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LUCKNOW, FRIDAY AUGUST 7, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3

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Chinese intrusion info taken off Govt portal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Defense 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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Document was on Defence Ministry website about Chinese transgressions since Tuesday

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 admitted 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.

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 70,6779 have died so far. Brazil on July 17 Brazil 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 30,3946 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.

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

AP

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	2,897	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.

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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 Mehreshi.

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.

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BJP Sarpanch killed by ultras

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Sending out a chilling Sreminder 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 P7

Guj cadre DIG heads CBI SIT on Sushant

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

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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 Sasidhar, 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 relat-



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

PTI

ed 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 has been registered under Indian Penal Code sections relating to criminal conspiracy, abetment of suicide, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement, theft, criminal breach of trust, cheating and criminal intimidation.

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'Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi' actor Samir found hanging in Mumbai home

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Television actor Samir Sharma, best known for his roles in "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" and "Left Right Left", was found dead in his home in suburban Malad where he lived alone, police said on Thursday.

The 44-year-old was found hanging from the fan of the kitchen on Wednesday night, police officials said. He may have been dead for two days before he was found hanging, they said. "We have not found any suicide note at the spot. It

seems to be suicide case. It is suspected that he hanged himself 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 Rishyet Ghar Pyar Ke" and "Wo Rehne Wali Mehlon Ki", lived in a rented flat in Chincholi Bunder locality in Malad (West). His body was discovered by the building's watchman, who peeped through the kitchen window and saw him hanging.

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SAMEER SHARMA
MAY 3, 1976 — AUG 5, 2020

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.

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Relief for Gehlot as Raj HC bench dismisses petition

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, the numbers of the other side will touch 97.

Continued on Pg 4

CAPSULE

LANKA POLLS: RAJAPAKSA HEADING FOR GRAND WIN

Colombo: Sri Lanka's strongman Mahinda Rajapaksa was poised to stage a political comeback on Thursday as his party took an early lead and was set for a big victory in the twice-postponed general elections, according to results announced so far.

FIVE KILLED AS RAIN BATTERS KERALA

Thiruvananthapuram: 5 people were killed as intermittent heavy rains and strong winds battered parts of Kerala on Thursday.

Muslims fear VHP, RSS may target Kashi and Mathura

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the foundation stone was laid for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, a buzz is going around Muslims that Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) will now intensify their demand for demolishing mosques in Mathura and Varanasi to build temples there after the construction of Ram temple starts.

The murmurs started after BJP leader Vinay Katiyar said

that mobilisation for temple building at Kashi and Mathura would gain momentum once the construction of Ram temple started in Ayodhya.

“Temple building at Kashi and Mathura is very much on our agenda. We will sit and discuss the ways to achieve our goal. It is not an easy task and it is going to take time,” Katiyar said in an interview.

Mathura is considered the birthplace of Lord Krishna and a mosque called Shahi eidgah stands adjacent to the Krishnabhoomi temple where

Hindus believe Lord Krishna was born. Both temple and mosque share one wall. Hindus believe that Mughal emperor Aurangzeb had demolished a part of the temple to build the mosque there. Ditto is the case in Varanasi where Gyanvapi Mosque and Kashi Vishwanath temple, a temple of Lord Shiva, share a wall.

“A temple is coming up in Ayodhya after the Supreme Court order and we welcome that. The Narendra Modi government should assure Muslims that now Hindu out-

fits will not ask for construction of temples in Varanasi and Mathura after demolishing the existing mosques there,” main litigant in Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, Iqbal Ansari, said from Ayodhya.

The fear among Muslims is justified because during Babri mosque demolition, a slogan “Yeh to kewal jhanki hai, Kashi, Mathura baaki hai,” (This is just a trailer, Varanasi and Mathura are still left)” reverberated the plains of North India.

Riaz Ahmad, an advocate in Lucknow said that fear was

always lurking down the corner that now the VHP would go for either Mathura or Varanasi.

“A beginning has been made in Varanasi where the buildings surrounding Kashi Vishwanath and Gyanvapi Mosque have been demolished in the name of beautification, thus making the mosque vulnerable,” he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who represents Varanasi in Lok Sabha, has launched a Rs 600-crore Kashi Vishwanath corridor project that will build a pathway from the temple

premises to the banks of the river Ganga.

Sayid Yasin, general secretary of Gyanvapi mosque, said that a part of the Gyanvapi mosque’s surrounding structure was destroyed last year during the project work. “We were alert and opposed the demolition. The government has since rebuilt it. The incident has made Muslim very cautious about government move,” he said.

Riaz said during Ayodhya hearing in Supreme Court, a section of Muslim side had

made a settlement offer saying they were ready to forego claim on Ayodhya if the government promised to protect mosques in Mathura and Varanasi but Hindus refused to negotiate.

The Supreme Court in its order of November 2019 has allotted five acre land for construction of mosque. The land is around 30 km from the place where the original Babri masjid stood.

Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board Chairman Zafar Ahmed Farooqi declared formation of a trust named

Indo Islamic Cultural Foundation for building the mosque and developing other facilities for the benefit of the general public in Ayodhya.

“The donation is bound to pour in. Mosques are always built with public support. We will open a bank account and ask people to donate for the construction of the mosque,” Farooqi said.

Rakesh Yadav, pradhan of Dhannipur, where the mosque will come up, hoped that the mosque would transform the village into a tourist spot.

Dalit family first to get ‘Bhumi Pujan’ prasad sent by CM Yogi

PTI ■ AYODHYA

A Dalit family is the first to get the prasad sent by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath after the ‘bhumi puja’ of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, an official said on Thursday.

The prasad included lad- doos, a copy of the Ramcharitmanas and tulsi mala, Chief Minister’s Media Advisor Shalabh Mani Tripathi told PTI. He said the first prasad was sent to the Mahaveer’s family in Ayodhya.

Mahaveer, a masion who lives at the Suthati locality of Ayodhya, was visited by Adityanath during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Adityanath had food at his house and interacted with his family, after the Election Commission banned him from campaigning for 72 hours for his Ali-Bajrang Bali remarks.

Reacting to it, Mahaveer said, “I am a Dalit. The CM sent first prasad to me and my

family. I am thankful to him that he remembered me.”

“It’s a double delight for us. Firstly, our dream of a Ram temple has been fulfilled. Secondly, we got the first prasad. We hope that now the caste discrimination in the state will end and everyone will think of development and welfare of all,” he said.

When contacted, a senior Ayodhya official said due to the COVID-19 protocol, very few people were invited for the ‘bhumi puja’.

“Now, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust and the administration are distributing ‘prasad’ among the maximum number of people. In Ayodhya, the first ‘prasad’ was sent to the Mahaveer’s family on the directions of the chief minister,” the official said.

He said all those invited to the groundbreaking ceremony were given a silver coin having pictures of the Ram darbar and the trust’s logo.

Devotees offer prayers at Hanumangarhi

PTI ■ AYODHYA

As devotees entered Ayodhya’s Hanumangarhi temple on Thursday, a day after PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation of a Ram temple at a site nearby, a constable could be seen keeping tabs on them to ensure that they follow social distancing norms.

People were seen taking a dip in the Saryu river while some excited youngsters took selfies as the city woke up to a cloudy and windy morning.

Some devotees at the Saryu’s Naya ghat were seen offering prayers to an idol of Lord Hanuman.

Shops too opened in the vicinity of Hanumangarhi after the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple on Wednesday with traders hoping that its construction will benefit their business.

Forty-seven-year-old Shriram, a constable in the Provincial Armed Constabulary, says the number of devotees seemed more on Thursday. They might have waiting for the August 5 event to get over and then offer prayers at the temple, the constable who hails from Uttar Pradesh’s Gorakhpur says.

Shriram mans a picket near the Hanuman temple for eight hours a day and he says they stand guard on a rotational basis. He has three sons



and a daughter and says they visit him whenever they come to Ayodhya.

Meanwhile, the life seemed to return to its normal routine.

Most shops selling prasad in the vicinity of the Hanumangarhi temple were open. Shopkeepers were seen asking devotees to buy prasad from them.

Amit Kumar, who sells the items used in worshipping, says he opened his shop after five days.

“Saturday and Sunday were the weekend lockdown while we kept our shops closed on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday,” he says hoping for a brisk business.

Other shopkeepers in the area were of the view that the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya will benefit them.

Rakesh Modanwal, who sells framed photographs of various

Hindu deities, said, “Devotees coming for the past 10 days are demanding the photo of Ram Lalla Virajmaan. At this point of time, it is the most sought after photo among the customers.”

Cloth merchant Ravi Chandra Gupta, who has a shop in the bylane leading to the Ramjanmabhoomi, says, “Once the Ram temple is built, we hope that it will benefit us.”

Sweetmeat shop owner Rakesh Kumar too says the construction of the Ram temple will have a “positive impact” on the shops around the Hanumangarhi temple.

Another sweets shop owner, Arvind Kumar, says, “We are running the shop for the past three to four generations. The construction of a grand Ram temple will definitely help us to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Trust for building mosque in process of setting up office

Lucknow (PTI): The Trust constituted by the Uttar Pradesh State Sunni Central Waqf Board to construct a mosque on five acres of land in Ayodhya is in the process of setting up an office in the state capital, an official said on Thursday.

He said the office of the Trust — Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) — will be functional in 10 to 12 days.

“Our Trust has been formed. As per rules, we have applied for a PAN card in its name and awaiting its delivery, after which we will be meeting online and pass a resolution for opening a bank account of the Trust,” IICF Secretary Athar Hussain told PTI.

“We had met last month online. As of now, we have identified office space and renovation work is going on there. It will take 10-12 days for the work to complete. After which our office will be functional,” he said.

The state government has allotted five acres of land in Ayodhya’s Dhannipur village for the construction of the mosque on the directive of the Supreme Court. The IICF will oversee the construction of a mosque, Indo-Islamic research centre, library and hospital in the land.

A member of the Trust said, “Ayodhya District Magistrate Anuj Kumar Jha has formally handed over the possession of the land for the mosque to the Trust members. We have got a cer-

tified copy of the revenue record.”

The Supreme Court had in November last year paved the way for the construction of a Ram Temple by a Trust at the disputed site in Ayodhya, and directed the Centre to allot an alternative 5-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a “prominent” place in the holy town in Uttar Pradesh.

The residents of Dhannipur, where the land has been allotted, are eagerly waiting for the Trust to start construction of a mosque.

Mohammad Izhar, a resident of Dhannipur village, said, “It’s good that the land was allotted here. We are happy and hope that the work will start soon. Finally, our village will develop. We hope so.”

Another resident, Mohammad Imran also expressed similar views saying it is good that besides a “mosque we will also get a hospital”.

The Trust will have 15 members, of which names of nine have been declared and rest will be finalised soon. “We will co-opt the remaining six trustees. The secretary of the Trust will also be its official spokesperson,” a member of the Trust said.

Notably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday laid the foundation of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. The programme was organised by the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust.

CM stresses on proactive approach to tame coronavirus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officials to take COVID-19 pandemic as a challenge and intensify the fight against it, saying a proactive approach is required to negate the coronavirus threat.

Presiding over a high level unlock review meeting at his official residence here on Thursday, the CM directed officials to pay attention on improving the treatment and control of COVID-19 in the districts of Kanpur Nagar, Jhansi, Varanasi, Gorakhpur and Prayagraj.

“Send experts from SGPGIMS and KGMU to camp in Kanpur Nagar to guide and supplement the existing health infrastructure,” he said and asked the additional chief secretaries of Health and Medical Education departments to visit Level-2 and Level-3 Covid hospitals of Lucknow district and give a report about vacant beds,” Yogi said.

The CM further directed officials to strengthen surveillance activities in the state, including Kanpur Nagar. He asked them to improve contact tracing and door-to-door survey activities. He also instructed them to maintain caution in the containment zones and medically screen every person in such zones.

He asked the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) at districts to maintain communication with the home isolated patients and get feedback on their condition.

“The CM Helpline can also be used in this work. Expedite enforcement activities for compulsory use of masks,” the



CM said.

The CM asked officials to ensure adequate availability of beds in Level-2 and Level-3 Covid hospitals as well as proper arrangements for medical employees and medical equipment. He said ventilators should be available in Level-2 and Level-3 Covid hospitals as per the norms. He asked officials to ramp up Covid testing and increase testing through RT-PCR.

“Prevention is the single most important thing in treatment of COVID-19 hence the people should be made aware of it. Infected persons should be taken to hospitals and treated according to the symptoms,” the CM said.

He directed the DG Medical Health and DG Medical Education to furnish details of increase in the capacity of beds of Level-2 and Level-3 Covid hospitals. He

also asked the officials to get feedback from the DMs about the nodal officer deployed for ICCC. Similarly, the feedback on nodal officers for ambulance services should be taken from the CMO of the concerning district, he said.

The CM directed officials to launch effective rescue and relief measures in flood-affected areas. He said the affected persons should be provided every type of help and relief and rescue measures should be briefed in the media regularly. For the purpose of employment, the district level employment offices should be activated.

Those present in the meeting included the Medical Education Minister Suresh Khanna, Chief Secretary RK. Tiwari, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Alok Tandon, Agriculture Production Commissioner Alok Sinha, Additional Chief Secretary (Home and Information) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Sanjiv Mittal, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister SP Goyal, Director General of Police Hitesh Chandra Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad, Additional Chief Secretary (Medical Education) Dr. Rajneesh Dubey, Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj) Manoj Kumar Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Navneet Sehgal, Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devesh Chaturvedi, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Sanjay Prasad, Secretary to Chief Minister Alok Kumar and other senior officers.

BSP leader held for calling Mahakal temple a ‘hub of terrorists’

Lucknow (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh Police on Thursday arrested Bahujan Samaj Party corporator Saddam Husen for allegedly calling the Mahakal temple in Madhya Pradesh’s Ujjain a “hub of terrorists” and posting controversial content on social media.

Earlier, an FIR was lodged against Saddam Husen for calling the Mahakal temple “a hub of terrorists” after the arrest of Vikas Dubey, an accused in the Kanpur ambush case, from the temple premises. “A case was registered against Husen on July 10 and now he has been arrested,” said Abhishek, Superintendent of Police at Aligarh.

It may be recalled that dreaded gangster Vikas Dubey was arrested from Mahakal temple in Ujjain on July 9. The FIR was lodged on the basis of a complaint received by Bharatiya Janata Party’s youth wing leader and district president from Aligarh, Mukesh Lodhi. “I have filed the complaint against BSP leader Saddam Husen for his statement on social media. The day Vikas Dubey was arrested from Mahakal temple in Ujjain, he gave the statement that the Ujjain Mahakal temple is a hub of terrorists, hurting the sentiments of Hindus across the country,” Lodhi had told a news agency.

“The Ujjain temple is a famous jyotirlinga and this statement is an attempt to disrupt social harmony. I request the administration to arrest him immediately and take strict action against him,” he had added.

Dubey was killed on July 10 in an encounter when he apparently tried to flee from the custody of Special Task Force of Uttar Pradesh Police, after the vehicle in which he was being brought from Madhya Pradesh overturned after skidding on the road because of heavy rain. ADG Prashant Kumar had later said: “After the car overturned, Vikas Dubey tried to snatch police weapon and attempted to flee. There was retaliatory firing by the police in which he was injured. He was pronounced dead after being taken to hospital.” Dubey and his gang were responsible for killing eight police personnel in an ambush in Bikru village on July 3.

Sinha’s elevation as LG a move to woo Bihar’s Bhumihars

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The elevation of former Railway Minister Manoj Sinha, a three time MP, as the new Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir is seen as a political move of the BJP to woo the upper caste voters, particularly the Bhumihars, in the ensuing crucial Bihar assembly elections later this year.

Sinha, a prominent Bhumihar leader of eastern Uttar Pradesh close to Bihar, was also a front runner for the post of Uttar Pradesh chief minister after the Bharatiya Janata Party won the state assembly elections in 2017 but failed in the last leg against Yogi Adityanath.

The former Minister of State for Railways is also considered to be close to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sinha was defeated by Afzal Ansari, brother of don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. After his defeat in the Lok Sabha polls, there were speculation of Sinha getting Rajya Sabha seat from UP but it was

denied.

Sinha is the fourth politician of Uttar Pradesh to be appointed as the constitutional head of the state. Kalraj Mishra is Governor of Rajasthan, Phagu Chauhan of Bihar, Baby Rani Maurya of Uttarakhand and now Sinha of J&K.

Lalji Tandon, who was Governor of MP, and died recently, was also from UP.

The IIT-BHU alumnus earned the sobriquet of Vikas Purush among the locals of Ghazipur when he was the Railway minister in the Narendra Modi 1.0 government .

The three-time BJP MP from Ghazipur constituency went for admission in civil engineering at the Banaras Hindu University in mid-1970s during the Emergency era. Soon after this Sinha became an active member of Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the youth wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party. By the age of 23, in the year 1982, Sinha stepped into student politics and became the president of BHU.

He contested his first Lok

Sabha election in 1998 from Ghazipur constituency and then repeated his win in 1999.

The third time Manoj Sinha won from Ghazipur Lok Sabha constituency was in 2014 during the Modi wave. He was made minister and was named as the star campaigner of the BJP during the 2017 UP Assembly polls.

CM CONGRATULATES MANOJ SINHA

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has congratulated former Railway minister Manoj Sinha for being appointed as Lt. Governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

In a message on Thursday, Yogi said: “A committed public leader, an able administrator full of organisational skill, my congratulations to Mr Manoj Sinha for being appointed as the Lt. Governor of J&K.”

“I think under his leadership J&K will set up a new milestone in development. My best wishes,” the UP CM said

Assembly session to follow Covid guidelines: Dikshit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Hriday Naryan Dikshit said here on Thursday that the Assembly session would commence from August 20 and all the members of the House would strictly follow the

guidelines for preventing the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and the Covid protocol.

He said the session would be held as per social distancing protocol for the COVID-19 pandemic as announced by the Central government.

Dikshit said a meeting of the leaders of all parties was convened here on Thursday where the issue was discussed threadbare. He said the meeting was convened to discuss the strategy for the smooth conduct of session.

Besides Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna, leaders of different parties also attended the meeting. The speaker said Rakesh Singh of Samajwadi party, Lalji Verma of Bahujan Samaj Party attended the meeting. He said Aradhana Mishra, leader of the Congress, communicated over phone that she

was unable to attend the meeting as her private secretary was infected by the coronavirus.

He said leader of Apna Dal Neel Ratan Patel and Suheldeo Bhartiya Samaj Party leader Om Prakash Rajbhar also communicated to the Assembly secretariat that they were unable to attend the meeting for certain unavoidable reasons.

The decision for the monsoon session of the Assembly was taken by the state cabinet held through circulation of the cabinet note on July 27.

During the brief monsoon session expected to have 2 sittings, the UP legislature would pass the first supplementary budget of the current fiscal 2020-21 around a dozen of Bills for which Ordinances have been promulgated when the houses were not in session.

The UP government, due

to pandemic, has borrowed heavily from the bonds market and by the end of last week of March 2020, the state government had raised over Rs 13,000 crore which is 96 per cent of the total borrowings to be made by the state government during 2020-21. The money was drawn from the state contingency fund and the government needs to get the legislative approval for recompment of the State contingency fund.

The monsoon session is the constitutional obligation for the state government as there cannot be gap of six months or more between the two sessions of the State assembly. The budget session of the UP assembly was adjourned sine die on February 28 last; hence the next session will have to be called before August 28.

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Covid Level-2 hosps set for upgrade

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Covid Level-2 hospitals will be upgraded to plus levels to enhance facilities for the patients, Chief Medical Officer Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh said on Thursday. The exercise for upgradation of Lok Bandhu in Ashiyana and another in Sarhamau started on Thursday.

Director of Lok Bandhu Hospital Dr Madhu Saxena said that in the plus-2 levels, there would be six more ventilators. "Currently, we have seven ventilators. We have a total of 300 beds but 225 are in use at the moment," she said.

The hospital can only be upgraded to plus levels and not Level-3 because it does not have any superspecialist, which is an essential requirement. The hospital will start functioning as an upgraded one in a day or two. "We have submitted our requirements to the HR department in this regard," she pointed out. Five ventilators will be added to Sarhamau hospital.

A senior official at the CMO office said anaesthetists are essentially required when the hospitals are upgraded because they assist when ventilation or intubation is required. He said they would soon be submitting a proposal to the Health department for having a pool of anaesthetists and physicians so that they can be available when required.

"We have to manage with limited resources of government staff because most of them have taken exemption from Covid duties citing reasons like age and co-morbidities. Even if walk-in interviews are arranged, no one is likely to come because of the corona scare, not just about themselves but their families as well," he said. The official said they had been asked to identify the anaesthetists and then make a concrete proposal for maintaining a pool of these specialists who could be called as per the requirement by other hospitals.

"We have a limited number of anaesthetist because

each Covid hospital has 2-3 of them and they are also required in a maternity hospital — a minimum of two anaesthetists are required for round-the-clock duty at a maternity hospital. Ideally, there should be four anaesthetists at each of these hospitals," he said. He pointed out that the younger staff were also exempting themselves from Covid duties, so they were getting the optimum level of work done by motivating them and sensitising about the limited resources.

Meanwhile, ICU-1 incharge (SGPGI) Dr Zia Hashim said the number of patients was increasing, as was the demand of ICU, since most of the patients had severe oxygen requirements.

Most of the patients require non-invasive ventilation or high flow of oxygen," he said. He added that they had introduced high-flow nasal canula for the patients. "It delivers oxygen at a very high rate, which is more than 50 litres per minute," he pointed

out. Asked about the increasing number of corona deaths in the city, he said that the disease causes small blood clots in lungs and some of the clots may also occur in the heart, leading to cardiac arrest. "This virus also makes the blood more susceptible to coagulation," he added.

Dr Hashim said patients should reach the hospital before the disease becomes severe. "If patients are intubated in time, they can be extubated in time too. But, if they are already on ventilator at the time of admission, extubation becomes difficult," he explained.

About post recovery, he said they were aware of patients who required oxygen for a long time. "This may be due to scarring of the lungs. One of the patients who was discharged required oxygen for a period of two weeks even after he tested negative and we discharged him after five weeks," he pointed out.

Dr Hashim said some of them had pneumonic patches

for a long time. He said they were in the process of documenting these cases which could be monitored and taken up for research later.

"There is a complication which occurs in some of the patients after recovery, which is called organising pneumonia. It is very common after viral diseases and we are seeing that this organising pneumonia is very common after recovery from Covid-19," he said.

Giving an example, he said that there was one patient who had been at the hospital for five weeks and although she had tested negative, her oxygen requirement remained the same. He said they currently have three such patients.

Meanwhile, Dr Sudhir Singh of KGMU said that on June 17, a 47-year-old woman was admitted to the Medicine ward for treatment of brain TB and later tested positive for coronavirus. She was shifted to the Covid ward and after hectic efforts put in by the staff and doctors, she recovered.

Bodies of youth, girl found in hotel room



Kin of deceased inconsolable after bodies were recovered from a hotel room

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bodies of a youth and a girl were recovered from a hotel room in Krishna Nagar on Wednesday afternoon, fuelling speculations of foul play. The youth was found hanging from the ceiling while the girl was lying dead on the bed. However, police ruled out foul play and claimed that they ended their lives as their parents were against their marriage.

As per reports, the staff of Moment Hotel in Krishna Nagar grew suspicious after the guests staying in room number 310 did not check out by afternoon as scheduled. They made calls but the same went unanswered. The staff later reached the scene and found the doors bolted from inside.

They opened the doors using another key and were shocked to see the youth hanging and the girl lying dead on

bed. The staff called the police and a team consisting of forensic experts reached there.

On the basis of identities noted in the hotel visitors' book, the youth was identified as Rahul of Krishna Nagar while the girl as Megha (name changed) of Sarojininar. She was a student of BSc-III.

Initial probe into the case revealed that Megha was reported missing on Wednesday and her father had lodged a case against Rahul, accusing him of luring her into eloping with him.

In his complaint, he had stated that Rahul lured the girl into running away from the house around 11 am on Wednesday and later both switched off their mobile phones. As per girl's father, Rahul was mad about her for the last couple of years and he had secured her photographs which he later morphed indecently. Girl's father said Rahul

was harassing her and forcing her to meet him.

"When we confronted him, he abused and threatened us. We contacted Rahul's family after the sudden disappearance of Megha and were told that Rahul had eloped with her," girl's father said. He added that Rahul had called his mother to share his plan.

"Prima facie, it appears that the girl ended her life after which Rahul also committed suicide. Another possibility is that Rahul killed the girl and then ended his life. There were bruises on Rahul's hands and other body parts. The bodies have been sent for autopsy and further probe is underway. No suicide note was recovered from the room. Rahul had mentioned his name and introduced Megha as his wife. For the past few years, Rahul was in relation with the girl," Krishna Nagar SHO DK Upadhyaya said.



People appear to be caring two hoots for social distancing at Aminabad market on Thursday

Pioneer

'Govt coming up with investor-friendly polices'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even under the current geopolitical crisis the whole world is going through, Uttar Pradesh, with its industry-friendly framework, is on the verge of matching the business standards like those of Singapore, Cabinet minister Sidharth Nath Singh said while speaking at a virtual interactive session organised by PHD Chambers of Commerce and Industry on Thursday.

He said that the state government was coming up with various new investor-friendly policies to encourage the start-ups and also ensure ease of doing business. The objective of the webinar was to focus on promoting and boosting invest-

ment in various sectors in the state. The webinar was also aimed at strengthening the trade-ties between India and Singapore and to eventually assist in channelising more industrialisation and exploring better business opportunities in various sectors of the state. The minister also stressed on the need to form a joint working group between UP and Singapore and to promote trade in various sectors.

High Commissioner of India to Singapore, P Kumaran shed light on how the bilateral relations between Singapore and India have evolved in creating a win-win situation for both the countries and how Singapore is acting as a bridge between India and ASEAN

countries. He said with the two nations enjoying extensive cultural and commercial relations, India and Singapore have signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and strategic relationship agreement in order to increase trade, investments and economic cooperation. He added that over the last two decades, Singapore has positioned itself as the hub of India's economic, political and strategic relationships in Southeast Asia. Kumaran complimented business growth in Uttar Pradesh and said that with the largest skilled manpower and large land-banks, the state has enormous business potential to emerge as the next financial hub.

Gang of fraudsters busted; nine held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of nine persons, the cyber cell of Lucknow police claimed to have busted a gang that operated its call centres in Deoghar, Dumka and Girideeh of Jharkhand and had duped several to the tune of crores.

Those arrested were identified as Rupal Mandal, Gopal Mandal, Lallan Mandal, Yoganand Prasad, Pramod Kumar Mandal, Neeraj Mandal, Harihar Mandal, Ranjeet Mandal and Rahul Arya. Police got the names of 11 more members of the gang and launched a manhunt for them. The team recovered Rs 3 lakh in cash besides seven mobile phones and a laptop.

All the gang members are youngsters from different families but similar clan. The gang had duped several people of around Rs 3 crore, as per evidence available with the police.

The gang members used above 50 SIMs for IP use and more than 70 SIMs for making calls to their targets. The accused would introduce themselves as insurance agents or bank employees. The police recovered KYC forms for banks in Mumbai, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat. The gang leader and members own palatial buildings, bungalows

and plots at prominent locations in Deoghar, Asansol and Dumka cities.

As per police, Pramod (arrested), Rajesh and Suman (both absconding) are the gang leaders and they would have all the control in their hands. The police said the accused had the contact lists of pensioners and retired judicial officials in PDF format. Explaining the modus operandi, the police said the gang used keypad phones to call their targets. They used to lure people with little knowledge about online banking.

They would get the internet banking option activated and then get the money deposited as FD by applying online. They would take loan against the FDs and get the money transferred into another accounts and withdraw later. The police stumbled upon the gang while investigating a case of fraud in which a government employee had lodged a case stating that unidentified miscreants had got Rs 53 lakh transferred into another bank account while using his FD. The police got a lead about the gang during investigation and a joint team of cyber cell and Hazratganj police reached Saaljobandari village in Dumka and nabbed the accused.

Newly-wed killed for dowry

Lucknow (PNS): A young woman was killed allegedly by her husband and in-laws for dowry in Ashiyana. Her parents were told that she died of some illness on Wednesday. Sister of the deceased lodged a case in this connection.

As per reports, Savita (20) was married to Sonu of Usari village in Bangla Bazaar locality. Sonu is a vegetable vendor.

Savita's sister Mayadevi of Nigoha said she got a call from Sonu and was informed that Savita had taken ill seriously. "I reached the house immediately and found Savita dead. Savita's husband and in-laws killed her for dowry but they pretended that she succumbed to some illness," Mayadevi alleged. She alleged that Sonu, his elder brother and other members in the family used to torture Savita for dowry.

"Savita got married on May 4 and we gave dowry to Sonu as per demands. But Sonu and others in his family were not satisfied and were demanding a motorcycle and cash," Mayadevi alleged.

Meanwhile, a youth ended his life at his house in Banthra on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday.

As per reports, Sonu (25) of Kharwara village in the area was found hanging from an iron rod around 1 am on Thursday. His mother said Sonu was suffering from stomach-related ailment and was very upset over that. The police said they recovered a suicide note which was kept under a pillow in the room.

"The deceased had stated that he was got fed up with the ailment and did not want to live any longer," the police said.

Waseem Rizvi slams Owaisi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board chairman Syed Waseem Rizvi on Thursday slammed All India Majlis-e-Itehadul Muslimen (AIMIM) chief Asaduddin Owaisi for his comments on the commencement of construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Rizvi said the Hyderabad MP should move to Pakistan and let the Muslims in India live peacefully.

The Shia Waqf Board chairman asked the AIMIM chief to keep silence on the issue of Ram temple in Ayodhya as the Supreme Court had delivered its judgement on the disputed issue.

He said the apex court

ruling as per the Indian Constitution had paved the way for the construction of Ram temple, which was due for several centuries. Rizvi asked Owaisi to stop promoting hatred among the two communities by his provocative statements as it could lead to communal discord, violence and bloodshed. "Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar and former al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden have been killed, Pakistan and Afghanistan need you. Let the Muslims in India live peacefully," Rizvi said.

The Shia Waqf Board chairman's sharp reactions came a day after Owaisi said, "Today is the day of victory of Hindutva and majoritarianism and defeat of democracy

and secularism". The AIMIM chief made the comment while referring to the bhoomi puja for Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The Hyderabad MP on Wednesday had also said that "by attending the groundbreaking ceremony in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not only laid the foundation of a Mandir but also the foundation of a Hindu Rashtra".

Ending the wait of centuries, PM Modi on Wednesday laid the foundation of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. He along with several revered saints and priests from across the country performed the bhoomi puja for the temple at the spot where Hindus believe Lord Ram was born.

Survivors take part in breast cancer support meet

Lucknow (PNS): The department of Endocrine Surgery, King George's Medical University, organised a virtual 'Lucknow breast cancer support meet' on Thursday. Convener Dr Anand Mishra stressed on the importance of adhering to personal measures suggested by health authorities to tide over the corona crisis.

Senior dietician at KGMU, Dr Shalini Shrivastav made an informative presentation on immunity-boosting traditional diets. Cost-effective, readily available, easy to cook and tasty options were described, which is a necessity in corona times.

The highlight was that it was a meeting for the survivors by the survivors. Kanchal Rawat, Anita Lal, Anju Verma, Savitri Agarwal, Deepa Gupta and Beena Mishra made short cultural presentations ranging from songs, dances to pep talks and cooking. All the presentations were based on the theme 'Saavan'.



An artisan making preparations for Janmashtami at Reserve Police Lines on Thursday

Pioneer

South Asian Enterprises Ltd.
Regd Office: Mikky House, K-Block, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur-208011 Phone:0512-2608859
Corporate Office: 2nd Floor, 13, Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065
Ph: 011-46656666, Fax: 011-46656699
CIN: L91990UP1990PLC011753
Email: southasianenterprises@gmail.com
website: www.sael.co.in

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given in terms of Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Friday, 28th August, 2020, inter-alia to consider the Unaudited Financial Results for the quarter ended on 30th June, 2020.
This notice is also available on the concerned stock exchange's website
www.bseindia.co.in, and Company's website www.sael.co.in

for South Asian Enterprises Ltd.
US Audit Compliance Officer
Place: New Delhi
Date: 06.08.2020
M. No.: A34144

Bank of Baroda
Branch : B.N. Road, Lucknow
Nataraj Complex, 11, B.N. Road, Kaiserbagh, Lucknow
Email- vjbnro@bankofbaroda.com
Mob. 7565003608

Sale Notice for Immovable Properties "APPENDIX-IV-A (See Proviso to Rule 8(6))
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso of Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, Constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Bank of Baroda, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of below mentioned account/s. The details of Borrower/s/Guarantor/s/Secured Assets/s/Dues/Reserve Price/E-Auction date & time, EMD and Bid increase Amount are mentioned below:

Date of Auction: 10.09.2020		Last Date of EMD Submission: 08.09.2020 upto 4.00 P.M.					
Sl.	Name & Address of the Borrower/Guarantor	Description of the Immovable Property with known encumbrances, if any	Total Dues	Date & Time of E-Auction	Reserve Price/EMD/ Bid Increase Amount	Status of Possession (Constructive/ Physical)	Property Possession Inspection Date & Time
1.	Borrower- M/s. S Shoppers Prop. Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh S/O Mr Chandraveer Singh	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of /Plot No:24 in village Kamta in Khasara No: 454,454/1, Minjuma within the Registration Sub-District Lucknow and District Lucknow, Bounded: North: Plot No 25, South Plot No 23, East : 25ft wide Road West : Plot No 27	Rs. 74,47,063/- + Interest + other charges	10.09.2020 01:00 PM to 2:00 PM	1,29,96,000/- 1,29,960/- 10,000/- (Bid Increase Amount)	Constructive	07.08.2020 to 07.09.2020 between to 10:00 PM to 4:00 PM

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Bank of Baroda secured website i.e. www.bankofbaroda.in/e-auction.htm & <https://ibapl.in>. Also, prospective bidders may contact the authorised officer on Mobile No. 7565003608

Date: 06.08.2020, Place: Lucknow **Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda**

666 villages affected by floods in 17 dists

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst Met office forecast of rain or thundershowers at many places over eastern UP and at a few places over the western part of the state over the next 24 hours, as many as 666 villages have been affected by floods across 17 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

According to the data released by the UP relief commissioner, major rivers are flowing above the danger mark at some places in the state. The Sharda river at Palia Kalan in Lakhimpur Kheri, the Saryu at Elgin Bridge in Barabanki and Ayodhya and Turtipar in Ballia , and the Rapti at Birdghat in Gorakhpur are flowing above the red mark.

Relief Commissioner Sanjay Goyal said 17 districts in the state were now flood-affected. A total of 666 villages

have been hit, out of which 446 have been marooned.

The districts affected by the floods are Ambedkar Nagar, Ayodhya, Azamgarh, Bahraich, Ballia, Balrampur, Barabanki, Basti, Gonda, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Lakhimpur Kheri, Mau, Sant Kabir Nagar, Siddharthnagar, Maharajganj and Sitapur.

Goyal said seepage in an embankment on Rapti river was reported from Gorakhpur and there were reports of land erosion in an embankment in Mau district. He added that repair work was underway and the situation was being monitored.

In Mau, around 5,000 families have been affected and 20 families were evacuated from three marooned villages, the official said. He said there was no danger to embankments and bridges in other parts of

Another saint killed in Aligarh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Yet another saint was murdered under mysterious circumstances in Aligarh on Wednesday night.

Reports said that 77-year-old Tegchand, a resident of Teranchi area of Pali Mukimpur in Aligarh, retired from the Charra power station where he was working as a lineman. Soon after his retirement, he left family and social life and started living in a temple near his house and spent his time in prayers and bhajans. He had four sons living nearby so they and their family members regularly provided food and other daily needs to their father.

One of the sons, Indirajit, claimed that on Wednesday night his nephew went to give food but was shocked to see grandfather Tegchand lying dead in his room. He immediately called the family members and they informed the police about the incident.

The cops immediately rushed to the spot along with a forensic teams. They claimed that besides ligature marks on the neck, there were no other injury marks, suggesting that someone had strangled the victim and escaped.

However, the motive behind the killing is yet to be ascertained.

The body has been sent for post-mortem and further investigations are on.

Meanwhile, a labourer was also killed in Aligarh on Wednesday night. Reports said that some people saw the body of a man lying in a pool of blood near Kaudiyaganj crossing in Akraabad area of the district on Thursday morning.

The police later identified the victim as Subhash who was a labourer in a brick kiln field. His brother, Santosh, who identified the body, said that Subhash had left the house to purchase some eatables and when he did not

CITYBRIEFS

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said here on Thursday that despite weekend lockdown (from 10 pm on Friday to 5 am on Monday), public transport would run on August 8 (Saturday) and 9 (Sunday) in view of BEJ-JEE which is scheduled to be held on August 9. However, he said that there would be no other relaxation. The DM said all the students, employees associated with the examination would be allowed to move but they would have to keep their ID cards with them.

SINGH TAKES CHARGE

Shantanu Pratap Singh, an Indian Information Service officer, took charge as the PRO (Defence) in Lucknow Cantonment on Thursday. Singh is from the 2012 batch of the Indian Information Service in the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. He was earlier posted as Deputy Director (News), RNU Chandigarh, All India Radio. During his tenure in the IIS, he has been posted in DD News (New Delhi), DDK (Shillong) and various media units under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

CMS STUDENT GETS 157TH RANK

Priyamvad Yadav, a student of City Montessori School, Mahanagar, has placed himself this year in the most coveted Indian Administrative Service. He has secured 157th rank in the Civil Services exam. Priyamvad has given the credit for his success to the educational and harmonious atmosphere of CMS besides the inspiration of his parents and teachers. CMS not only imparts high quality teaching and provides a spiritual atmosphere to students, it also encourages them to use their talents for service to society, Priyamvad said.



Young lovers burnt alive by girl's family

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a sensational case of honour killing, a 19-year-old girl and her lover were allegedly attacked and burnt to death by her family members in a village in Banda district.

The police claimed that it was a case of honour killing.

Reports said that 23-year-old Bhola Arkh, son of Asharam, used to work in Surat in Karkha village in Matounda police station area. He came home during lockdown. He was having a love affair with 19-year-old Priyanka of his village. Bhola's grandfather, Lakhan, said that on Wednesday evening, the girl called Bhola and took him home. The girl's family members allegedly caught the couple in a compromising position and brutally assaulted both and later locked the door of the room and set it on fire.

On seeing the smoke and hearing noise, the villagers rushed there and brought the youth and the girl out of the room. Both were rushed to the district hospital with serious burns. However, the doctors pronounced Bhola "brought dead". The girl was referred to Kanpur after first aid but she too died on way to hospital.

"It is alleged that the family locked

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

From Page 1

A section of political observers feel, Murmu, who was a man of a few words, was struggling for a long time to fill the political vacuum especially in Kashmir valley.

These observers claimed, "it is for the same reason centre decided to shunt him midway and brought another seasoned politician to bring back the stalled political process on track".

The newly-appointed Lt-Governor has tasted grassroot politics since his students days. He remained President of the Students Union in the Banaras Hindu University and later represented Parliamentary constituency of Ghazipur in eastern Uttar Pradesh thrice in the Lok Sabha. He lost last Lok Sabha polls to Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) candidate Afzal Ansari. He has also served as minister of communications and minister of state for Railways.

According to the official sources, the oath ceremony of the newly appointed Lt-Governor Manoj Sinha is scheduled to take place in Srinagar on Friday.

Meanwhile, Sinha arrived in Srinagar in the afternoon and was

accorded warm welcome and formal guard of honor at the technical airport.

Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam, DGP Dilbagh Singh and Principal Secretary to the Lt-Governor Bipul Pathak were present to receive him.

He was later escorted under tight security arrangements to the Raj Bhawan.

Earlier, late Wednesday evening Lt-Gov Girish Chandra Murmu tendered his resignation and the same was accepted by the President early Thursday morning.

Before the arrival of newly appointed Lt-Governor Manoj Sinha, Girish Chandra Murmu, who was camping in Jammu, returned to New Delhi along with his wife and children in a special BSF plane.

In the absence of any other senior officer in Jammu, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu Sanjiv Verma bid him farewell at the airport by presenting a bouquet.

Speculations were also rife in the corridors of power over the exact reasons behind Girish Chandra Murmu's sudden exit from Jammu and Kashmir.

It is widely believed both Murmu and Chief Secretary were not on the same page for a long time. This was obviously affecting smooth implementation of the developmental package in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to these observers, Murmu also paid the price for speaking 'out of turn' over certain contentious issues.

In a series of interviews to different media houses, Murmu had openly favored the restoration of 4G network for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

His observations prompted even the center to inform the Supreme Court that it will verify the statement of the Lieutenant Governor.

GC Murmu's assessment over holding fresh Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir had also created ripples in New Delhi.

This time, the Election Commission of India had pulled up Murmu for his statement on the conduct of elections in Jammu and Kashmir saying holding polls is the mandate of the Commission and it was not the domain of the Lieutenant Governor.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice
The Dy. CSTE/C-ILKO, Office Complex, Construction Organization, N.Rty, Charbagh, Lucknow, for & on behalf of "President of India" invites "OPEN E-TENDER" for the under noted work:-

Name of work & location	*Hiring of One Non-AC Inspection Road Vehicle (Bolaro/Tavera/ Gypsy or Similar) at Lucknow on monthly basis for 30 (Thirty) Months for Dy.CSTE/C-ILKO.*
Completion period	30 (Thirty) months from the date of issue of Letter of Acceptance.
Approx. cost of work	Rs. 12,25,320.00 (Rs. Twelve Lacs Twenty Five Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Only)
Earnest money to be deposited	Rs.24,500/- (Rs. Twenty Four Thousand Five Hundred only)
Date & Time for submission of e-tender and opening of tender	Tender may be uploaded upto 11.30 Hrs on 27.08.2020 on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The bidder can participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11:30 Hrs on 27.08.2020.
Website Detail & Documents Details on Notice Board	The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in . Above tenders document will be available on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 06.08.2020 to 27.08.2020 upto 11.30 Hrs. The bidders who desire to participate against e-tenders, are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which, they would require to, obtain class III digital certificate (If already not obtained) issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.
Tender Notice No.	287-Sig/C-ILKO/Tender/0320 Dated : 05.08.2020 1711/2020
Serving Customers With A Smile	

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Chief Project Manager/Northern Railway, Lucknow for & on behalf of President of India invites open e-tender under **Two-Packet system** for the following work:

1. Name of work and location:	Misc civil works including raising and extension of passenger platforms, extension of steel FOB, earthwork, blanketing and ancillary protection works at Malhaur and Barabanki stations including supply of ballast & electrical (general) works in connection with "Barabanki-Malhaur-3rd & 4th Line (32.84 km)"
2. Completion period of work:	12 (Twelve) months
3. Approx. cost of the work:	Rs. 2294.46 Lakh
4. Earnest money amount (to be deposited Online):	Rs. 12,97,200.00
5. Date & Time of submission E-tender and opening of tender	Tenders may be uploaded 11.30 hrs. on 31.08.2020 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in . The bidders can only participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs. on 31.08.2020
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document:	The detailed e-tender notice and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in w.e.f. 11.08.2020 Above tenders document will be available for submission of offer on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 17.08.2020 to 31.08.2020. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.
No. 19-Tender/CPM/NR/LKO Date:	04.08.2020 1709/2020
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

उत्तर प्रदेश पावर ट्रान्समिशन **मात्र** निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00
कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड ई-निविदा (जीएएसटीडी सलित) 11- 132 केवी0
सूचना संख्या-01/ECTD- विद्युत उपकेंद्र नैरी, सीतापुर पर वार्षिक
IL/2020-21 अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता द्वारा अनुसूचा का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरो. निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु पृथक-पृथक हर घनराशि रु0 2,000.00 (रु0 दो हजार ई-निविदाएं दो मांगों में ई-टेंडरिंग पोर्टल मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00
http://etender.up.nic.in के माध्यम से जान (जीएएसटीडी सलित)। 12- 132 केवी0 लाईन निविदाएं आगंतिक की जारी है। 1- विद्युत उपकेंद्र महमूदाबाद, सीतापुर पर 220 केवी0 विद्युत उपकेंद्र हरदोई पर वार्षिक वार्षिक अनुसूचा का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 अनुसूचा का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरो. माह, धरोहर घनराशि रु0 2,000.00 (रु0 दो हजार हजार मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जीएएसटीडी सलित) 13- 220 केवी0 (जी0एसटीडी सलित)। 2- 132 केवी0 विद्युत विद्युत उपकेंद्र निचासन, लखीमपुर पर वार्षिक उपकेंद्र संखीना, हरदोई पर वार्षिक अनुसूचा अनुसूचा का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरो. का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरोहर घनरा. हर घनराशि रु0 2,000.00 (रु0 दो हजार शि २,000.00 (रु0 दो हजार मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जी0एसटीडी सलित) 15- 132 केवी0 विद्युत उपकेंद्र गौला, लखीमपुर पर वार्षिक अनुसूचा का चकलखरी, उन्नाव पर वार्षिक अनुसूचा का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरोहर घनराशि कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरोहर घनराशि रु0 2,000.00 (रु0 दो हजार मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जी0एसटीडी सलित)। 7- Technical Bid एवं अन्य शर्तें तथा मात्रा वार्षिक अनुसूचा का कार्य। कार्य अवधि 12 माह, धरोहर घनराशि रु0 2,000.00 (रु0 दो हजार मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जी0एसटीडी सलित)। 9- 132 केवी0 विद्युत उपकेंद्र सिंघा, सीतापुर पर वार्षिक पश्चिमा/युद्धिकरण, निरस्तीकरण की सूचना अनुसूचा का कार्य कार्य। अवधि 12 माह, धरो. मात्र निगम की वेबसाइट **www.upptcl.org** पर अपलोड मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जी0एसटीडी सलित)। 10- 132 केवी0 विद्युत उपकेंद्र लहरपुर, सीतापुर पर वार्षिक पश्चिमा/युद्धिकरण, निरस्तीकरण की सूचना अनुसूचा का कार्य कार्य। अवधि 12 माह, धरो. मात्र निगम की वेबसाइट **www.upptcl.org** पर अपलोड मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जी0एसटीडी सलित)। 10- 132 केवी0 विद्युत उपकेंद्र लहरपुर, सीतापुर पर वार्षिक पश्चिमा/युद्धिकरण, निरस्तीकरण की सूचना अनुसूचा का कार्य कार्य। अवधि 12 माह, धरो. मात्र निगम की वेबसाइट **www.upptcl.org** पर अपलोड मात्र) निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य रु0 590.00 (जी0एसटीडी सलित)। 10- 132 केवी0 विद्युत उपकेंद्र लहरपुर, सीतापुर पर वार्षिक 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210 more COVID-19 patients found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district has seen yet another big spike for the second continuous day when the number of new COVID-19 patients was more than 200. As many as 210 new cases have been detected here on Thursday. It was the second highest number of patients found in a day after 218 found a day ago. With this, the total number of patients has increased to 3,753. The day also saw two more deaths, increasing the toll to 74. During the day, the follow-up reports included 69 patients recovered from home isolation and the total number of patients cured at home has increased to 722, while 43 recovered from the hospitals. With this, the total number of patients discharged from the hospitals has reached 1,346, while the total number of cured patients is 2,068, leaving 1,611 active patients.

According to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh, in the first report received by 11 am during the day, as many as 116 new corona patients were found out of 716 reports received from Microbiology department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Till then, the total test reports received were 50,795 and the results of 7,073 excluding 811 RTPCR samples collected a day ago are awaited. Out of these, 47,136 were neg-



Security at hotspot Machaudhari (Adampur) in Varanasi on Thursday

Pioneer

ative reports, while 3,659 positive.

The total number of samples collected was 58,679. Earlier, three deaths included a male aged 63 from Pandey Haveli, Sonarpura (Bhelupur), male aged 62 and male aged 60 from Gadwasi Tola (Chowk). They died during treatment at DDU, BHU and SSPG Hospitals respectively. With the addition of 26 red zones,

the total number of hotspots has increased to 1,000 including 379 red zones including two green zones converted into red zones again. Besides, there are 621 green zones including 30 new ones.

Earlier, in this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions, as many as 697 patients were found COVID-19 positive within a day by

Wednesday.

During this period, a maximum number of 218 patients was detected in Varanasi, followed by 101 in Azamgarh, 95 in Jaunpur, 68 in Ghazipur, 36 in Sonbhadra, 33 in Mirzapur, 18 in Bhadohi and 17 in Mau. Besides, eight persons including three each in Varanasi and Azamgarh districts and one each in Jaunpur and Mirzapur died.

Home isolation improves recovery rate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The permission given to the asymptomatic patients for home isolation treatment has helped the district a lot to improve overall recovery rate during the last one week when the COVID-19 positive cases had increased sharply. By Thursday morning when 116 new patients were found, the total number of cases had increased to 1209, showing the alarming situation. The increase in testing since the introduction of rapid antigen tests is one of the main reasons behind the detection of a large number of corona patients. This system has helped in con-

ducting tests in groups at different offices and other places and it was due to this system, several cases were detected in government, police, health and other office premises. The finding of some district court employees as COVID-19 has forced the District Judge Umesh Chandra Sharma to order for the closure of court premises for two days. As the courts remain closed during the weekend, now the same will be reopened only on Monday.

Just a week ago on July 30, only 1,074 patients were discharged from the hospitals in the district out of 2,622 patients which showed that the recovery rate was slipped to 40.96

per cent but the same has seen an improvement by Wednesday when 1,956 corona patients were cured out of total number of 3,543 cases, improving the recovery rate to 55.20 per cent. During the last few days, as the number of cases has jumped up so the same of cured patients has also seen improvement. Out of these 1,956 patients, 653 (33.38%) were those who were cured from home isolation while 1,303 (66.61%) were discharged from different hospitals.

During this period, sharp spikes in cases were seen every day because except on August 4, all the days the cases were found in three figures with the

biggest rise seen on Wednesday when 218 cases were found. The same picture is also seen in almost all the districts of this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions.

By Tuesday, the best recovery rate was reported in Mau (65.27%) followed by Chandauli (64%), Sonbhadra (60.88%), Varanasi (55.18%), Jaunpur (51.89%), Ghazipur (50.89%), Bhadohi (45.19%), Mirzapur (44.80%), Ballia (42.84%) and Azamgarh (35.99%). The districts which had seen a sharp spike in the number of cases in recent days were poor in their recovery rates.

DM directs CMO to make appointment of doctors through walk-in-interview

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The works related to COVID-19 are suffering a lot in the district because of the shortage of doctors and thus, the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma has directed the Chief Medical Officer Dr VB Singh to sort out this crisis at the earliest by making appointment of MBBS doctors through walk-in-interview.

On being apprised that the shortage of doctors is badly affecting the works of COVID-19, the DM asked the CMO to make the appointment of MBBS doctors by conducting walk-in-interview to address this problem. The incharge of community and primary health centres and additional chief medical officers that are showing indifferent attitude in their duty, be deployed at Pt Deen

Dayal Government Hospital, he added in the meeting held at his camp office on Wednesday evening to discuss about the measures to prevent the infection from coronavirus and providing better medical facilities to corona patients.

The DM also directed for deploying the doctors to this hospital who are discharging field work but showing laxity in duty. On the absence of the incharges of PHCs of Konia and Bajardiha areas from the meeting, he directed for issuing showcause notice to them by withholding their one-day salary. Sharma directed Dr Singh to ascertain action against the in-charges of PHCs that have failed in furnishing daily corona report by 4.30 pm.

He expressed dissatisfaction over the progress in finding out and identifying the con-

tract tracing of corona patients and directed for ensuring the cent per cent sampling of persons came in the contact of COVID-19 patients. He expressed annoyance over the delay being made by members of the rapid response team to reach the corona patients and directed for making contact to the patients within 24 hours. On the mistake made by data entry operators in the entry of information related to corona, the DM directed the CMO to impart training to them again and ascertain the action of suspension if they repeat the same mistake.

Meanwhile, the management of Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has decided to open its outdoor patient department for the non-corona patients from August 10. But

only those patients would be attended that have got them registered on the app. And, in view of the gradual increase in the number of corona patients, as many as 70 more beds have been made available to the SSH. With this, the number of beds in this hospital has now increased to 280. The multi-parameter monitor will also be made available to the hospital. Meanwhile, while expressing his annoyance over the complaints that the patients remained in ambulance for hours after the denial of admission by the COVID-19 hospitals, the DC directed for ascertaining stern action against the erring hospitals by lodging an FIR if such complaint was received again. The corona patients should be admitted in the hospital immediately after being taken there, he added.

CRPF continues plantation drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Continuing their campaign in the direction to plant one lakh saplings in the city with the help of some social organisations as set by the Commandant of 95th Battalion of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Narendra Pal Singh, the CRPF personnel planted saplings at Shivaji Nagar Colony Park (Mehmoorganj) here on Thursday in association with Srijan Samajik Vikash Nyas. They also continued their campaign to make the people aware about environmental protection.

Under the joint leadership of Deputy Commandant Mahendra Kumar Mishra and brand ambassador, Environment department, UP Government, Anil Singh, the plantation was done in which a total of 51 saplings including of neem, gurdhal and parijat were planted.

Besides, the entire area was also de-infected by spraying sodium hypochlorite chem-



CRPF personnel planting saplings at Shivaji Colony Park in Varanasi on Thursday

ical by CRPF personnel. MLA from Varanasi Cantonment constituency Saurabh Srivastava expressed his thanks to the CRPF personnel on behalf of the residents of the colony.

The MLA is also a resident of the same colony. He also appreciated the CRPF for continuously launching social schemes during worldwide coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahendra Kumar Mishra said

that the CRPF has set a target of planting more and more trees all over the country and the Commandant of this battalion Narendra Pal Singh a target of one lakh saplings in the city in association with some social organisations. On the occasion, the participants also took oath of plantation and water conservation.

Meanwhile, the CRPF personnel continued their campaign with dedication. A team of the same battalion led by sec-

ond command officer Suresh Kumar Mishra carried out a programme of de-infection by spraying sodium hypochlorite chemicals in Sundarpur, Chittipur, Ashutosh Nagar and surrounding areas apart from doing thermal scanning of about 350 persons.

Yet another team led by assistant commandant Vikas Kumar did the chemical spraying in Kashi Vishwanath Temple / Gyanvapi Masjid Complex, Annapurna Mata Mandir, Nandi Hall, Sugam Darshan Kendra, ATM centres at Bansphatak and other places apart from providing 350 food packets to needy people in association with Jalan Employees' Welfare Association.

Besides, the team of CRPF Wives' Welfare Association led by its chairperson Ranjita Singh continued its efforts to collect ration and distribute the same in packets to the needy people in association with some voluntary organisations.

198 test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

As many as 198 new positive cases of corona were detected on Wednesday night, while three corona-infected patients died at Swaroop Rani Nehru COVID Hospital. Of the total infected patients, the report of Associate Professor of ADC (Allahabad Degree College) also came positive besides, three health workers and policemen and people working in private institutions have also been found corona infected. The total number of corona patients in the district now reached 3,219 and the number of deceased has been 62 in the city so far.

Apart from Associate Professor, two nurses of Swaroop Rani Nehru Covid Hospital have also become corona infected. An employee of the ENT (ear, nose, and throat) department at Colvin Hospital has also been found positive. In such a situation, the same department has been sealed for two days. Lekhpal of Bara tehsil, ANM of Jasra, two AG office workers, two PAC personnel, project manager working in private company, head operator of police department have also been found corona infected.

According to Dr. Rishi Sahai, the nodal officer for COVID-19, 50 corona patients have been discharged from the hospital after recovering on Wednesday. 1402 corona positive patients have now become negative and discharged from hospital. While the city has 1,755 active cases. The report of 1,499 samples is still negative. 1,618 corona suspected



Railway employees sanitising train coaches at Prayagraj Jn

Pioneer

patients have also been sampled. Apart from this, about one thousand corona positive patients have been placed in home isolation so far.

Meanwhile, the Health department team will conduct door-to-door surveys in more than a dozen neighbourhoods on Friday.

In this, patients with corona symptoms will be identified and their sampling will be done. For this, 145 teams have been formed. ACO Dr. Satyen Rai has been made incharge of this campaign, which will be supervised by ADM City Ashok Kumar Kanaujia.

The campaign will be launched in Phaphamau, Daraganj, Allapur, Baghambari Gaddi, Bakshi Kala, Rajapur, Mumfordganj, Minto Road,

Nevada, Kalyani Devi, Atarasuiya, Baluaghat, Chaukhandi, Khalasi Line, Mutthiganj, Madhwapur, Meerapur, Nehrunagar, Tulsipur, Gosanagar, Sultanpur in C block and Naya Purva for two days. If patients are found with fever, cold, cough and difficulty in breathing, then their list will be prepared and their sampling will be done.

Suspected patients of corona are being tested and are being treated, but they are not getting their test reports. This is the reason why patients are apprehensive about whether they are positive or not? Because many such patients are also being told that they are positive from the control room. Patients wish that they are at least reported if they are positive.

In the early days of the corona epidemic, those who tested positive were also reported. But when the number of patients started increasing, this system also ended and now those who are getting corona positive are just told to call from the corona control room. For the past few days, there has been doubt about corona's report. There is also a problem of feeding on the portal. Many negative patients are also being called and cited that they are positive.

These days only private labs are giving test reports of corona to patients. The nodal officer for COVID-19, Dr Rishi Sahai said that when the positive cases of corona are found, their list is prepared and they are also intimated about it by the team, added Dr Sahai.

HC directs DM, SSP to ensure physical distancing in their dists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Not satisfied with the implementation of physical distancing in state, the Allahabad High Court has directed DM and SSP of all the districts of Uttar Pradesh to take necessary steps by tomorrow and ensure physical distancing in their districts.

The court directed concerned authorities to act by tomorrow and see vigorously that no two individuals in public remain within a distance of two yards from each other and in case of violation action must be taken against the owner of such a public place. Further, if policemen fail to ensure physical distancing then action must be taken against such erring officers.

The court also directed authorities to take action

against hospitals and clinics who violate COVID-19 norms regarding physical distancing. Further, the High Court had asked concerned court administration and bars to ensure physical distancing in courts across the state.

The court further directed that the district administrations of all the districts must ensure that no pillion riders except a couple on two wheelers are seated unless there is an extreme urgency.

The Bench comprising Justice Siddhartha Varma and Justice Ajit Kumar while passing the order observed, 'Do gaz ki doori, mask bhi zaroori' seems to be an empty shibboleth coined by the Government. Neither the Government is looking interested in implementing the rule that two individuals should remain two

yards away and wear masks nor the people of our State are interested in following the above rule.'

'The Government is coming up with various data to show that things are under its control but newspaper reports are not very encouraging. There are complaints that people, though have been tested for COVID-19 but have not yet received their reports even after a lapse of two or more weeks,' said the bench.

The court was hearing a Public Interest Litigation on the condition of quarantine centres in the state and has fixed August 7 as the next date of hearing in the case.

DEFERRED: The Allahabad High Court has deferred the hearing of a habeas corpus petition, filed by Nuzhat Parveen, mother of Dr

Kafil Khan, till August 19, 2020. The petitioner has challenged the order of detention under the National Security Act (NSA) of Dr Kafil Khan, which was served upon him by the district magistrate in the jail.

This order was passed by the bench consisting of Justice Manoj Misra and Justice Deepak Verma. The Additional Government Advocate, representing the state of UP, requested the court to grant him 10 days time to file affidavit to the amended petition, filed by the petitioner. The court has also directed the union of India to file reply to the petition filed by the petitioner. It might be recalled that notice under the NSA was served in jail to Dr Kafil for his alleged communal speech against CAA. The court will hear the writ petition on August 19.

NCR plans to install automatic way-side train examination systems

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

North Central Railway has prepared a comprehensive plan for installing automatic way-side train examination systems to ensure safety.

Both trunk routes between Ghaziabad- Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn and Palwal-Bina Jn to have wayside equipment at every 100 kms interval.

Observing safe passage of trains without any defect like hot axle, hanging part, brake binding are conventionally checked by station, gate and rolling in staff on Indian Railways. However with increase in speed of trains, elimination of level crossing gates by ROB/RUBs and elimination of station end cabins it is imperative that automated way side rolling stock monitoring systems capable of detecting these defects and raising alert without any human intervention are installed to aug-

ment efforts of alert Railwaymen. North Central Railway the pioneer in the field of automated way side monitoring of trains have already made a headway in this direction through installing many advanced systems for monitoring of moving trains over Prayagraj and other divisions. Hot Axle and Hot wheel detectors (HAHW) or automatic train examination system (ATES) for identifying hot axle and brake binding in moving trains, Wheel Impact load detector (WILD) for identifying flat wheel or wheel with out of roundness, online rolling stock monitoring system (OMRS) a combination of HAHW/ATES and WILD, Hanging part detection system (HPDS) for identifying loose and unsafe object in running train, CCTV at rolling in examination points for visual examination of train are installed at different locations over NCR.

General Manager North Central and Northern Railway Rajiv Chaudhry has been stressing to prepare a comprehensive safety grid so as the entire stretch of North Central Railway is covered for each type of defect. Accordingly based on capability of each equipment w.r.t. defect identification a judicious mix of equipment has been prepared by the mechanical department; which will now be followed for installing additional systems in consultation with the operations wing of North Central Railway. At present two hot axle & hot wheel detector (HAHW), one hanging part detector (HPDS), two wheel impact load detectors (WILD) and two on line rolling stock monitoring systems (OMRS) are functional over NCR while three automatic train examination system (ATES) and one wheel impact load detector (WILD) are under installation. Besides

these, 16 HAHW/ ATES, two OMRS and 44 low speed HAHW suitable for rolling in examination points at entry to major stations sanctioned additionally are being procured by COFMOW as well as North Central Railway. Under the comprehensive plan these equipment have been positioned in such a way that both trunk routes of 759 Kms between Ghaziabad- Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn, and 503 Kms between Palwal- Bina are evenly covered for each type of defect identification. Installation and commissioning of these additional equipment will ensure checking of trains at regular intervals on both trunk routes in less than 100 Kms spacing from one equipment to other. This will ensure timely identification of various defects in moving trains and attention thereof will help in safer and detention free train operations.

PM urged to stand by farmers

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Leaders of 7 farmers' organisations of Allahabad Mandal, led by the 260 member All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, AIKSCC, made a representation to the Prime Minister, through a written appeal presented to the District Magistrate Prayagraj and three Members of Parliament, Reoti

Raman Singh, Dr. Rita Joshi Bahugana and Kesari Devi Patel on Thursday. The appeal urged the PM to stand by the farmers who have worked hard to keep the food bowl of the country full to the brim in hard conditions, even though the central government has been taking decisions to favour foreign and domestic corporate

houses who ruin the farmers' income to maximise their profit. The leaders highlighted the recent 3 ordinances passed by the government on June 5 as anti-peasant, anti-worker. These ordinances remove cereals, pulses, oilseeds, potato and tomato from the list of essential commodities; which allow MNCs and big business to

directly buy from farmers through agents; and contract farming Ordinance which will further tie up peasants and sharecroppers to companies, force them to buy costly inputs, GM seeds and to sell their crop to the company. This will lead to MSP and PDS being wound up and rise in hoarding and black marketing.

Courts to function from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

District Magistrate BR Tiwari said that Kanpur courts would be removed from the list of containment zones and would function normally from Friday onwards.

He said sanitisation work was being carried out on a war footing to ensure that the courts could function normally.

Dr Tiwari said the directive for opening of the court had been issued by District Judge SK Singh.

He said this decision was taken in a meeting held at the residence of the district judge that was attended by district administration and police officials, said the chief medical officer.

The district magistrate said the green signal for removing court premises from containment zone was given by the CMO.

He said the government had sanctioned ₹ 5 crore to combat coronavirus effectively and this fund would be used for resources and for arranging equipment to contain the spread of the virus and save lives.

Dr Tiwari said this fund would be made available from the state funds given to the local bodies. He said the fund

297 more test positive

KANPUR (PNS): Kanpur Nagar reported 297 more coronavirus positive cases on Thursday. Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said 297 more persons tested positive for coronavirus between Wednesday evening and Thursday evening and with 397 completing home isolation, the tally stood at 7,487 cases. He said a total of 34 cases were discharged and the number of cured persons now stood at 2,403.

The CMO said with nine more deaths in the city, the death toll stood at 251 on Thursday. He said there were 4,436 active cases in the city. He said 2,705 samples were taken for test.

would be given to a six-member committee which would comprise municipal commissioner, CDO, DDO, DPRO, chief treasury officer and CMO.

The district magistrate said with the daily COVID-19 testing reaching around 3,000, the district administration had made foolproof arrangements for it.

He said 17 mobile vans had been deployed for collecting samples while rapid antigen test kit was made available at 32 urban primary health centres. He said the government had increased the number of kits seeing the rise in number of coronavirus positive cases and deaths.

Dr Tiwari said the High Court had expressed concern over the failure of the people to strictly follow social distancing.

He said strict orders had been issued to the health and district authorities to ensure that the Covid protocol was followed in the right earnest.

The district magistrate said the health authorities had also been directed to ensure that there was no laxity in hospitals and quarantine centres.

He said in case the officials faced any genuine problem, they could meet him in person to work out a solution. He said complaints from holding areas should also be taken up seriously.

CONCERN OVER DELAY IN BRINGING PATIENTS TO HOSPITAL

GSVM Medical College Principal Dr RB Kamal has expressed concern over the delay in admitting COVID-19

patients having difficulty in breathing.

He said in most of the cases, by the time such patient reached the hospital his/her oxygen level was below 70, making revival very difficult.

Dr Kamal advised people testing positive for coronavirus infection to ensure that they immediately rushed to hospital at the slightest discomfort in breathing.

He said most of such patients who reached the hospital on time were put on ventilator and were able to recuperate and get well also.

The GSVM principal said there was need to spread awareness among the masses to have pulse oximeter at home to monitor the oxygen level of the patient.

Former medical superintendent Dr GD Yadav said it had been found that often the COVID-19 patients approached the hospital with extremely low levels of oxygen. He said in some cases there was acute discomfort but in some there was no sign of difficulty in breathing as well.

He said pulse oximeter was remarkably accurate when oxygen readings were high, it markedly exaggerated the severity of low levels of oxygen when readings were low.

Thakur moves Lokayukta against Kanpur Dehat DM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Social activist Dr Nutan Thakur has filed a complaint before Lokayukta Sanjay Mishra against the alleged inaction of Kanpur Dehat district magistrate in a case relating to illegal occupation of 32 bigha government land in Derapur tehsil.

In her complaint, Nutan said that a three-member inquiry committee set up to look into the matter had in its report dated August 17, 2012 stated Satish Pal, an ex-state minister level politician, had entered into criminal conspiracy with revenue staff to get his name falsely entered in revenue records.

Thakur said that based on this report, the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) of Derapur had got an FIR registered against Satish Pal and his family, and the charge sheet was filed in the court of chief judicial magistrate (CJM) of Kanpur Dehat and charges were framed against the accused in November 2017.

Thakur said that despite these facts, so far Kanpur Dehat DM Rakesh Kumar Singh had not taken any action to free the land from illegal possession of Satish Pal, who was still occupying the gram sabha land and was now trying to sell it by illegal plotting.

Nutan has urged the Lokayukta to take action against the present DM of Kanpur Dehat and the revenue officials who had deliberately ignored the matter and permitted Satish Pal to continue his illegal possession on costly government land.

Stress on production of NON sugars

KANPUR (PNS): National Sugar Institute Director Prof Narendra Mohan called upon the sugar industry personnel to look for production of sugar in factories keeping in view its end uses. He said production of pharmaceutical sugar, liquid sugar, brown sugar and other specialty sugars should be taken up as its market was fast growing up.

He stressed upon the production of natural, organic and nutritive (NON) sugars and their hygienic packaging for value addition as well as for providing nutritive sweeteners to consumers in the current COVID-19 scenario.

He was addressing an international webinar organised on Thursday on the topic 'Sugar & Sweeteners -- Quality and Consumption Patterns', jointly organised by National Sugar Institute, Kanpur, National Sugar Development Council, Nigeria and Assiut University, Egypt.

Addressing the session Hezekiah Kolawole, Director, National Sugar Development Council, Nigeria, made a presentation about sugar scenario in Nigeria and said that the country was a sugar deficient country meeting its requirement to the extent of 97 per cent through imports.

He said out of the total industrial consumption, 50 per cent was by the soft drinks units but the per capita sugar consumption was 9 kg/annum which may grow to 15 kg in future. He said as per the Nigeria Sugar Master Plan which looked for self-reliance in sugar, there was possibility of creating over one lakh jobs and export of over 400 MW power. He said a lot of business opportunities were available and many Indian companies were supplying plant and machinery to the up-coming sugar units.

Ahmed Vawda, Plant Executive Director, United Sugar Co, Saudi Arabia, spoke about different types of sweeteners including sugar alcohols, natural zero calorie sweeteners and artificial sweeteners. He said it was not only the low or no calorie content which was making these sweeteners popular but the cost also which was even less than 10 per cent of the cost of sugar.

He discussed in detail about such sweeteners including natural caloric sweeteners like maple syrup, sweet sorghum syrup and honey.

Randomised controlled trial of RNB culminates successfully

CORRESPONDENT ■ ETAWAH

The randomised controlled trial (RCT) conducted at UPUMS, Saifai, to evaluate the safety and efficacy of world's first 'Allovedic' medicine Raj Nirwan Bati (RNB) in the treatment of mild to severe symptomatic Covid-19 patients has culminated successfully with encouraging results. This was conveyed by Dr Prof Raj Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, Uttar Pradesh University of Medical Sciences (UPUMS), Saifai. This landmark randomised control trial considered highest in the hierarchy of scientific evidence methodology is the result of a series of meticulously planned scientific studies and trials conducted at the University in the past few months during this Covid era. Dr Raj Kumar said that a pilot study-cum-single-arm clinical trial was conceptualised and successfully conducted in June/July at dedicated Covid hospital, UPUMS. Due registration for the same had been done at the apex body for the purpose- Clinical Trial Registry of India (CTRI). The study was approved by University's empowered corona committee, scientific and ethical committees. Three research articles incorporating the findings and results of this single-arm clinical trial, demonstrating the safety and efficacy of RNB in mild to severe symptomatic Covid-19 patients have been published in reputed national and international journals and have also been described in detail in the book 'Covidology-Sciences, Infrastructure & Management' published by UPUMS recently. Buoyed up by the encouraging results of this successful single-arm clinical trial, a double-blind randomised controlled trial was subsequently conducted in mild to severe symptomatic Covid-19 patients being treated at dedicated Covid Hospital at UPUMS, Saifai, during the months of June/July. Due registration for the same was also done at the apex body for the purpose- CTRI and approval was taken from the University's empowered corona committee, scientific and ethical committees. This trial was designed diligently as per contemporary allopathic medicinal research practices and guidelines. In this RCT 60 Covid-19 patients above 18 years with mild, moderate and severe symptoms were registered. Critically ill cases were not included in the study since



RNB is available only in tablet form presently and not in an injectable form. These 60 patients were distributed among two study groups. Thirty patients in the 'RNB Intervention group' received RNB medication whereas 30 patients in the 'Placebo Control group' did not receive RNB. All patients in both the study groups received concomitant treatment with hydroxychloroquine, antibiotics, anticoagulants, steroids and vitamins etc. as per standard established treatment protocols. In the RNB interventional group, 60 per cent (pc) of patients had co-morbidities like diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery diseases (CAD), hypothyroidism, bronchial asthma, COPD, oral carcinoma and head injury while in placebo control group only 23 pc of the patients had co-morbidities. Despite this fact patients in the RNB interventional group showed comprehensive improvement in their health status. Statistically significant findings of this RCT (with globally acceptable power of study) are as under: In the RNB intervention group 97 pc of patients on day 12, became RT-PCR negative. Whereas in the placebo group, 73 per cent of patients on day 6 and 90 pc of patients on day 12 became RT-PCR negative. Symptomatic improvement in the patients was assessed on the basis of mean days taken for relief of eight symptoms namely fever, cough, sore throat, breathlessness, chest tightness, fatigue, myalgia and taste sensation. The patients in RNB intervention group got relief in all the above symptoms in lesser days (mean 5.9 days) as compared to patients in placebo group (mean 7.1 days) and this was statistically significant. Besides considerable improvement in the chest X-ray findings was observed in 89 pc of patients during the course of treatment in RNB group. Whereas only 57.0 pc of the patients in placebo group showed improve-

ment. The mean platelet count of the patients in RNB intervention group increased significantly as compared to the placebo control group in the study period. The rate of increase in platelet count from the index value was 43 pc on day 6 and 80 pc on day 12 in the RNB interventional group compared to an increase of 28 per cent on day 6 and 75 pc on day 12 in the placebo control group. Mean values of various hematological or biochemical parameters namely haemoglobin, polymorphs, lymphocytes, urea, creatinine, bilirubin, many liver enzymes, international normalised ratio (INR), serum protein levels etc either remained within normal limits or changed non-significantly. This indicates that RNB does not have any adverse effect on liver, kidney, blood etc and has an excellent drug safety profile. The findings and results of this successful landmark RCT as well as the pilot study-cum-single-arm clinical trial, demonstrating the safety and efficacy of RNB in mild, moderate and severe symptomatic Covid-19 patients, have been sent to ICMR and CCRAS, Ministry of AYUSH, to strengthen fight against this pandemic. RNB can prove instrumental in containing the spread of this virus, treating COVID-19 patients and saving millions of lives. It is still an ongoing race against time to find a cure for this deadly virus. The scientific temperaments at UPUMS Saifai under the leadership of the V-C Dr Raj Kumar were ignited well in advance even before corona could knock at our doors. More than 25 research publications have been published during this period contributing significantly to the global scientific community. In-depth analysis of the mortality around the world illustrated the tissues and organ systems targeted ruthlessly by Coronavirus. A meticulously dedicated approach unearthed those components of our ancient medicinal system which have a proven scientific track record of strengthening and fortifying those susceptible organ systems. This paved the way for this novel herbo mineral formulation. RNB has been tested on all scientific principles of modern medicine (along with the scientific proof of each constituent), that is why it has been termed as world's first 'Allovedic' preparation despite the fact that it contains 11 established constituents of Ayurveda.

Free Covid testing at OPF

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Ordnance Parachute Factory General Manager DK Bangotra while inaugurating a free COVID-19 testing camp on the premises on Thursday said there was a greater need to spread awareness about the disease.

He said even today a big section of people were not aware what coronavirus was and that it was fatal.

He said it was observed in urban areas that people ignored wearing masks and maintaining social distancing that was highly essential for ones safety. He said social distancing, was in fact "physical distancing," which meant keeping a safe space between oneself and others who were not from the household.

He said to practice social or physical distancing, one must stay at least six feet (about two arms length) from other people who were not from household in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

He said in addition, to reduce the spread of COVID-19 one should wear masks, avoid touching face with unwashed hands and frequently washing hands with soap and water for at least 20



COVID-19 test being carried out at Ordnance Parachute Factory on Thursday.

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seconds.

Manager (Administration) Ayesha Khan said coronavirus spreads when an infected person coughed, sneezed or talked and droplets from the mouth or nose were emitted in the air and landed on the mouth or

nose of people nearby. She said these droplets could also be inhaled by others not wearing masks.

She said social distancing was especially important for people who were at higher risk. She said one should limit

contact and go out when absolutely necessary.

Those present included Rupesh Kumar, Aditya Mishra, Shivjeet Gautam, Shivam Trivedi, Saurabh, DK Kushwaha, Sachin Verma and Mahenda Yadav.

Cash & valuables worth ₹ 22 lakh stolen from house

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Cash and valuables worth around ₹22 lakh were stolen from the house of a defence employee in Awes Vikas Colony-3 in Kalyanpur police station area on Wednesday night.

Sanil Kumar Mishra, a master craftsman in the Revolver Section of Small Arms Factory, lives in Awes Vikas Colony-3 with wife Sushma and son Vaibhav. On July 16, after the death of his mother, he had taken her body to his native village Jalalpur in Jaunpur along with family members. He had asked his neighbour Rajesh to take care of his house and he used to sleep there at night.

On Wednesday night, Rajesh had to go to his house as his child was weeping bitterly. In his absence burglars broke into Sanil's house through the windows and collected cash and valuables from four almirahs and escaped.

On Thursday morning, when Rajesh found the window open, he suspected something was wrong and informed Sanil's sister Sushila Dwivedi of Mahabalipuram about the incident. Sushila immediately arrived with her son Saurabh and brother Sushil and found Sanil's house burgled.

Saurabh informed the police that cash and jewellery worth around ₹22 lakh were



Police carry out investigations in SAF employee's house burgled on Wednesday night.

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stolen.

TWO HELD WITH CHARAS WORTH ₹ 30 LAKH

A joint team of Bithoor police and Crime Branch recovered 6.250 kg charas (cannabis) worth around ₹30 lakh in international market and arrested two inter-state drug peddlers, including a woman, on Mandhana-Pachaur road on Thursday morning. They were identified as Raja Prasad alias Rahul (27) of Raxaul and Nimisha alias Mili (40) wife of Sanjay Rao of Bihār. Both disclosed during interrogation that they deliv-

ered the charas in Kanpur after collecting it from an unidentified person in Gorakhpur and were paid ₹15,000 per trip. They said they had made about five trips to Kanpur so far. Nimisha used to accompany Raja to avoid suspicion of police. The police team was led by SO Bithoor Kaushlendra Pratap Singh and Crime Branch Incharge Dinesh Kumar. Meanwhile, the Beanganj police arrested a woman and recovered stolen cash (₹2,650) and a Samsung mobile phone from her possession. She was identified as Farzana (45) wife of late Israt of Kidwai Nagar Labour Colony. She snatched purses of

women in crowded places, SO Beanganj Nawab Ahmad said.

ROAD MISHAP

A youth and his elder sister were killed when a speeding truck knocked down their motorcycle on the flyover in Govind Nagar police station area on Thursday morning.

The victims, identified as Rajan alias Rajendra Pandey (40) of Baghpur (Kanpur Dehat) and Sadhana Misra (45) of Maitha Hathika village, were going to participate in the annaprasan ceremony of their brother Akhilesh's granddaughter in H Block of Gujaini, Kanpur, when in a bid to overtake them on the flyover near Govind Nagar, a speeding truck knocked their motorcycle down, killing both on the spot.

KILLED

Mystery shrouds the death of a youth whose body was found floating in the water filled in a vacant plot in Shyam Nagar under Chakeri police station on Thursday morning. The deceased youth, identified as Dharmendra alias Bauwa (35) of Maharaipur, was employed as security guard at the house of a lawyer in Shyam Nagar. Shyam Nagar police outpost incharge BP Rastogi said that according to the lawyer, Dharmendra was suffering from epilepsy. The kin of Dharmendra, however, alleged that he was killed and the body was dumped in the plot.

NER implements Bridge Management System

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

By adopting new technologies the NER administration is constantly making efforts to ensure qualitative improvement in its system of working and efficiency. In this perspective NER is moving towards complete digitalisation. Maintenance of rail bridges is of special importance in protected rail movement. The NER has started the use of Bridge Management System (BMS) developed at the entire Indian Railway level for good and protected upkeep of bridges. BMS is a web-based portal in which all details related to rail bridge are available and is very effective in inspection, monitoring and maintenance of bridges, said CPRO Pankaj Kumar Singh. In BMS all details related to bridges from small to big and data are available such as date of their construction, their current status, date of superstructure, technology and materials used, improvements made from time to time, date of various inspections, map, photographs etc. This portal is an important platform for significant analysis of all aspects related to rail bridges and availability of



information. BMS has been developed by CRIS. Through it updated information about all rail bridges is available online to all authorities concerned which helps in protecting them and taking corrective action. By adopting this new technology railway administration has become more capable than before in taking immediate decisions and taking necessary

action. On NER that there are a total of 25 important rail bridges, 383 major ones and 3,537 minor ones. Before the use of BMS it was difficult to compile all the data and details of these bridges. Each bridge had a separate register in which all details were mentioned manually. This work took more time. In analysing the condition of any railway bridge the registers related to it had to be sent to several officials. With the implementation of BMS all these problems have been overcome and dexterity for taking effective decisions timely has increased. Moreover in the perspective of Covid-19 too BMS is very useful. In manual system sending the registers of rail bridges to many places there is a possibility of infection while there is no such apprehension in BMS. It may be pointed out here that the use of e-office has also been started on NER.

NER hospital starts antigen testing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Rapid antigen testing has been started in NER divisional hospital here in collaboration with district administration under the leadership of CMS Dr MS Nambial. He said the NER administration is sensitive to prevent the spread of Covid-19. "In view of the increasing number of Covid-19 cases, rapid antigen test system has been started in the divisional hospital because the RTPCR investigation took a lot of time," said Dr Nambial. He said a rapid antigen test through kit tests the antibodies of coronavirus present in the body in a short time, which also accurately reports at various stages of infection. "Now it has become easier for railway employees to get Covid-19 test done as earlier they were being sent to BHU or Heritage Hospital," he said. ACMS Dr Sunanda Chaturvedi said that as many as 45 employees and their families were examined on Wednesday and out of them three positive patients were detected and details about them had already been given to the district administration for further action.

BEd entrance exam preparations reviewed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A meeting was held at the ZP meeting Hall for reviewing preparations for the BEd entrance examination which was scheduled to be held on August 9. Presiding over it DM SK Patel made it clear that no electronic device, including mobile phone, would be allowed in the examination room. He directed the heads of the exam centres to ensure that the CCTV cameras from the main gate to the examination rooms were in working order. He said that seven centres had been in the district. The meeting was attended by the principals concerned, ASP city, SDM Sadar, chief treasury officer and Dr Ashok Kumar, representative of university which was conducting the examination.

MLA distributes masks among labourers

CORRESPONDENT ■ JALAIUN

MLA Gauri Shankar Verma distributed masks, slippers and sanitiser kits among 500 labourers on Rath Road on Wednesday. He said the role of labourers was very important in temple construction. Several BJP

office-bearers were present, including Kedar Bhardwaj, Pradeep Maheshwari, Udayan Paliwal, Pawan Tomar, Shashi Sharma, Suman Sharma, Shanti Gupta, Manoj Paliwal, Amit Niranjan, Dharmendra Pal Nagar, Pramod Kumar, Shailendra Soni, Sumit Parihar, Devendra

Ahriwar, Ankur Savita, Sheelu, Sandeep Verma and Girish Chaturvedi. Meanwhile Ramdhun was played and Sunderkand was held at Shri Radha Krishna Temple. The MLA said that it was a historic day, the BJP had fulfilled its promise and the Ram temple would be built there.

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 each ventilator is geo-tagged. We will 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 procured 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 Khetrapal 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's 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 2nd installment of virus 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 Vial Transport Media (VTM) have been procured by them. As many as 96,557 human resource has been added and 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 by 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, seek 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 students 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 Alok Srivastava, has also sought direction to the authorities to increase the number of examination centres for these exams. "Conducting the aforesaid 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 then only conduct these exams, in order to save the lives of the students and their parents," the plea said.

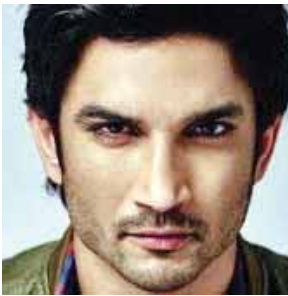
It claimed that NTA, which conducts entrance exams for

The plea, filed through advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava, has also sought direction to the authorities to increase the number of examination centres for these exams

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's suicide: ED grills Samuel for second day



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday questioned actress Rhea Chakraborty's associate Samuel Miranda for the second consecutive day in connection with a money laundering case relating to film star Sushant Singh Rajput's death.

The ED questioned 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 had filed a complaint before 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 Munnai 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

Maha witnesses spike, records a new of 11,514 infected cases

- Breaches 300 fatality mark 3rd time in a week, records 316 deaths
- Total infections mount to 4,79,779, deaths go up to 16,792

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a major spike in the number of Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra, an all-time daily high of 11,514 people tested positive for coronavirus on Thursday, while 316 people succumbed to the pandemic in various parts of the State.

Surpassing the earlier record daily tally of 11,147 infections reported on July 30, the State witnessed a new high of 11,514 infections, taking the total number infected cases to a staggering 4,79,779.

Breaching the 300 fatality mark on the fourth consecutive day in week, Maharashtra recorded 316 deaths on Thursday. Earlier, there were 322 deaths on August 1, the state recorded 300 deaths on August 4 and 334 on August 5.

With the 316 fresh deaths, the total number of deaths in the state mounted to 16,792.

Of the total reported on Thursday, Pune accounted for the highest 62 deaths, followed by 57 deaths in Mumbai and 56 deaths in Thane.

Apart from 62 deaths in Pune, 57 in Mumbai and 56 in Thane, there were 18 deaths in Nagpur, 15 in Solapur, 13 each in Nashik, Jalgaon and Kolhapur, 10 in Palghar, 7 each in Aurangabad, Parbhani and Amravati, 6 in Latur, 5 each in Raigad, Ahmednagar, Sangli and Nanded, 3 in Buldhana, 2 each in Dhule, Satara and Yavatmal and one death each in Nandurbar, Ratnagiri and Akola.

With 57 deaths, the Covid-19 toll in the city rose from

6591 to 6648, while the number of infected cases went up by 910 to touch 1,20,150.

On a day when 10854 patients were discharged from hospitals in the state after full recovery, taking the total number of patients discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year to 3,16,375. The recovery rate rose to 65.94 per cent. The mortality rate in the state is 3.50 per cent. The State health authorities pegged the number of 'active cases' in the state at 1,46,305.

Pune, which has emerged as the second worst-affected district in terms of spread of the pandemic, has recorded 1,04,353 infections and 2496 deaths till now.

With 1,00,875 infected cases and 2,823 deaths, Thane continued to be the second-worst hit district in Maharashtra.

Out of 24,87, 990 samples sent to laboratories, 4,79,779 have tested positive (19.23 per cent) for COVID-19 until Thursday.

Currently, 9,76,332 people are in home quarantine while 37,768 people are in institutional quarantine.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari e-inaugurated a new Covid-19 testing lab at Bhaktivedanta Hospital in Mira Road, one of the Corona hotspots, in the presence of the hospital Chairman Hrishikesh Mafatlal, Mira-Bhayander Municipal Corporation Mayor Jyotsana Hasnale and MLA Gita Jain.

MUMBAI PARALYSED AGAIN

City remains under wet spell for 3rd day; landslide in downtown Mumbai, 15 wall, 360 tree falls, 47 short circuits mark day

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after the Island city of Mumbai registered a record rainfall in 46 years, the country's commercial capital and neighbouring area reeled under the intense wet spell for the third consecutive day on Thursday, resulting in dislocation in bus and suburban train services and inundation of the low-lying areas.

A landslide along upmarket Peddar Road, 15 wall collapses, 360-odd tree falls and 47 incidents of electric short-circuits were the highlights of Thursday's monsoon report card for the metropolis put out by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

In one of the major monsoon-related incident that disrupted the traffic towards south Mumbai, a portion of the land slid along with trees planted near the wall protecting the hillock along the Peddar Road. The landslide took place in the early hours of Thursday, at the edge of the Malabar Hill located just off the Kemp's Corner flyover.

The suburban train service services on the Main and Harbour lines of the Central and Central Railway were affected by the continued rains and consequent inundation of tracks at several places. This was the sec-



ond landslide within Mumbai in three days — the other being the one reported earlier at Kandivli in north Mumbai along the Western Express Highway.

For most part of the day, team of civic workers were involved in clearing the piled up loose soil from the landslide and branches of the trees. As a consequence, the main arterial road remained out of bounds for the traffic movement for several hours.

Talking to mediapersons after visiting the spot, Maharashtra's former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said: "I visited the Peddar Road in south Mumbai where the entire road got blocked due to the landslide. Not only traffic got affected but water supply too".

Meanwhile, the Island city of Mumbai recorded 331.8 mm

of rains during 24 hours between 8.30 am on August 5 and 8.30 am August 6, which incidentally was the highest rainfall in 46 years. The city suburbs recorded a rain of 162.3mm during the same period. Of the 15 wall collapses reported on Thursday, six were reported from the Island city, six incidents took place in the eastern suburbs, while the remaining three incidents were reported from western suburbs of the city.

Similarly, there were 361 tree falls — 274 in the city, 40 eastern suburbs and 47 in the western suburbs — were reported from across the metropolis, while 57 incidents of electric short circuits were reported from the different parts of the metropolis. Following the call by the weather bureau, the fishermen from the Coastal Konkan

region chose not to venture into the sea.

Meanwhile, 16 fishermen who were stranded off Arnala off Thane district were rescued by Indian Coast Guard.

A crane in the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust collapsed but no damage to any vessel was reported, while winds caused extensive damage to the DY Patil Stadium in Nerul in Navi Mumbai.

In a related development, Kolhapur district in Western Maharashtra has been put on high alert with the Panchganga river flowing over the flood line in some places. The Panchganga river is flowing at 41.2 feet level whereas the alert level is 39 feet and danger mark is 43 feet

The movement on nine State highways and two dozen roads in the Kolhapur district were affected because of rainfall since the last three days.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray reviewed the situation in Kolhapur, along with the neighbouring district of Sangli which had in July-August witnessed deluge and floods. Uddhav advised Konkan and Pune divisional commissioners to focus on overflowing of rivers in Kolhapur, Raigad, Ratnagiri and shift local residents to safer places in view of flooding of rivers.

BJP sarpanch killed by ultras in S Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Sending out a chilling reminder to the security forces 'unidentified' terrorists 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. According to ground reports, "Sajad Ahmad was camping in a secured migrant camp in the area for the past several days. Early Thursday he stepped out of the camp and was 20 meters short of his home when 'unidentified' terrorists fired upon him".

"Bleeding profusely he was rushed to the nearby hospital where doctors declared him brought dead", official sources said. This is the second attack on a BJP worker in the last 48 hours in the region.

Earlier, BJP Panch Arif Ahmad was critically wounded after terrorists fired at

him in Akhran Qazigund on the evening of August 4. Since June 2020 this is the fourth major terror attack on Panchayat workers in Kashmir valley.

Last month, former BJP district president Waseem Bari, his father and brother were killed inside their shop after terrorists fired on them from close range in Bandipora. Bari had a 10-member police security and all of them were suspended and arrested because they were not with him when he was attacked.

On June 8, Congress sarpanch Ajay Kumar Pandita was killed outside his house at Lokbhawan in Anantnag.

Meanwhile, fearing for their lives three more BJP Workers of Kokernag constituency of Naropora Watnard Village Thursday resigned from basic membership of BJP party. These workers were identified as Shabir Ahmad Khan S/o Gh Rasool Khan, Reyaz Ahmad Rather S/o Ab Aziz Rather, Ab Khaliq Sheikh S/o Mohd Subhan Sheikh.

Ex-RS member dies of corona

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The dreaded coronavirus claimed yet another political victim when veteran Marxist leader, former Rajya Sabha Member and an important member in Jyoti Basu Cabinet Shyamal Chakrabarty died on Thursday. He was 77 and is survived by a daughter. He had tested positive for the virus and, admitted to a pri-

vate hospital on July 31, sources said, adding he was suffering from comorbidities like renal conditions.

He was one of the five "Young Turks" of the Left movement in the 1970s, including Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, Biman Bose, Anil Biswas and Subhas Chakrabarty all of whom were close friends and rose to prominence as mass leaders.

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 targetted 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 sarpanches 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. Demonising 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 fetid legacy 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.

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 that Jehovah is god; Moses the Prophet and Torah the scripture. What follows are logical corollaries of this premise, all of which the believer must expectedly 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 *haraams* 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 *Ijtihad* 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 and between Bulgaria 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 up-down, given the premise followed by its 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

“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”



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 fad for some social media users to target celebrities and post unsavoury 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 targetted 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
Kannur

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 Junagadh 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 elitist 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 welfare partner countries and the globe. China knows that future 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 deeper 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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



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



MOÏN QAZI

In the last two decades, the gender landscape in rural India has been greening 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 scorecard 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 Shalan 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, Mhalungi and Adhala in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra.

Now a 49-year-old firebrand, Shalan 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, Shalan and her band of workers are trying to unlock human potential, both for themselves and for thousands of women in villages around Sangamner.

Shalan 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 Shalan. 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 Shalan was made of sterner stuff and instead of being resigned to *status quo*, she decided to upend it.

Shalan'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.

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

While pursuing her entrepreneurship journey, Shalan 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 *Bahina*, 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 *Bahina* 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 channelised into the magazine's writings where issues are reported and analysed from a woman's perspective.

The 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 build 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.

Shalan 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.

Shalan'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.

Shalan 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 Shalan. "I really feel like a seasoned business leader." Women leaders like Shalan 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 containing phosphate detergents and industrial effluents into it.

The two-member Yamuna monitoring committee got this information with the aid of the nine quality monitoring stations of the DPCC along the banks of the river. Now that the cause for the toxic foam on the river's surface has been found, it is for the Government to convert the findings of the report into verifiable and meaningful action.

Sadly, rivers in urban India have always been the dumping ground for 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 lodging a silent protest against pollution is the appearance of the toxic foam.

The Bellandur Lake in Bengaluru is another such water body that has



been in the news for spewing excessive white, toxic foam. The pollution level in Bengaluru's largest lake is an example of the apathy and inefficiency of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board in managing sewage disposal. To make matters worse, the dumped chemicals and oil in the lake tend to float to the surface and also catch 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 STPs 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 daily. 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 irreversible 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)



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)

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 fallout 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 made eligible for 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 the 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.

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 has provided relief to a large number of MSMEs, he added.

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, RBL 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, Sunteck 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 and now prefers to wait and see how the COVID situation pans out for further action.

Having said that, their accommodative stance and expectation of easing in inflation keep the possibility of a rate cut alive.

"Besides, the additional

measures announced to support the stressed sectors were also received well by the market," said Gurpreet Sidana, chief operating officer, Religare Broking Ltd.

The Sensex surged 362 points to close at 38,025.45.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, left the benchmark repurchase (repo) rate unchanged at 4 per cent.

"Given the uncertainty surrounding the inflation outlook and extremely weak state of the economy in the midst of an unprecedented shock from the ongoing pandemic, the MPC decided to keep the policy rate on hold," Das said.

He said the central bank would remain "watchful 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."

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 an 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 that it will procure 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 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 aircraft Mig 35 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 Bhashwani Windlass on Thursday said it has not laid off any employee so far, but admitted that there is not much clar-

ity on "where the footwear major is heading" amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

As of March, the company 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 clari-

ty about where we are heading. Intermittent lockdowns and the surging pandemic in some states is of concern for us. 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.

NIFTY 50					
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	11185.70	11256.80	11127.30	11200.15	98.50
TATASTEEL	389.75	402.80	385.50	400.50	14.70
INFY	953.50	974.40	942.50	972.00	27.30
GAIL	94.20	96.45	93.50	95.75	2.45
BAIFINANCE	332.00	337.80	325.00	334.50	8.25
UPL	452.50	466.50	451.60	465.00	11.40
ZEE	146.50	152.60	146.00	149.10	3.55
TCS	2275.00	2319.50	2265.35	2309.85	50.35
HCLTECH	692.00	707.60	686.40	703.40	15.00
ICICIBANK	353.45	363.75	348.60	359.30	7.30
JSWSTEEL	235.00	239.95	232.50	239.65	4.50
TECHM	656.00	666.85	649.15	660.30	11.95
CIPLA	724.95	739.70	720.10	734.00	11.85
TITAN	1105.45	1125.00	1091.25	1122.55	17.10
TATAMOTORS	116.20	117.70	115.50	117.15	1.75
ONGC	77.85	79.95	77.05	78.10	1.15
HDFCBANK	1037.00	1055.00	1026.25	1041.45	13.90
HINDALCO	178.00	178.90	174.20	178.05	2.30
ITC	194.20	195.60	193.10	195.20	2.40
HINDUNILVR	2200.00	2229.00	2192.05	2216.30	21.75
NESTLEIND	16600.00	16700.00	16450.00	16661.00	157.65
BAJAJFINSV	6279.95	6370.00	6242.00	6299.95	57.90
IOC	86.80	88.20	86.30	87.40	0.80
ASIANPAINT	1732.05	1752.10	1720.10	1730.15	13.85
SUNPHARMA	533.90	541.45	526.15	532.75	3.90
INDUSINDBK	497.80	501.95	485.75	496.00	3.25
WIPRO	280.70	284.25	277.75	279.85	1.65
NTPC	86.50	87.45	85.60	86.40	0.50
RELIANCE	2157.00	2167.70	2107.80	2136.55	10.10
KOTAKBANK	1345.00	1367.40	1330.65	1340.20	6.00
HDFCLIFE	608.40	611.75	602.25	607.65	2.65
GRASIM	636.00	646.50	629.00	635.90	2.45
MARUTI	6534.95	6585.85	6434.40	6551.25	25.00
COALINDIA	129.00	131.20	128.90	129.00	0.45
INFRAEIT	192.00	196.75	190.55	191.70	0.65
BRITANNIA	3865.00	3912.00	3845.00	3860.00	10.05
HEROMOTOCO	2717.00	2733.00	2675.00	2702.80	7.05
HDFC	1798.25	1805.70	1762.05	1778.45	1.75
ULTRACEMCO	4068.90	4083.75	4001.05	4040.00	2.95
POWERGRID	176.65	177.75	175.40	176.00	0.05
BPCL	412.00	423.50	406.25	409.90	-0.55
SBIN	192.30	194.90	190.25	191.15	-0.30
IT	926.05	933.70	920.25	922.70	-0.05
BAJAJ-AUTO	3024.80	3075.00	2976.40	2999.00	-10.00
BHARTIARTL	561.70	561.70	552.65	555.00	-1.95
AXISBANK	436.00	438.30	427.10	433.00	-1.95
DREDDY	4610.05	4658.00	4567.55	4576.00	-24.95
M&M	618.00	618.00	605.55	610.75	-3.50
ANDAMPORTS	330.10	330.90	321.40	324.05	-3.05
SHREECEM	22120.00	22165.00	21530.00	21849.85	-254.05
EICHERMOT	2199.55	2209.95	2158.75	2167.65	-283.10

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 high on the ACLU's agenda: voting rights, LGBT rights, racial justice and others. In one long-running case, the ACLU succeeded in blocking 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 later hidden 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 they could tweet again. **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 takes a direct 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 the 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 into a national spotlight and at the heart 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 on offer 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 relegated 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 Organiser Basil Rajapaksa — who is the younger 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 peace 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 non-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**

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 the start of intra-Afghan 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 party 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 state 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 people 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**

Belarus' leader warns against poll protests

Minsk (Belarus): The authoritarian leader of Belarus warned political opponents Thursday that authorities won't allow any unsanctioned demonstrations following the weekend election in which he is seeking a sixth consecutive term.

President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the ex-Soviet nation with an iron hand for 26 years, is facing an upsurge in opposition protests fueled by the worsening economy and the Belarusian govern-

ment's botched response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Election officials barred Lukashenko's two main challengers from the race, leaving a former English teacher who is the wife of a jailed opposition blogger as the candidate trying to unseat the president. But Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, 37, has managed to unite the fragmented opposition in Belarus and drawn tens of thousands to her campaign rallies.

Police have detained over

1,360 participants in opposition protests since the start of the campaign in May, according to the Viasna human rights center in Belarus. Looking increasingly nervous in the face of the anti-government protests, Lukashenko, 65, met with his top security officials Thursday and warned against any attempts to stage demonstrations after Sunday's vote.

The opposition staged rallies after previous elections to protest the outcome as rigged, and is

expected to try to do the same if the president wins again this time. "God save us from setting up a fire in the center of Minsk," he said at the meeting. "We can't and will not allow that to happen."

The Belarusian leader described the protests already held as part of a "hybrid war" waged by antagonists, charging that the West, Ukraine and even his country's main ally, Russia, all could be interested in destabilising his government. **AP**

1.2 m seek jobless aid in US after \$600 federal check ends

Washington: Nearly 1.2 million laid-off Americans applied for state unemployment benefits last week, evidence that the coronavirus keeps forcing companies to slash jobs just as a critical \$600 weekly federal jobless payment has expired.

The Labour Department's report Thursday marked the 20th straight week that at least 1 million people have sought jobless aid. Before the pandemic hit hard in March, the number of Americans seeking unemployment checks had never surpassed 700,000 in a week, not even during the Great Recession of 2007-2009.

The new jobless claims were down by 249,000 from the previous week after rising for two straight weeks.

The pandemic, the lockdowns meant to contain it and the wariness of many Americans to venture back out to eat, shop or travel have delivered a devastating blow to the economy despite the gov-

ernment's emergency rescue efforts.

The nation's gross domestic product, the broadest measure of economic output, shrank at an annual rate of nearly 33% from April through June. It was by far the worst quarterly fall on record, though the economy has rebounded somewhat since then.

On Friday, the government is expected to report a sizable job gain for July — 1.6 million. Yet so deeply did employers slash payrolls after the pandemic paralyzed the economy in March that even July's expected gain would mean that barely 40% of the jobs lost to the coronavirus have been recovered.

And the pace of hiring is clearly slowing. A resurgence of cases in the South and the West has spread elsewhere and upended hopes for a speedy economic recovery as bars, restaurants and other businesses have had to delay or

reverse plans to reopen and rehire staff.

All told, 16.1 million people are collecting traditional unemployment benefits from their state. For months, the unemployed had also been receiving the \$600 a week in federal jobless aid on top of their state benefit. But the federal payment expired last week. Congress is engaged in prolonged negotiations over renewing the federal benefit, which would likely be extended at a reduced level.

In the meantime, millions of the unemployed suddenly have less money to pay for essentials. Many of them are among the 23 million people nationwide who are at risk of being evicted from their homes, according to The Aspen Institute, as moratoriums enacted because of the coronavirus expire.

With the nation still gripped by an alarming resurgence of coronavirus cases, the US government will provide its

latest snapshot Thursday of the layoffs that have remained elevated at a weekly pace above 1 million since the pandemic erupted in March.

The rate of applications for unemployment benefits has stalled at roughly twice the record high that had existed before the virus sent the economy spiraling into a recession. With many states and localities having re-imposed lockdowns in response to the spreading virus, businesses face renewed struggles that have forced some to impose further job cuts or to shut down.

The latest string of layoffs follows the expiration of a \$600 weekly federal jobless payment that provided critical support for many of the unemployed. Members of Congress are locked in prolonged negotiations over a new rescue aid package that might extend that unemployment benefit, though likely at a lower level of payment. **AP**

Nirav Modi trial in Sept

London: Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, fighting extradition to India, was on Thursday further remanded in custody until August 27 after he appeared via video-link at a regular remand hearing before a UK court on charges over the nearly USD 2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud and money laundering case.

The 49-year-old jeweller, who has been lodged at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest in March last year, appeared via video-link before District Judge Vanessa Baraitser at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London for a regular 28-day "call-over" hearing.

He was told the next hearing in the case will be a case management hearing ahead of a trial set for five days from September 7.

"You will appear via video-link again. Your lawyers may be present in court," said Judge Baraitser, in reference to the part remote setting in operation across UK courts since the coronavirus lockdown.

Pakistan Leader of Opposition indicted in corruption case

Lahore: A Pakistani court on Thursday indicted Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shahbaz in a corruption case.

Separately, the Lahore Accountability Court issued bailable arrest warrant against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, currently in London for treatment, in a land allotment case involving Geo Media Group owner Mir Shakilur Rehman.

The accountability court in Lahore indicted Shahbaz, 68, on the charges of using taxpayers' money to construct a drain in Chiniot (250 km from Lahore) in (2010-2013) which allegedly benefitted a business run by his sons.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) alleged that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president used his position at the time as chief minister of Punjab to approve the drain's construction at a cost of Rs 36 crore, benefitting the Ramzan Sugar Mills which

is owned by his sons Hamza and Salman.

"The public funds were misused for the benefit of a family business. The people getting benefits from the drain were few in number," the court said.

Salman is absconding in London and Hamza is in jail on judicial remand. Hamza is the Punjab Assembly's Opposition Leader.

Sharif told the court that wrong charges were framed against him and his son. The 70-year-old PML-N chief said he had saved billions of rupees in different development projects in the province. The court adjourned the hearing till August 27.

In the other land case, the accountability court issued bailable arrest warrants against three-time premier Nawaz Sharif.

Special Prosecutor Haris Qureshi said the suspect (Nawaz Sharif) was not brought to the court in the light of the government's COVID-19 standard operat-

ing procedures.

The judge directed the prosecutor to treat the case as 'special' and ensure the appearance of the suspect at the next hearing.

The prosecutor also submitted a report about non-service of the court's summons to Nawaz Sharif at his Lahore address. The report said the suspect was in London.

At this, the judge issued bailable warrants for the arrest of the former premier and adjourned the hearing till August 20.

Sharif had left for London in November last year after getting bail in a money laundering case, and the Al-Azizia case in which he was convicted for seven years. He left for the UK to treat a heart ailment.

The former prime minister recently submitted his medical reports to the Lahore High Court stating that because of coronavirus doctors had advised him not to go outside, therefore he could not return. **PTI**

TrendSlazer

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 untouched 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 Siddique, 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 engineer-



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 2020 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 manuals 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 no standardised 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.

—AP

SINGLES

MERCEDES RETAIN BOTTAS 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.

TOKYO BAY 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.

MAN CITY SIGN AKE FROM BOURNEMOUTH

MANCHESTER: Manchester City have signed Dutch defender Nathan Ake from Bournemouth. Ake has put pen to paper on 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 591 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 13-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 Formosinho, 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 changes 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 lad was 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 Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have mutually decided to pause their partnership for the 2020 season of Indian Premier League," it stated. Vivo won the IPL title spon-

sorship 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 franchise from Vivo's exit will potentially lose 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 M.LASK 2-1 and Inter Milan beat Getafe 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.

Andreas Andrade 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

Their celebrations were shortlived 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 getting 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 Romelu 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 Italian 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 couldn't 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 on loan at 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.



after 33 minutes.

The Spaniards were given a chance to take the game to penalties with 25 minutes remaining as VAR said Diego Godin had handled in his own box 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

of a clearance inside his own area.

Elsewhere, 2009 champions Shakhtar Donetsk booked a last-eight spot against Basel or Eintracht Frankfurt after three goals within the closing four minutes clinched a 3-0 win over Wolfsburg.

On Thursday Rangers head to Leverkusen, Wolves host Olympiakos, and Sevilla face Roma in Duisburg.

Shan's 156 drives Pak to 326

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Century-maker Shan Masood and Shadab 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 48 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 312-8 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 handled it.

Masood, on 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 in 24 years took 251 balls, with 13 fours.

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



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

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 with his first six of the innings, sending 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 has "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 reciprocal tour, saying England batsmen are raring to have a go at the placid 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 seven substitutes will be allowed on the bench but only three can be brought on when the new season begins around Sept 12. AP



"Everyone knows Agüero, 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

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 men's IPL was in doubt but these games are most welcome," Mithali said.

On comments of top internationalists like Healy, Suzie Bates, Rachel 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."

Normally, the IPL has a p-

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

"But these are unusual circumstances, the window (tentatively 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.

"It (their frustration) is understandable. They (foreign players) also want to be part of the event. I too want 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 men's 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 now has more time to prepare and end her drought at the showpiece event.

Tokyo 2020 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 C'ships. 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 October 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

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

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 13000 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 4000 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.

FOCUS

China's economy bouncing back to growth

The 3.2 percent year-on-year growth in the second quarter of the year, versus a 6.8 percent contraction in the first quarter, demonstrated that China's economy has a solid base for further expansion.

China's economy is bouncing back to growth after a steep slump from the COVID-19 pandemic with better-than-expected indicators in the second quarter, said Yan Pengcheng, director of the Department of National Economy at the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), during a news conference in Beijing on July 17.

"Steady economic recovery in the second quarter proves that China's economy has great resilience to offset external headwinds such as the coronavirus outbreak. The country is able to make structural adjustments, shift the growth model and foster new growth drivers," he said.

Ever since the outbreak of COVID-19, China adopted comprehensive, strict and precise measures for prevention and control despite misunderstanding and smearing from some Western countries. The government has rolled out a raft of measures, including more fiscal spending, tax relief and supportive employment policies, to revive the economy.

Chinese economy has shifted from slowing down to rising, strong evidence that the adverse impact of the epidemic can be overcome with resolve,



China's foreign trade has gradually recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data released by the General Administration of Customs, the country's foreign trade rose 5.1 percent on a yearly basis in June, with exports up 4.3 percent and imports growing 6.2 percent. Here in Qingzhou Port, Fuzhou, capital of east China's Fujian Province, a freighter loaded with containers sets on sail on July 21

Photo by Xinhua

courage and correct actions.

The recovery will continue in the second half of the year, powered by the rapidly growing new industries and business models, as well as the strong support from macro policies.

China, now in a better position to handle contingencies in the future, remains an important

engine for global growth. Its market is still huge, inclusive and open where wise foreign enterprises have every reason to stay rooted and seek further development.

The country still faces a number of major economic challenges that could dampen its future growth, such as the continued global

spread of the coronavirus and an unfavorable international economic and trade environment, Yan Pengcheng said.

Despite headwinds, China's GDP grew by 3.2 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, rebounding from the first quarter's contraction, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

Chen Yuyu, an

economics professor at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, said the second quarter's improved indicators signal that China is bouncing back from the downturn.

"The economy will gradually regain its swagger with government measures to continuously prevent and control the epidemic," Chen said in an article posted on the WeChat account of his management school. "The epidemic has not affected the pace of China's structural adjustment. Instead, China is moving forward in terms of upgrading its economic structure and renewing economic driving forces, with booming new business in fields like online education, cloud computing and smart manufacturing."

Chen forecast that China's GDP growth could rebound to 5 to 6 percent in the third and fourth quarters, with full-year growth of 2 to 3 percent. "More efforts are needed to spur consumption, boost domestic demand, create more jobs and introduce policies to spark innovation in technologies and business models."

To hedge against the impact of COVID-19, the government has introduced a series of policies to

maintain economic and social stability, such as increasing support for hard-hit enterprises. The country has cut taxes and fees by more than 1 trillion yuan (\$142.9 billion), the NDRC said.

The NDRC said it approved 54 fixed-asset investment projects in the first half of this year, mainly in transportation, high-tech, energy, agriculture, forestry and water conservancy. The overall investment hit 494.4 billion yuan.

"In the next phase, the NDRC will continue to work with relevant parties to expand effective investment and focus on new infrastructure, new-type urbanization and key projects for national development," Yan Pengcheng said.

In the first half of 2020, China's fixed-asset investment declined 3.1 percent year-on-year, narrowing from a 6.3 percent decline in the first five months. In the second quarter, fixed-asset investment jumped 4.8 percent, the NBS said.

Investment from foreign enterprises increased by 3.9 percent in the first half of this year, proving China's increasing openness and attractiveness to foreign investment, Chen added.

(Edited from Xinhua and China Daily)

MARCH TOWARD "XIAOKANG"

Bee-keeping enriches Yao village in S Yunnan

Editor's note: A *xiaokang* society, or a moderately prosperous society, has been the dream of Chinese people for thousands of years. At the end of this year, China plans to secure the building of a moderately prosperous society in all aspects. Recently, our reporters travel around Yunnan province to cover the arduous efforts being made in order to realize this dream.

Na'metian is a Yao village in south Yunnan's Xishuangbanna Prefecture. To help the poor villagers, the provincial taxation officers have joined hands with the Dianyunmiyu bio-company in recent years, offering them beehives and technical training in apiculture. "Thanks to beekeeping, the villagers have been lifted out of poverty and they're now willing

to let their children go to school," said Yan Wen, secretary of the villagers' Party committee.

The Yao village used to be a shabby place, without the basic means for beekeeping. Under local poverty-relief projects, the village has been turned into a clean Yao ethnic settlement, with sound facilities for living, working and animal breeding. Diversified vegetations in the village are resources for bees to produce quality honey.

Most villagers would sell their honey to the Dianyunmiyu company for it offer them good prices. So far, beekeeping has brought an income of 26,000 yuan to 13 poor families in the Na'metian and Manzhung villages. The two villages have each gained 129,000 yuan out of beekeeping. (Yunnan Daily)

CULTURE

Heritage plus souvenirs: "bring" the Yunnan culture back home



Tourists DIY purple pottery in Jianshui (Online photo)

As a culturally-diversified province lying in southwest China, Yunnan has long been famous for the arts and handicrafts created by local ethnic groups. Black and purple potteries, paper cuttings as well as wooden objects are among the most popular souvenirs for people who come to visit Yunnan. Almost every tourist would purchase a few handicrafts before leaving and bring them back home.

"Souvenirs developed from intangible cultural heritages are obviously the best sellers," says Wang Ziqiang, who currently runs a studio to specifically popularize tile cats, Yunnan's traditional clay roof ridge beasts originated from the Dali area.

Recently, the creative cultural products made by Wang's studio have become increasingly popular among visitors and tourists. By cooperating with the Yunnan Provincial Museum, Yunnan Art Museum and a number of other institutes and companies, his products have been sold to Kunming, Dali, Huanan and even Beijing. "My products are primarily designed for young

people, and I'm happy to see that they have already become my main customers," Wang Ziqiang says proudly.

In Jianshui city, southern Yunnan's Honghe prefecture, there remains a fairly long history of purple pottery making. According to local history records, the earliest pottery manufacturing in Jianshui can be dated back to over 3,500 years ago. The modern history of Jianshui purple pottery, on the other hand, began in the year of 1953, when it was named one of China's four most distinguished pottery wares by the then Ministry of Culture.

Along with the development of tourism, purple pottery wares of Jianshui have now been considered decent souvenirs for any travelers who visit Yunnan, rather than just a local intangible cultural heritage. Today, many tourists to Jianshui would choose to visit the Purple Pottery Park, Purple Pottery Street as well as Pottery Village, having a glimpse of the city's thousand-year history of pottery making while bringing some exquisite pottery wares back home. (Wang Jingzhong)

VOICE

Hong Kong's residents hold the key to their future

Many media throughout the West have been tirelessly repeating for weeks that the passing of the National Security Law means the "death" of Hong Kong, in the same way that the handover was peddled in 1997 as "a death sentence for Hong Kong". And yet here we are, with Hong Kong as prosperous and vibrant as ever.

Part of this problem stems from the misconception that Hong Kong is some sort of foreign concession. To those who hold this view, Hong Kong does not belong to China, even though China has undisputed sovereignty over it.

It should not be forgotten that Hong Kong, as well as other foreign concessions and colonies in China, was acquired through a series of unequal treaties that would be completely unacceptable under current international laws and modern democratic norms.

Why does the West forget now that Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking to put an end to the First Opium War?

Isn't this the same kind of hypocrisy that we are seeing now, when we see Britain offering millions of Hong Kong people residency rights and a path to citizenship, despite Britain not doing any democratic reform in almost 156 years of its colonial rule over Hong Kong?

In 2017, to mark the 20th anniversary of the handover, I conducted some research comparing the Hong Kong of 1997 with Hong Kong in 2017. Hong Kong was in better shape, from a socioeconomic perspective, in 2017 than in 1997.

Not knowing what the new national security law will mean in practice may worry some people, but the fact remains that 99.9 percent of Hong Kong people will not be affected by this new law, since it targets only separatist

activities, subversion of State power, terrorism and foreign/external interference.

Given the fact that an immense part of Hong Kong's society is pacific and reasonable, this law should not worry Hong Kong residents. What should worry them right now is how to make Hong Kong flourish again after a year of protests and riots, and after the COVID-19 pandemic's devastation.

Despite Hong Kong being part of China (and therefore neither an independent territory nor a foreign concession), Hong Kong's future depends entirely on the residents of Hong Kong. The city's residents can show Beijing that Hong Kong can be part of China while maintaining its special characteristics.

The Macao Special Administrative Region has chosen this path. For example, Macao will try to diversify its economy by creating a stock exchange and embracing both the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area project.

Hong Kong residents must grasp the city's future now by embracing the many opportunities that will further integrate its economy with that of the mainland. (By Oriol Caudevilla who has a doctorate in real estate law and economics, has worked as a business analyst for a Hong Kong publicly listed company.)



99.9 percent of Hong Kong people will not be affected by the National Security Law, since it targets only separatist activities, subversion of State power, terrorism and foreign/external interference.

IN-PICS



A growing number of young people in Macao have set up their businesses in parallel with the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Riding the wave of innovation and entrepreneurship across China, they are seizing opportunities in the Greater Bay Area to achieve their dreams. The photo shows that students were given training courses at the Macao Young Entrepreneur Incubation Center on July 14

Photo by Xinhua

NEW INDUSTRIES

Yunnan issues guidelines to boost "night economy"



A snack stand at Nanqiang street, Kunming

Photo by Li Wenjun

Recently, the People's Government of Yunnan Province issues guidelines to promote the "night economy" in the province amid the "new normal" brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to

the guidelines, a series of "night economy areas" are designed to be built not only in Kunming, the province's capital city, but in Dali, Lijiang, Jinghong, Qujing and many more cities.

"Night economy" is a Chinese way to make the night lively and dynamic. Since its birth, the new economic pattern, which aims to increase domestic demand and spur consumption in China, has gained popularity nationwide amid the on-going Covid-19 pandemic.

Take Kunming for instance, 15 existing shopping complexes and markets will be named "key night economy areas". The guidelines stress the importance of combining night and ethnic elements of each place. Therefore, while a total of 20 to 30 night economy areas are planned to be created in Kunming, every other major city across Yunnan will also see 2 to

3 such areas, with an aim to not merely boost local economy and bring new dynamics to urban life, but meet the increasing shopping and leisure demands of citizens in Yunnan province as the lockdown of COVID-19 eases.

By reorganizing tourist resources and upgrading urban facilities and services, the Yunnan government expects to create a better environment that tourists and consumers from Yunnan and even the entire nation can enjoy, especially at night. Furthermore, an "online+offline" shopping model will be guaranteed to substantially optimize every customer's experience.

(Wang Jingzhong)

FOREIGNERS IN CHINA

Asif Alex: China's achievements made by hard-working people

Asif Alex, a student from Afghanistan has been studying at the School of International Education of Kunming University, Kunming, capital of Yunnan province since 2018.

He has been to the Chinese localities of Hong Kong, Shanghai, Yiwu and Zhuhai, as well as the cities and prefectures in Yunnan during the past two years. Skyscrapers, bustling markets and vibrant business impressed him a lot. Alex thinks patriotism among the Chinese people drives progress in the country.

"While we were staying safe at home, medical workers were risking their lives on the frontline in the battle against coronavirus," Alex cited China's battle against the COVID-19 as an example, adding the

folks who used to take a singer, movie star or ball player as their idols, now they respect medics more than before.

He added the economy, weapons and infrastructure don't always make a country great. Instead, the strength comes from people's resolve to serve their country.

Alex also attributed China's growth to its hard-working people. My Chinese teachers and friends spare no effort in chasing their dreams. "China is the second largest economy which grows most rapidly in the world. We should learn the development experience from China," Alex hoped that he could learn as much knowledge in China as he can, and build his own country when he returns.

(Li Hengqiang)