

1st Test, Day 3
Live from 3:30pm IST
SONY SIX NETWORK

Afridi was with him at tea on 1 not out.

NO PROBLEM IN TOURING PAK

England head coach Chris Silverwood said he had no problem in touring Pakistan for a short T20 series if it can be managed ahead of the side's scheduled visit to the sub-continental nation in 2022.

England have avoided touring Pakistan since 2005-06, citing security concerns but of late the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has expressed hope of visiting the country in two years' time.

"For me it's great that it's a topic of conversation again. We are looking to get back there," Silverwood told Sky Sports on the opening day of the first Test.

"Personally, I'd have no problem going," he said.

Silverwood hinted that things are on course for a pre-T20 tour, saying England batsmen are raring to have a go at the placed wickets in Pakistan.

"I've never been so it would be nice to go and have a look. And I know our batsmen are looking forward to batting on their wickets. We are getting there (in terms of planning)," he said.

Silverwood's statement came after Pakistan Cricket Board CEO Wasim Khan requested the ECB to consider sending a T20 team to the troubled nation ahead of their next scheduled visit in 2022.

PL revert to 3 substitutions

LONDON: The Premier

League will revert to a maximum of three substitutions in matches next season with England's top division clubs deciding to no longer allow two additional changes.

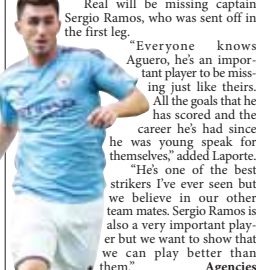
Clubs previously backed the use of five substitutions to deal with the congested schedule after the league's pandemic-enforced 100-day shutdown ended in June.

Despite the International

Football Association Board

allowing the temporary use of five substitutions next season, the league won't be adopting it. The rule had been seen to favor bigger clubs with more depth in their squads.

A maximum of seven substitutes will be allowed on the bench but only three can be brought on when the new season begins around Sept 12.



Mithali defends BCCI's stand, says foreign stars misjudged situation

NEW DELHI: India ODI captain

Mithali Raj totally understands the frustration of foreign international players on overlapping of T20 Challenge and WBBL dates but firmly believes that BCCI "did its best" to fit in the four-match tournament in these unusual COVID-19 times.

While the foreign players, led by Australian star player Alyssa Healy, questioned the timing of the exhibition games as it is clashing with the WBBL, the BCCI was also criticised for not going ahead with the women's tour of England in September.

Asked about her thoughts on the two subjects, Mithali spoke her mind.

"People tend to judge quickly. The BCCI president (Sourav

Ganguly), secretary (Jay Shah) and IPL GC chief (Brijesh Patel) have been very encouraging towards women's cricket."

"I personally thought we may not even get to play the Challenger trophy (domestic event) because even the IPL was in doubt but these games are most welcome," Mithali said.

On comments of top international players like Healy, Suzie Bates, Rachael Haynes expressing their displeasure, the Indian legend tried putting things into perspective.

"I know a lot of people (foreign players) have questioned the timing of it but these are not normal circumstances."

No matter what the situation, the IPL has a p-

pens in April-May and doesn't collide with WBBL (in Australia).

"But these are unusual circumstances, the window (tentative) November 1-10) was a short one and the BCCI did the best it could."

The WBBL is scheduled from October 17 to November 29.

"(Their frustration) is understandable. They (foreign players) also want to be part of the event. I too want to be the best players in the league." But the situation is not normal. Right now, there is hardly any sporting activity in India and to have the matches before the IPL, it would require players to be in match mode. We are yet to start training.

"My own state has just allowed the opening of gyms. So for me to get match ready will take time. The BCCI has given us that window and we will have to work around it this year," she said.

PTI

Tai has no problem with Oly postponement



KUALA LUMPUR: World No 2 shuttler Tai Tzu-ying has said she didn't have any problems with Tokyo Olympics getting postponed as according to her, she has more time to prepare and end her drought at the showpiece event.

Tai Tzu-ying was initially set to be hosted in July this year but due to coronavirus pandemic, it will now take place

from July 23 till August 8 in 2021.

Despite her constant successes on the BWF circuit, Tai Tzu is yet to win a medal at senior international level which includes Olympics and World Cups. At London 2012 and Rio 2016, she crashed out in the last-16 round itself.

"I didn't have a problem with (postponement). I can use this time as a period of rest because it's been a long and tight schedule of high-level competition," Tai Tzu said on the BWF's *Badminton Ultimate Feature*. "It's a good time to rest and have even more time to prepare (for the Olympics)."

Tai Tzu had earlier hinted that she might call time on her career after the end of 2020 season. But with the badminton calendar destroyed due to coronavirus pandemic, all such retirement talks have been put to rest for the time being.

"I will play until the end of next season before I revisit the decision. As of now I want to finish next season's schedule," the former World No 1 said. IANS

BCCI, CA to discuss on swapping of T20 WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

The main agenda of the meeting is scheduling of ICC tournaments including the

women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand early next year. It is expected that some decisions will be taken, an ICC Board member said.

The ICC World T20 which was scheduled to be held in Australia from October 18 this year was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making way for the cash rich Indian Premier League, to be held from September 19 in the United Arab Emirates.

It is expected that Cricket Australia will like to host the T20 World Cup in 2021 as it had already started preparations and wouldn't like to wait for two years

but BCCI also doesn't want to forego its right to host the tournament in 2021.

"The BCCI was originally scheduled to host the T20 World Cup in 2021 and they would like to go ahead. Another reason being, hosting a T20 World Cup in 2022 and then a 50 over global event within a gap of just one year. It would be an overkill," another ICC board member said.

However for Cricket Australia, it also has a few points in its favour.

"The ICC website states that those who have booked match tickets for Australia World T20 event should wait till further announcement. The reason being CA wants to host the event next year," he said.

It is also learnt that there is a good chance that the eight-team Women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand in February-March 2021 will go ahead as per schedule.

CA mull moving Boxing Day Test from MCG

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Cricket Australia is contemplating moving the traditional Boxing Day Test against India from Melbourne to Adelaide due to rising COVID-19 cases in the state of Victoria.

According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Adelaide has emerged as a frontrunner to host the December 26-30 marquee fixture.

In this regard, CA chairman Earl Eddings has called for an urgent convening of the national cricket cabinet next week to discuss ways for smooth conduct of the series and avoid losing a staggering 300 million Australian dollars.

The situation in Victoria is

not good and a senior cricket official told the country's leading daily that there is no way the current schedule can go ahead as planned with the state border restrictions in place amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Victoria has so far reported over 13,000 positive cases for the coronavirus besides 170 deaths.

As far as the other Australian states are concerned, New South Wales comes a distant second with close to 4,000 positive cases. South Australia, whose capital is Adelaide, has so far reported 457 confirmed cases with 445 of them recovered.

CA had earlier said that the existing schedule is subject to change.