



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



WE WILL
FIND LIGHT:
HRITHIK ROSHAN
13 VIVACITY

OPINION 8
UNENDING
LADAKH STORY

WORLD 12
AZAR LEADS HIGHEST-LEVEL US
DELEGATION TO TAIWAN IN DECADES

SPORT 14
PIRLO IS NEW
JUVENTUS COACH

Desi push bans 101 defence imports

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

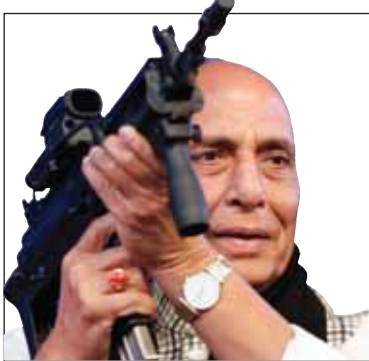
The Government on Sunday announced an import embargo on 101 items to give a major boost to the Indian defence industry.

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

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

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

Making the important



- This will see the domestic players manufacturing weapons ranging from artillery guns to missiles and assault rifles to name a few
- They will also be expected to bag orders worth over ₹4 lakh crores over the next seven to eight years as the Army, IAF and Navy will be procuring world class weapon systems developed and manufactured within the country
- A separate budget head has been created with an outlay of nearly ₹52,000 crore for domestic capital procurement in the current financial year, Rajnath said
- More equipment for import embargo would be identified progressively by the Department of Military Affairs in consultation with all stakeholders

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

In a series of tweets, he said the Defence Ministry has prepared a list of 101 items for which there would be an embargo on the import beyond the timeline indicated against them. The Minister also said the Defence Ministry has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes.

A separate budget head

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

Taking cue from that evocation, the Ministry of Defence prepared the list, said Rajnath, adding it will offer a great opportunity to the Indian defence industry to manufac-

ture the items by using their own design and development capabilities or adopting the technologies designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Continued on Page 10

PC: PROMISED BANG ENDED WITH WHIMPER

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

2L Covid cases in just 3 days; daily death crosses 1K



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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Apart from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka and West Bengal have started reporting huge number of cases on daily basis. With several States still not carrying out adequate number of tests, the caseload could go up

Continued on Page 10

684 test +ve in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow reported 684 more Coronavirus positive cases, taking the tally to 12,760 on Sunday, even as six COVID-19 patients died in the city, pushing the death toll to 147.

With 238 COVID-19 patients being discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, 6,531 infected persons have recovered and at present 6,082 active cases are undergoing treatment in the city. Indiranagar, Gomtinagar, Ashiyana, Chowk, Thakurganj Mahanagar, Hussainganj, and Hazratganj remained high containment areas in the state capital.

Meanwhile, 4,687 persons tested positive for coronavirus across the state, raising its caseload to 1,22,609. The state witnessed 45 COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours as the toll reached 2,069. With 2,817 persons being released from hospitals, 72,650 COVID-19 patients have recovered and 47,890 are undergoing treatment.

Centre transfers ₹17,100 cr to bank accounts of 8.5 cr farmers electronically

Modi launches agri infrastructure fund with capital of ₹1 lakh-crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to direct financial support and to empower the farmers of the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday electronically transferred ₹17,100 crore to the bank accounts of over 8.5 crore farmers as part of the PM-KISAN scheme.

The Prime Minister also launched the agriculture infrastructure fund with a capital of ₹1 lakh crore for agri-entrepreneurs, startups, agri-tech players and farmer groups for post-harvest management and nurturing farm assets through a video conference on the

occasion of "Balram Jayanthi", a day when farmers worship plough.

The first sanction of over ₹1,000 crore was made to over 2,280 farmers under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.

Speaking on the occasion, Modi said no middlemen or commission was needed as the amount went straight to farmers.

He also expressed satisfaction because the objective of the scheme was fulfilled.

"₹17,000 crore of PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi have been deposited into bank accounts of 8.5 crore farmers with a single click. No middlemen or commission, it went straight to farmers. I am satisfied because the objective of the scheme is being fulfilled," PM Modi said during the launch of a financing facility for farmers.

Continued on Page 10

Colleagues falling prey to ultras, 12 BJP men desert party in Valley

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Grassroot workers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are turning out to be "sitting ducks" in Kashmir valley in the absence of adequate security cover for even those who figure on the "hit list" of terrorists and fearing for their lives, about one dozen BJP workers have so far resigned from the membership of the party recently.

Four party workers from Budgam resigned following fresh attack on a BJP worker in the area on Sunday.

It is learnt the BJP workers have forwarded their letters of resignation to SSP Budgam and District President Budgam BJP. Budgam BJP president Aga Mohsin told reporters the letters of resignations of four BJP workers are in circulation on WhatsApp.

"I will talk to them regarding their resignations," he

added. According to a police spokesman, a BJP worker hailing from Budgam was shot at and critically injured by terrorists. He was out for a morning walk when terrorists targeted him.

This is the third incident in the valley in the last one week.

On August 6, BJP sarpanch Sajad Ahmad Khanday was killed in Vessu village of Qazikund block in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. On August 4, BJP Panch Arif Ahmad was also critically wounded after terrorists fired at him in Akhran Qazigund.

According to a police spokesman, at about 6.30 am terrorists fired upon a BJP worker identified as Abdul Hameed Najar, son of Mohammad Jamal. "The BJP worker was shifted to SMHS hospital Srinagar for treatment where his condition is stable," police spokesman added.

Continued on Page 10

STF guns down close aide of Mukhtar Ansari

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of Special Task Force (STF) gunned down a dreaded shooter, who was said to be involved in BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai murder case, during an encounter with him in Sarojininaragar early morning on Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Rakesh Pandey aka Hanuman Pandey of Mau. He was said to be a close aide of mafia-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari and slain mafia Munna Bajrangji, and was

carrying a cash reward of ₹50,000 in Prayagraj.

The police were tipped off about the presence of Rakesh Pandey and his gang in Gudamba on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday during a routine monitoring of hardened criminals and a team was dispatched for his arrest.

When the police team reached Gudamba, it surfaced that Rakesh and his aides had left for some place on Kanpur road and the team moved to that place. The team spotted an

Continued on Page 10

CISF official asked if I am Indian as I don't know Hindi: Kani

PTI ■ CHENNAI

DMK MP Kanimozhi on Sunday said a Central Industrial Security Force officer asked her if she was an Indian, when she asked the woman official to speak in Tamil or English.

"Today at the airport a CISF officer asked me if 'I am an Indian,' when I asked her to speak to me in Tamil or English as I did not know Hindi. I would like to know from when being Indian is equal to knowing Hindi. #hindiimposition," Kanimozhi who is also the DMK's women's wing secretary said on her twitter handle.

A number of social media users replied supporting her, with one of them saying, "I am an Indian and Hindi has nothing to do with it! #hindiimposition Pass it on!"

According to party sources, the incident occurred in Chennai when the MP was at the airport to board a Delhi flight in the afternoon.

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

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

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A major fire broke out in the early hours of Sunday morning at Hotel Swarna Palace in Vijayawada, which had been converted into a



Rescuers and others stand outside Hotel Swarna Palace where a fire broke out early morning in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh on Sunday

Covid Care Centre (CCC). At least ten people are feared dead in the mishap besides several others who were injured, according to authorities. The building was housing Covid-19 patients who were mildly symptomatic and those who did not require hospitalisation.

Ramesh Hospitals has taken Swarna Palace Hotel located in Vijayawada was transformed into temporary Corona hospital to treat Covid-19 patients. The flames suddenly started in the hotel at about 4.45 am in the early hours on Sunday and the fire tenders started rescue operations at 5 am.

Continued on Page 10

CAPSULE

6 DIE IN JHARKHAND INSIDE SEPTIC TANK

Deogarh: Six persons died on Sunday after inhaling poisonous gas in a septic tank in Jharkhand's Deogarh district, a senior police officer said.

THAROOR: CONG MUST FIND FULL-TERM PREZ

New Delhi: The Congress must expedite the process of finding a full-term president to arrest the growing public perception that the party is "adrift and rudderless", senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said on Sunday.

LANKAN DON POISONED TO DEATH BY WOMAN

Coimbatore: The question whether Amani Thanji, who had been living with the Sri Lankan don Angoda Lokka, poisoned him to death to avenge the killing of her husband in the island nation, is doing the rounds among the police and public.

12 NAXALS SURRENDER IN CHHATTISGARH



Raipur: Twelve Naxals, five of them Collectively carrying a reward of ₹6 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Sunday, police said.

11 members of Pakistan Hindu migrant family found dead at farm in Jodhpur

PNS ■ JODHPUR

Eleven members of a family of Pakistan Hindu migrants were found dead at a farm in Rajasthan's Jodhpur district on Sunday morning, police said.

A member of the family, however, was found alive outside the hut they lived at Lodta village of the Dechu area, over 100 km away from Jodhpur city, an officer said.

"But he claimed to have no idea about the incident, which believed to have happened in the night," said Superintendent of Police (Rural) Rahul Barhat.

"We are yet to ascertain the

Preliminary probe indicates they committed suicide

cause and means of death. They appeared to have committed suicide by consuming some chemical in the night," Barhat said.

He said there was a smell of some chemical in the hut, suggesting they consumed something. The family belonging to the Bhil community had come to India from Pakistan's Sindh province in 2015 on a long-term visa.

They had been living at the

Lodta village farm, which they had hired for farming, for the past six months.

"There was neither any injury mark on any of the bodies nor any evidences of any foul play," the SP said.

"But we have roped in a forensic team and a dog squad before arriving at any conclusion," he said.

Preliminary investigation indicated that there was some dispute in the family over some issue. "Once we interrogate the survivor, we would be in a position to find out what had led to this incident," he said.

Continued on Page 10

ED summons Rhea, her father

Sushant's girlfriend is being grilled for second time for money laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned actress Rhea Chakraborty, accused of abetting film star Sushant Singh Rajput's suicide, to appear before it again on Monday in an ongoing money laundering probe.

Rhea was grilled for eight hours on Friday, while her brother Shouvik was questioned for 18 hours on Saturday. The questioning continued till Sunday morning. Shouvik is also an accused in the abetment to suicide case now taken over by the CBI from the Bihar Police.

Shouvik's statement was recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and his questioning centred on his personal businesses, income, investments and financial dealings with his sister and the late film star.

Besides Rhea, the ED has



also summoned her father and co-accused Indrajit Chakraborty to appear before it on Monday.

On Friday, the ED had briefly questioned Shouvik and Indrajit besides the actress'

Chartered Accountant (CA) Ritesh Shah and business manager Shruti Modi, who also worked for Rajput. As part of the money laundering probe, the ED is looking into the financial deals involving the accused actress, her father and brother who are directors in two companies that are under the agency's gaze.

The ED is seeking to establish Rhea's income, investments, business and professional deals as the probe so far has shown mismatch between her income, expenditure and investments, they said.

Continued on Page 10



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	5,15,332	17,757	3,51,710
Tamil Nadu	2,96,901	4,927	2,38,638
Andhra Pradesh	2,27,860	2,036	1,38,712
Karnataka	1,78,087	3,198	93,908
Delhi	1,45,427	4,111	1,30,587
Uttar Pradesh	1,22,609	2,069	72,650
West Bengal	95,554	2,059	67,120
Bihar	79,720	429	51,315
Telangana	79,495	627	55,999
Gujarat	71,064	2,652	54,238
Assam	57,715	145	40,592
Rajasthan	52,497	789	38,235
Odisha	45,927	321	31,785
Haryana	41,635	483	34,781
Madhya Pradesh	39,025	996	29,020
Kerala	34,331	109	21,832

Pvt labs directed to adhere to guidelines

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash has directed private labs to follow Covid-19 guidelines for effective prevention of coronavirus spread. In a meeting with all the representatives of private labs on Sunday, the DM said that reports of the patients should be uploaded immediately and it should be ensured within the following hour that the patients are either in hospitals or in home isolation. He told the representatives of six private labs in the city carrying out Covid-19 tests to feed the portal with the correct data by Monday evening.

The DM said each lab has to have an ambulance and there should be emergency services available at the collection centres. "All the labs have to follow ICMR guidelines and if they are not doing so, strict action will be taken against them. All the data of the antibody tests which have been conducted by the labs have to be given to the CMO," he said.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh said they were adopting the strategy of increasing RTPCR tests in comparison to antigen tests. He said they were stressing more on RTPCR than on antigen tests because antigen tests had to be followed by the con-

firmatory tests (RTPCR).

"We will reserve antigen testing for all places where mass testing has to be carried out. We will carry out antigen testing for the distant contacts of Covid-19 patients and RTPCR for close contacts," the CMO said. He pointed out that a total of 5,000 tests were being carried out on a daily basis in Lucknow, 2,500 of which were RTPCR tests while the rest included TrueNat, antigen and other tests. The CMO said that to control the growing number of cases, they had also started giving Ivermectin tablets to the health workers and close contacts of the positive persons. "We are expecting good results because it has worked in decreasing the infection in Agra. This is a harmless medicine with no side-effects and should not be given to kids below 2 years of age and pregnant women," he said. Dr Singh said they had received complaints about a private hospital taking huge sum of money from patients and stern warning had been issued to hospitals to follow guidelines. Looking into the utility of the Integrated Control and Command Centre, it was decided that a new building would be set up in the campus of the Smart City office which would be termed as Safe City Command and Control Centre.



The road stretch near Rumil Darwaza wears a deserted look during weekend lockdown

Pioneer

Rajkiya Nirman Nigam has been told that construction activity should be started in one month's time and the building be completed by April 2021.

Meanwhile, IITR director Alok Dhawan said that this week, the Lucknow cluster which is carrying out Covid testing has come first in the country by conducting the maximum number of tests (12,000). "I have received a mail from the department of Biotechnology under which the Lucknow cluster consisting of IITR, BSIP, NBRI and CDRI has conducted the maximum number of tests. For a

long time, we were at the second position, but now we have become first by pushing our limits. Bhubaneswar, which was leading with 11,000 tests, is now at the second place," he said. Dhawan said that over the time, they had developed the technique of managing a large number of samples in an optimum time-frame.

"Earlier, we would make pools of ten samples and then test them. If we found a pool positive, we would conduct the tests again. But now, we sit for an hour prior to the testing and sort out the close contacts and the second contacts of the

Covid-19 patient by going into the history of patients and then pool together the second contacts which would likely be negative," he said.

Meanwhile, a senior official from the CMO office said that the cases coming from old parts of the city were less in comparison to those from Trans-Gomti areas and other parts. Director of Balrampur Hospital Dr Rajeev Lochan said the number of coronavirus cases being detected at the hospital had increased. "We are getting 4-5 patients testing positive in the holding area. These are the patients who have come for emergency treatment. We inform the CMO about these patients who are then shifted to a Covid hospital," he added.

Meanwhile, four patients succumbed at KGMU on Sunday. Spokesperson Dr Sudhir Singh said the deceased included a 48-year-old woman from Auraiyya who was admitted on July 17 and suffering from meningitis. A 79-year-old man from Indiranagar, who was admitted on August 6 and suffering from kidney problems, also succumbed. A 54-year-old man from Vibhuti Khand, who was admitted on July 23 and was suffering from kidney problems, also died, as did and a 41-year-old woman from Gosainganj.

Slain shooter's father alleges foul play

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Father of the slain sharpshooter Rakesh Pandey claimed that his son was taken into custody by a team of cops in civvies and later on he was killed in an encounter. Baldatt Pandey said Rakesh had reached Lucknow to look after his mother who was undergoing treatment at SGPGI.

"We were not informed about the announcement of reward on Rakesh ever before. He was taken out from home in Gudamba by a team of STF around 3 am," Pandey said.

According to old-timers in Lucknow police, Rakesh moved to Lucknow to pursue a diploma course in polytechnic when he was 16-year-old and ended up killing his hostel roommate over a petty issue. It is said that he lifted his roommate and threw him down, causing him to die on the spot. He was jailed in a crime case in 1993 and then he came in contact with dreaded criminals. The criminals then had the craze to join the likes of Mukhtar Ansari and Munna Bajrangi, and Rakesh was no exception. Seven years after the case in Lucknow, Rakesh Pandey's name appeared in a contract killing in



Police personnel at the site where Rakesh Pandey was gunned down early morning on Sunday

Pioneer

Rae Bareilly. He gained accolades in the underworld following his daredevilry in executing crimes and soon became a close aide of Mukhtar Ansari. Sources

said Rakesh came in good books of Mukhtar Ansari and gained latter's confidence after the Krishna Nand Rai murder case.

76% candidates appear for BEd-JEE in city



Candidates at Shri Jai Narain Misra Post Graduate (KGC) College in Lucknow on Sunday

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Seventy-six per cent attendance was recorded in Lucknow as BEd-JEE was held on Sunday. Out of 30,394 candidates who had registered for the exam, 23,142 were present in the morning shift and 23,127 in the second.

In the state, the attendance was 82.67 per cent. State coordinator, BEd-JEE Amita Bajpai said given the circumstances due to Covid-19, the joint entrance exam was successfully conducted across the state.

She said that in Lucknow, there was only one case in which a girl used a different photograph in her admit card at Awadh Girls' Degree College. "The matter will be looked into by the committee. Other than that, there was no case of unfair means," she said.

Regarding reports of candidates crowding at the entrance of exam centres in violation of Covid-19 guidelines, she said: "What happens outside the gate is not under our purview, but guidelines were followed at all the centres and we have numerous videos and photographs. All the students wore masks and sanitisation was also carried out between the shifts," she said.

A total of 4,31,904 candidates had submitted applications for the exam in 1,089 centres across the state and 3,57,064 appeared for the examination.

"Several of these candidates were visually-challenged and they were provided dictators and also given extra time. At various centres, certain candidates with above-normal body temperature were made to sit in isolated rooms. All the protocols and instructions for safety were strictly adhered to," Amita Bajpai said.

"There were CCTV cameras at each exam centre and proper arrangements were made for cameras, routers etc. The exam was closely monitored with the help of the command control room set up at the University of Lucknow. No untoward incident was reported from any exam centre," she said.

She said that an unsuccessful attempt was made by a female candidate at a Meerut centre to appear for the exam using a fake admit card. The local authorities sent the information to LU. The entry was found to be fake when the data available with the university was checked," she said. District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash also visited one of the centres in the morning.

Banda correspondent of Pioneer dies of Covid-19

Lucknow: The staff of *The Pioneer* mourned the sudden death of Banda district correspondent Anjani Nigam due to coronavirus infection on Sunday. He was 54. Nigam, who had been associated with *The Pioneer* for over 20 years, tested positive for coronavirus last week. His condition deteriorated on Saturday while undergoing treatment in a Banda

hospital and was rushed to Lucknow for specialised treatment. However, he succumbed to the infection early Sunday morning. His last rites were later performed in Banda. He is survived by wife and two sons. The UP Journalists' Association also held a condolence meet in Banda Press Club to condole the death of Nigam.

कोरोना से जंग में बढ़ते कदम

शिशु, बाल एवं किशोर हेतु स्वास्थ्य कार्यक्रमों का शुभारंभ

योगी आदित्यनाथ

मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश द्वारा

दिनांक : 10 अगस्त, 2020 | समय : अपराह्न 4:00 बजे | स्थान : 5, कालिदास मार्ग, लखनऊ

पी.सी.वी. निमोनिया वैक्सीन

निमोनिया जैसी बीमारियों से मुक्ति के लिए नियमित टीकाकरण के अंतर्गत वैक्सीन मुफ्त उपलब्ध।

राष्ट्रीय कृमि मुक्ति अभियान*

कृमि उपचार हेतु 1-19 वर्ष के बच्चों को आशा एवं आंगनवाड़ी द्वारा घर-घर जाकर एल्बेन्डाजोल की गोली खिलाई जायेगी।

विटामिन-ए सम्पूर्ण कार्यक्रम

रतौंधी से मुक्ति - प्रतिरोधक क्षमता में वृद्धि, 9 माह से 5 वर्ष तक के बच्चों को विटामिन-ए की खुराक मुफ्त उपलब्ध।

*नोट: राष्ट्रीय कृमि मुक्ति अभियान का आरम्भ एटा, चित्रकूट, अमरोहा, फिरोज़ाबाद, हापुड़, हाथरस, कासगंज, अमेठी, बांदा, शाहजहांपुर एवं सोनभद्र जिलों से होगा।

जय प्रताप सिंह

मंत्री, चिकित्सा एवं स्वास्थ्य, परिवार कल्याण तथा मातृ एवं शिशु कल्याण, उत्तर प्रदेश

अतुल गर्ग

राज्यमंत्री, चिकित्सा एवं स्वास्थ्य, परिवार कल्याण तथा मातृ एवं शिशु कल्याण, उत्तर प्रदेश

27 जन

कोरोना संबंधी जानकारी हेतु संपर्क करें

चिकित्सा, स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग, उ०प्र०

1800-180-5145

अन्य जानकारी के लिए संपर्क करें

0522-2230006, 0522-2230009, 0522-2616482

Youth acts fresh with 9-year-old, detained

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth allegedly acted fresh with a 9-year-old girl when she was playing outside her house in Hasanganj on Sunday afternoon. Girl's father lodged a case against the accused, who was detained by police later. The accused was identified as Jatin Pandit of the same locality.

As per reports, the girl was playing outside her house while her father and other members were resting inside the shanty. Around 2 pm, her father came out of the shanty all of a sudden and saw that Jatin had gagged the girl with her hands folded behind while he was touching her inappropriately.

"I screamed and lunged at him, but Jatin fled the scene. My daughter told me that Jatin used to give her money and misbehave with her," the complained alleged. He said he felt his daughter was in a problem and hurriedly came out of the shanty to save her. The police said a case under Section 354 of IPC was registered against Jatin and he was also booked under POCSO Act. "Jatin is under detention and the case has been assigned to a sub-inspector," the police said.

In another incident, a girl

student consumed acid at her house in Madaion on Saturday evening after being scolded for not concentrating on studies. She later died during treatment at Balrampur Hospital.

As per reports, Shobhita Rathor (18) of Gayatri Nagar passed Class XII but with low percentage. On Saturday evening, her father Rajesh Rathor scolded after finding her busy in works other than studies. Shobhita felt humiliated and consumed acid. Her parents rushed her to hospital where she died during treatment.

ARRESTED

The Gudamba police arrested a drug peddler after a brief chase on Saturday night. The accused was identified as Santosh Singh of Lakhimpur Kheri. Reports said the police team, led by Sanwal Prasad, was conducting a checking at Tedhipulia crossing in the area when an informer tipped off the team about the drug peddler who was travelling in a tempo. The team laid a trap in the area but the accused got a whiff of police checking. He got down from the tempo soon after it was stopped and fled the scene. The team gave him a chase and nabbed him. The team recovered 18 grams of smack from his possession.

Youth found hanging

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth was found hanging at his uncle's house in Madaion on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. As per reports, Amit Vishwas (27) aka Anup was staying at his uncle Gopal Vishwas's house in Paltan Chhawani. His mother had died on July 14 following some illness.

Around 1 am, his aunt Saraswati Vishwas went to the room in which Amit was resting and found him hanging from the ceiling. She informed Gopal about the same. Gopal later called the police and a team reached the scene. Investigating officer, sub-inspector Zafar Mehdi said Anup was hanging from the ceiling with a cable tied around his neck. Amit was unmarried.

Gopal told the police that his nephew Amit was staying

at his house for the past few months. "Amit was upset following the death of his mother who passed on July 14 due to some illness. He took to alcohol to get over the mental trauma. For the last few days, he was consuming alcohol. On Saturday night, he was drunk and ended his life," Gopal said.

Meanwhile, a joint team of Ashiyana and Krishna Nagar police arrested an accused named in several crime cases and bearing a cash reward of Rs 25,000, late on Sunday evening.

The accused, identified as Pultsya Tiwari of Ashiyana, suffered bullet injuries in his leg in the firing by the police after he refused to surrender and opened fire on police team. The police said they got a tip-off about Tiwari's movement in the area and laid a trap to arrest him.

Indian Overseas Bank

(A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING)

Branch-Etah

इण्डियन ओवरसीज बैंक

(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम)

Notice of IOB Etah Branch's Merger with IOB Firozabad Branch

All respected customers are informed that with effect from 10.08.2020 our Etah branch has been merged with Firozabad Branch (Address- 2/616, Sector-2/Opposite to Main Post Office, Awas Vikash Colony, Suhag Nagar, Firozabad 283201, Uttar Pradesh). All valued customers are requested to avail the banking facilities from Firozabad Branch.

Branch Manager

Office of the Superintending Engineer Etawah Circle PWD, Etawah

No.: 2676/551-ई.ए. / 2020-21 **Shrot Time E-Tender Notice** Dated : 31-07-2020

1. E-Tender is invited on behalf of Hon'able Governor of U. P from eligible contractors registered with U.P.P.W.D. for 'Road Work' as below:

Sl. No.	District	Name of Work	Estima-ted Cost (Lacs)	Bid Security (Lacs)	Cost of Bid Document (Rs.)	Time of Com-pletion (with rainy season)	Category of Contractor
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Renewal for financial year 2020-21							
1.	Auraiya	Renewal with B.C. on Pata Gate to Phaphund road By Departmental HMP	42.00	4.01	2000.00+ 300.00+ GST(414.00) =2714.00	01 Month	A,B,C

Bid document/Tender details is available on website <http://etender.up.nic.in>, From **17.08.2020 to 24.08.2020 (upto 12:00 Noon)** which can be downloaded from website. Filled Bid documents must be submitted / uploaded on line on the above website on dated **24.08.2020** (upto 12:00 Noon). Technical bid will be opened on **24.08.2020 at 12.30 p.m.**

(A.K.Jatav)
Executive Engineer
Provincial Division,
PWD, Auraiya

U.P. 154099, Date : 06.08.2020
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

(P.K.Jain)
Superintending Engineer
Etawah Circle,
PWD, Etawah

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, 30वां (वि./यां.) वृत्त, लो.नि.वि.,लखनऊ

चक्र: 1479 सीपीओ-30 सीपीओ-30 / 2020 **अल्टिमेटली नोटिस सूचना** दिनांक : 30.07.2020

महामहिम की राज्याल, उद्घाटन की ओर से निम्न कार्य हेतु निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। निविदा प्रारंभ दिनांक 17.08.2020 से 21.08.2020 अपरान्ह 12.00 बजे तक निविदा मूल्यांकन अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत अनुसंधान खण्ड 2, लो.नि.वि., लखनऊ, कार्य अधिकार, अ.वि.नि.ई.अनु.वि., लो.नि.वि., लखनऊ व अधीक्षण अभियन्ता 30वां वि/यां वृत्त, लो.नि.वि., लखनऊ के कार्यालय से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

मुरुबन्ध निविदाएं सील लिफाफों में दिनांक 21.08.2020 को अपरान्ह 03.00 बजे तक उक्त कार्यालयों में प्राप्त की जायेगी एवं दिनांक 21.08.2020 को 3.30 बजे विलापिकाएँ, लखनऊ के कार्यालय में ठेकेदारों या उनके उपस्थित प्रतिनिधियों के सम्म खोली जायेगी। निविदा के साथ रु 100/- का जनरल स्टैम्प जितरा रु 100 का रसीदी स्टैम्प हस्ताक्षरित किया हुआ लगा हो, जमा करना अनिवार्य होगा। वरिष्ठ धनराशि एवं एच.सी. / एक.डी.आर. / टी.डी.आर. जो कार्य अधिकार, अ.वि.नि.ई.अनु.वि., लो.नि.वि., लखनऊ के समक्ष देवा हो, के रूप में ही स्वीकरी की जायेगी। निविदाओं को सीलबद्ध तथा अनिवार्य करने का पूर्ण अधिकार विभाग के पास सुरक्षित होगा।

क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की अनु-मानित लागत (लाख में)	घरौहर धनराशि (लाख में)	निविदा प्रारंभ की मूल्य	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	निविदा की कैला	पात्रता
1	राज्य अतिथि गृह मीराबाई मार्ग लखनऊ में स्थायित वातानुकूलन संयंत्रों के वार्षिक अनुसंधान (AMC) कार्य।	3.80 लाख	0.38 लाख	677.00	01 वर्ष	03 माह	रिजलिट / विंडो टाइप एच.सी. के मूल निर्माता अथवा उनके अधिकृत विक्रेता ही निविदा के पात्र होंगे। निविदा के समक्ष पात्रता प्रमाण-पत्र प्रस्तुत करना अनिवार्य है।
2	इंटरनल मान में स्थायित सार स्टेशन एवं जनरेटर के संचालन का कार्य।	8.80 लाख	0.88 लाख	766.00	01 वर्ष	03 माह	लो.नि.वि. में 'ए' श्रेणी के फंक्शनल से ठेकेदार जिन्होंने पात्र सरकारी कम्प्यूटरीजिलिडिंग में स्थायित एच.टी. पैकल एवं एल.टी. पैकल के संशोधनजनक ढंग से संचालन का अनुभव प्राप्त हो, ही निविदा के पात्र होंगे। निविदा के समक्ष पात्रता प्रमाण-पत्र प्रस्तुत करना अनिवार्य है।

विशेष - 1. निविदा सम्मती अन्वय जानकारी दिनांक 20.08.2020 तक किसी भी कार्य दिवस में ओवरहालकर्ता के कार्यालय से प्राप्त की जा सकती है। 2. निविदा प्रारंभ उक्त ठेकेदारों को वेबी जायेगी जो उक्त वेबी पर पात्रता पूरी करते ही पात्रता प्रमाण प्रस्तुत करना अनिवार्य होगा। अन्यथा निविदा पर विचार नहीं किया जायेगा। 3. ओवरहालकर्ता / स्वाम अधिकारी को बिना कारण कार्य किसी भी निविदा को निरस्त करने का अधिकार होगा। 4. 10 प्रतिशत वरिष्ठ धनराशि निविदा के समक्ष देवा होगी। 5. सराव निविदा अस्वीकृत की जा सकती है। 6. आवक / जी.एच.एच.टी. की कटौती निम्नानुसार की जायेगी। 7. कार्यालय बन्द होने अथवा अवकाश होने की दशा में निविदा उसी क्रम में एवं समानानुसार अगले कार्य दिवस में खोली जायेगी।

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता
30वां (वि./यां.) वृत्त
लो.नि.वि., लखनऊ

उद्घाटन 154019, दिनांक-01.08.2020
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.up.gov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

Torture, harassment by cops forces girl to end life

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Torture and harassment of a 22-year-old girl by male cops of Jalaun police after alleging that she was involved in a theft forced her to commit suicide. The incident took place in Naya Ramnagar area of Orai in Jalaun district where 22-year-old Neeshu, was found hanging from the ceiling of a room in her house on Saturday morning. She was taken to hospital where the doctors pronounced her dead upon arrival.

The news of her death spread like a wildfire and the family members along with local residents gheraoed the local police station, alleging that assault and mental trauma which the victim faced in the hands of cops forced her to commit suicide.

Her father Kallu Chowdhary claimed that on Friday, Neeshu and two of her friends went to Balda Chowk market where some traders detained them, alleging that the girls had stolen a passport. All the three girls were later handed over to beat sub-inspector Yogesh Pathak.

The cops took the girls to

police station where all the three were assaulted and mentally tortured in the name of extracting truth. Surprisingly, no female cop was present in the police station when the girls were tortured by the male cops. The girls denied having committed any theft and even asked what they would do with the passport of someone else. Later in the night, when the family members and local residents staged demonstration, all the three girls were released and handed over in the custody of their parents.

Chowdhary said that his daughter could not bear the trauma and later committed suicide. He demanded action against all the policemen and the traders who made fake charge of theft on the girls.

ASP in Jalaun, Awadhesh Singh, however, took no action, claiming that they would probe the matter and take action accordingly. The cops also chased away the protesters.

Meanwhile, on the intervention of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, five policemen, including the station house officer (SHO) of Nagara police station in Ballia were placed

under suspension and a departmental inquiry was ordered against them.

The action was taken as the accused cops brutally assaulted an innocent family of retired army man. The district magistrate and the minister incharge of the district, Anand Swaroop Shukla, had sent a report to the chief minister on direction of Yogi Adityanath.

Reports said that Rajan Pandey aka Jhanku escaped from the custody of cops of Nagara police station on July 26 after which the cops launched a crackdown. However, failing to get any breakthrough, the cops picked up retired army man Ajay Pandey and nine of his family members and brutally assaulted them. A case was also registered against them for giving shelter to the accused.

When the media highlighted the issue, the chief minister on August 1 last asked the district administration to submit a report and finally on his direction, the then SHO Ramesh Kumar, beat sub-inspector Krishna Yadav and three constables were placed under suspension on Saturday night.

Mayawati bid to woo Brahmins and Dalits

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



Amidst coronavirus pandemic, caste and religion politics has started to heat up in Uttar Pradesh with Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday returning to her social engineering formula in an attempt to appease Brahmins as well as her traditional Dalit vote base.

While raising question over not inviting President Ram Nath Kovind to the bhoomi puja for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, the BSP chief on Sunday made a poll promise to build hospitals named after religious leaders, including Brahmins, so that the state could be better equipped to fight epidemics.

"In view of the shortcomings of the state and the Centre in fighting the coronavirus pandemic, the BSP government, if elected to power in UP, will build hospitals named after Parashuram, a symbol of faith of Brahmin society, and provide medical facilities in the name of great saints born in all castes and religions," Mayawati said.

Referring to Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav's announcement of installing a 108-foot tall statue of Parashuram in Lucknow, Mayawati said the SP was indulging in appeasement politics in order to earn the votes of Brahmins in the state.

"The fact that the statue is being installed just before the elections shows how worse their (SP) condition is. The society has faith that BSP does not just make promises but also fulfils them. If people with vices wish to build an idol, we

will respect their demands," she said.

Mayawati further said that four times the BSP government had launched several public interest schemes in the name of great saints of all classes and also named districts after them, but the names were changed by the Samajwadi Party government due to their casteist mentality. The names of these districts would be reinstated after BSP comes to power.

Parashuram is considered to be the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu by devotees and is said to have killed many warriors from the Kshatriya clan with his battle-axe (parashu) for abusing their power.

Interestingly to woo Brahmin voters, even the Congress has set up a Brahmin Chetna Samiti led by former Union minister Jitin Prasada who is taking up the issues of atrocities on Brahmin during the present BJP regime.

Mayawati also raised the issue of recent bhoomi puja in Ayodhya though she said that there should no politics on Ram temple as the matter was

related to religion.

"Prime Minister Modi should have gone to Ayodhya along with the President, who comes from the Dalit community. Some Dalit saints also kept shouting that they were not called for bhoomi puja on August 5. They did not invite Dalit saints but they could have invited President Ram Nath Kovind. A good message would have gone to society if they had invited the President for the auspicious ceremony," the BSP chief said on Sunday.

"Only talking of Ram rajya will not be helpful to people. They need to implement Lord Ram's teaching. There is a jungle raj in UP in the Yogi Adityanath government. Crime is increasing with each passing day. There is no Ram rajya in UP," Mayawati said.

Earlier she had given the credit for paving the way for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya to the apex court.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday took part in the bhoomi puja for construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.



Women performing puja at a temple in Narhi on Sunday

Pioneer

Work begins on making of Ramayana encyclopaedia

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Culture department has started working on the making of a global encyclopaedia of Ramayana, which will document the tangible and intangible heritage of the epic. Joint director, Culture department, YP Singh said it would have 200 volumes.

He said each volume would have a minimum of 1,100 pages with 700 being attributed to references and originals. "In the first phase of coming with the document, we are holding a number of webinars which will be followed by extensive documentation," Singh said.

"The aim is to document the global expansion of Indian culture through Rama and to provide large documents to the future generation and to authenticate the cooperation of the Ramayana as a soft power diplomacy in India's foreign policy and an endeavour to establish Ramayana group of countries. The proposal is to capture the various aspects of the tangible and intangible heritage of Ramayana — architecture, sculpture, paintings, music, handicrafts, literature etc existing in almost all countries of the world. After compiling all these tangible and intangible heritage, Ramayana art, culture, literature and way of life will be presented in a systematic manner in India and in other countries. Any information related to Ramayana is proposed to be documented. All the records, documents and research work will be published in sections



and chapters as encyclopaedia," he added. About the action plan, he said Ramayana was so widespread that to publish the encyclopedia of Ramayana as a bibliography, it was proposed to work on the following points.

Tangible and intangible legacies will be listed in each state. Based on these heritage, all available material along with architecture, sculpture, paintings, music, literature, Ramlila, picture styles etc will be listed as authentic. In each state, the services of new researchers will also be obtained for on-site survey, selecting the best experts on the basis of content.

There will be a high level consultation committee at the state level, through which counselling will be provided from time to time.

"An editorial board will be formed in each state. All members of

Cooperative societies to be strengthened

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 'Agriculture Infrastructure Fund' for development of infrastructure in cooperative sector at New Delhi, which was live-streamed at the NABARD Regional Office and viewed by senior officers of UP Government, bankers and cooperators in the presence of Minister for Cooperatives Mukut Bihari Varma. The PM interacted with a few representatives of farmers and expressed satisfaction that recent initiatives of the Centre had addressed some of the pressing needs of farmers.

A sum of nearly Rs 17,000 crore was released to more than 8.5 crore farmers under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi.

Coinciding with the event, the Minister for Cooperatives handed over the in-principle sanction letter for 'PACS as MSC' scheme of NABARD to Uttar Pradesh Cooperative Bank (UPCB) at NABARD Regional Office. The in-principle sanction, for extending Special Refinance Assistance to be provided by NABARD to UPCB for providing loan to 244 PACS with total project outlay of Rs 46 crore and bank loan of approximately Rs 42 crore was conveyed to UPCB.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister appreciat-

ed NABARD's introduction of this refinance facility for PACS which is the last mile credit provider to the farmers. He said UP had been pioneering many initiatives to strengthen the 'farm-gate' delivery system to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers and would ensure that PACS become a robust platform to address the needs of the farmers. Towards this objective, the state government will actively coordinate with NABARD to transform the PACS as Multi-Service Centres, he added.

Among the dignitaries who attended the programme included MVS Rami Reddy, IAS, ACS-Cooperatives, GoUP, Jitendra Bahadur Singh, Vice Chairman of Uttar Pradesh Cooperative Bank, Brijesh Kr Singh, GM & SLBC-Convenor and other senior officers of state government.

Shankar A Pandey, Chief General Manager of NABARD, said that under this scheme, refinance to UPCB would be provided at a very concessional rate of 3% by NABARD and the ultimate rate of interest charged to PACS would not exceed 4%. He expressed hope that PACS would make good use of NABARD's scheme to create necessary infrastructure and provide services to farmers at ground level.

Varanasi crosses 4500-mark; 294 COVID-19 patients found, 2 die

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district has seen yet another big spike as 294 COVID-19 patients have been detected here on Sunday. It was the second highest number of cases found in a day after 312 detected on August 7. With this, the total number of cases has crossed 4500-mark as it has reached 4,555. Besides, the district also saw two more deaths increasing the toll to 81. During the day, the follow-up negative reports included 139 patients recovered from home isolation and the total number of patients cured at home has increased to 1,312 while 47 recovered from the hospitals. With this, the total number of patients discharged from the hospitals has reached 1,443 while the total number of cured patients is 2,755 leaving 1,719 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 195 new corona patients were found out of 1,648 reports received from Microbiology department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Till then, the total test reports received were 57,541 and the results of 6,583 excluding 1,103 RTPCR samples collected a day ago are awaited. Out of these, 53,085 were negative reports while 4,456 positive. The total number of samples collected was 65,227. Earlier, a woman aged 35 from Ranipur (Mehmoorganj, Bhelupur) and a male aged 51 from Nehru Nagar (Sigra) died during their treatment at Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) in BHU and Apex Hospital



Sealed hotspot at Gurudham Colony crossing in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

respectively. With the addition of 18 red zones, the total number of hotspots has increased to 1,067 including 387 red zones. Besides, there are 680 green zones including 22 new ones.

Meanwhile, after finding of many journalists and residents of Patrakarpuram Colony as COVID-19 positive, a rapid antigen testing camp was organised at Paradkar Bhawan in which as many as 68 tests of media personnel and their family members were done and out of them, 10 were found positive. During the camp, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma and CMO also visited there and advised the positive suspected patients to take home isolation. They were also informed that in

case of any problem they should inform the Health department so that they can be admitted to Covid hospitals.

Earlier, this region continued finding of a large number of corona patients when 613 cases were detected on Saturday. The maximum number of 196 cases was found in Varanasi (4,261), followed by 94 in Ballia (2,281), 81 in Azamgarh (1,622), 52 in Jaunpur (2,682), 42 in Ghazipur (1,634), 38 in Chandauli (1,115), 37 in Mirzapur (1,061), 37 in Mau (690), 22 in Sonbhadra (818) and 14 in Bhadohi (760). Out of total 16,924 corona positive cases, 9,398 have been cured either at home isolation or discharged from hospitals and

the recovery rate was 55.53 per cent. With the increase in death toll to 224, the mortality rate has slightly declined to 1.32 per cent.

According to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amit Pathak, the police of various police stations arrested as many as 67 persons under Section 51 of CrPC and took action under Section 51 of Disaster Management Act against 629 persons. Besides, during checking at 14 border and 49 police checking points, as many as 1,068 vehicles were challaned and six seized. Apart from this, ₹59,300 were realised from 77 vehicles while ₹2,33,300 from 3,046 persons for moving on the roads without wearing masks.

176 more test positive in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The Sangam city again witnessed a number of corona patients over 150 for the fifth consecutive day. As of Saturday night, 176 new patients were found infected. At the same time, three corona patients admitted to Swaroop Rani Nehru COVID Hospital also lost their lives.

Now the number of corona patients has reached 3,801 and the number of dead has risen to 72 in the Prayagraj district so far. While the number of corona patients is increasing rapidly, the patients suffering from this disease are also recovering fast.

On Saturday, a maximum of 107 patients recovered and went home. This is the reason that the number of cured patients is 1,768, while as many as 1,664 patients are currently undergoing treatment at different Covid hospitals in the city. However, since last week of July, the number of corona patients has increased alarmingly.

So far, more than 100 patients were being detected continuously for a fortnight. But over the last five days this number has increased to over 150 from 100. In this, more than 200 patients were found for two days. On August 7, the number of patients had increased to 226. CMO Dr GS Bajpai said that the report of 1,603 samples has been negative, while samples have been taken for testing of 1,448 suspected people. The CMO has appealed to the citizens to ensure that patients with corona symptoms go to their nearest testing centre and get corona examined.



Policemen checking vehicles during lockdown at Allahabad University in Prayagraj

Pioneer

The death of corona in the district has increased since July. If one looks at the figures, the situation is normal. Death rate in Prayagraj is just two per cent. Responsible officers have been directed by the Chief Minister to reduce the death due to corona. The Chief Secretary and the Principal Secretary, who were getting information about Corona, had also informed that if the death rate is more than four per cent, it means more deaths are occurring but less deaths mean that the situation is not yet frightening.

To recall, the first corona patient died in Swaroop Rani Nehru COVID Hospital on May 6 in the district. The deceased was an engineer from Lukerganj. Then the number rose to three in May and six more corona patients died in

June. That is, there were only nine deaths in two months. The number of corona patients was also less in those days. The situation turned ugly in the month of July as the number of deaths accelerated in the same month and thus 71 patients died by the first week of August.

So far, only one patient had lost his life in Railway Covid Hospital of L1, the remaining 70 patients died in SRN Covid Hospital of L3. Only patients with a critical condition come to the SRN Hospital. Doctors say that 80 per cent of such corona patients have died, who were already suffering from diabetes, lung, cancer, blood pressure, pneumonia and respiratory disease.

Dr Sujit Verma, the Nodal Officer of SRN Covid Hospital, said that if any one is having

symptoms similar to corona, then he/she should be tested, as the condition can become serious if it is delayed.

Then it becomes very difficult to save the patient. This coronavirus affects lungs the most, so patients with respiratory problems should be alerted first.

Key facts— 80 per cent of the deceased who were already suffering from some disease, 15 per cent of the dead occurred due to reaching late in hospital, 05 per cent of the deceased were those who had no disease earlier.

They underwent treatment but could not be saved. Besides, 30 per cent of women have lost their lives from corona. People over 60 years of age died the most in the city. Patients under 40 years have the highest recovery rate.

UP BEd Joint Entrance Exam held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Amidst tight security arrangements, the UP BEd. Joint Entrance Examinations (JEE) was conducted here on Sunday in which thousands of candidates appeared. Due to the rush of candidates at several centres, violation of all the norms of social distancing was clearly seen. Over 80 per cent candidates appeared in the examinations conducted at 109 centres in which 39,600 candidates were scheduled to appear.

As a large number of candidates were female, a heavy rush of parents and guardians was also seen at many centres and despite all the instructions to maintain social distancing, the same could not be followed at many places. The examinations were conducted in two shifts and the candidates were allowed to enter the centres only after thermal scanning. No one was allowed to enter the centres without wearing masks. As there were several centres in Banaras Hindu University (BHU), a traffic jam-like scene was seen at Lanka near BHU Main Gate. There was also a heavy rush between the BHU Main Gate and Mahila Mahavidyalaya (MMV). Many outside candidates started arriving here by different modes of transport right from Saturday evening.

BHU UET/PET SCHED-



Candidates coming out after appearing in UP BEd JEE at BHU in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

ULE: The revised schedule for entrance examination for admission to various undergraduate and postgraduate courses (UET/ PET) of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has been announced. Entrance tests for all postgraduate programmes, LLB. (3 years), BEd./BEd. Special Education, BPed, BFA and BPA are scheduled in the first phase between August 24 and 31. The entrance

tests for remaining undergraduate programmes including BA (Hons.) Arts, BA.(Hons.) Social Sciences, BCom (Hons.)/ BCom –FMM, BSc. (Hons.) Ag., BALLB -5 years (Hons.), BSc. (Hons.) Maths, B.Sc. (Hons.) Bio, Shastri (Hons.) and different programmes of B.Voc will be held in the second phase on September 9, 10, 11 and 14. The schedule of the second phase of entrance tests

will be available on portal by August 17. All eligible candidates are advised to download the latest entrance test schedule from BHU entrance test portal (www.bhuonline.in). As per provisions of the University Entrance Test Bulletin, admit cards for entrance tests may be downloaded from the entrance test portal around one week prior to the date of entrance test.

Women observe Lalai Chhath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Despite continuous spike in COVID-19 cases in the city, rush of women was seen at some ponds including Ramkund at Srinagar Colony here on Sunday on the auspicious occasion of Lalai Chhath. The women worshiped praying the Almighty for long life of their sons. They also observed fast without having even a single drop of water. At Ramkund, the women offered several rituals as per their tradition. This festival is famous among the local women.

The women also assembled at many other ponds in the city and performed puja. As per tradition, Lalai Chhath falls a couple of days prior to Sri Krishna Janmashthami and the day is known to celebrate the birthday of deity Balbhadr, the elder brother of Lord Krishna. It is observed on Krishna Paksha Shashti in Bhadrpad month.

GANGA RISING: For the second day in succession, the water level of river



Women observing Lalai Chhath at Ramkund in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

continued rising in the city here on Sunday and during the last one day, the level was increased slowly as the river recorded rising by 1.29 centimetres per hour. The level has increased from 61.66 metres to 61.97 metres. However, there is no any serious threat of flood yet as the river is still flowing far below the warning level of 70.26 metres. According to report received from Middle Ganga Division-III of Central Water Commission (CWC),

the river Ganga continued rising in Varanasi but its uprend was checked at upstream Mirzapur. It was also rising at downstream Ghazipur but remained steady at Ballia, a district which separates UP and Bihar and surrounded by three big rivers where Ghagara had already created flood havoc in some parts of the district.

TRAINING: Banaras Hindu University (BHU) will impart training to the doctors, staff nurses and paramedical

staff of the state government from Monday to make available a better treatment to COVID-19 patients.

The Additional Chief Secretary and Nodal Officer of the district Devesh Chaturvedi held a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor of BHU Prof Rakesh Bhatnagar to review the testing of corona patients, their admission and treatment in Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) and it was decided that the hospital management will impart training to the doctors, staff nurses and paramedical staff of the government to make available a better treatment to the corona patients. The meeting discussed the availability of beds, ventilators, oxygen high flow respiratory humidifier system, intensive care unit, etc in the hospital and decided to increase these facilities as per requirement.

Recently, as many as 70 more beds were made available to the hospital and with this, the number of beds increased to 280.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

In view of rapid increase in the number of corona cases the Allahabad High Court had directed not to allow two passengers on two-wheelers in the state. It is clear violation of social distancing norms, the court observed.

The court, however, has allowed two passengers on a bike or scooter if they are husband and wife because they live together in a house.

The court has directed the police and administrative officers of all the districts to ensure strict implementation of the above order.

This order was passed by Justice Siddhartha Varma and Justice Ajit Kumar on a PIL seeking better facilities for the corona patients.

NON-SITTING OF COURTS: The Chief Justice, considering the rapid surge in number of coronavirus cases at Prayagraj and Lucknow on

Sunday taken a decision and accordingly order has been issued to continue non- sitting of courts on August 12, 13, 14, 2020 in the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad.

It has been said in the order that on the aforesaid dates only the urgent matters, mentioned before the Chief Justice and senior Judge at Lucknow, respectively shall be taken up and no other courts shall be sitting. There

shall be no physical/ e- filing on August 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16, 2020.

It is directed that all judicial as well as administrative sections of High Court Allahabad shall not function on August 12, 13, 14 ,2020. However, keeping in view of the backlog matters with stamp reporting (civil/ criminal) and fresh filing sections, they shall function with required number of staff only till the backlog is cleared.

Lodging of FIR against LU officers urged

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Activist Dr Nutan Thakur has sought registration of First Information Report (FIR) against the officers of Lucknow University responsible for holding today's BEd examination all over the state.

In her letter to UP CM Yogi Adityanath, Nutan said that while the State Government is repeatedly emphasising measures for containing spread of corona but today's BEd examination made a complete mockery of the Government's intention.

Thousands of people assembled at each examination centre where the candidates and other involved persons had to stand in extremely close proximity to each other and social distancing was completely overthrown.

Nutan said all these facts were well known to the examining authorities and had been repeatedly brought to their notice by the candidates but they took no cognisance of



No social distancing rules followed by applicants who had come to appear in UP BEd JEE at Allahabad University in Prayagraj

Pioneer

these requests. The result is that today the public health concerns were badly affected and the battle against corona took a back seat.

Hence she has sought registration of FIR against these authorities at Mahanagar police station, Lucknow.

Nutan has also sought

postponement of the BEO (Block Education Officer) exam to be held on August 16, 202 by UP Public Service Commission.

Webinar on self-reliant India held

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Department of Fashion Design and Embroidery of Hamidia Girls Degree College organised a webinar on 'Self-reliant India-Be Vocal About Local' and the eminent speakers of the webinar were Prof Alka Goyal, Dean, College of Home Science, GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology Pantnagar Uttarakhand, Dr Neetu Mishra, HOD Home Science Department, University of Allahabad and Dr Mariyam Fatima, Assistant Professor, Department of Home Science, Aligarh Muslim University. The speakers presented their valuable views and knowledgeable insights on

the topic 'Self-reliant India : Be vocal about local'. Prof Alka Goel started her view from early decades and said that local is not a new concept and have been used since thousand of years ago in India, from the Mughal era to the Swadeshi Movement and even after independence the artisan are experimenting to bring out their good work to compete in the market with international brands. She explored many Indian local art works from the field of textile and range over the local art work of India including Dabu printing from Rajasthan, use of Indigo Kalamkari, Banarasi silk handloom, Ikkat from Pochampalli

Bhagalpur. Dr Neetu Mishra stated on the promotions of indigenous products. She began from plastic glasses to the replacement of 'kullad' to environmental degradation. She said how the old techniques were useful and eco friendly for survival, but nowadays adding more technologies making the environment harmful to sustain. She shared her experience and motivated the attendees. Dr Maryam Fatima stated a very basic view of how day to day activities are linked with the vocalisation of talent and how the flexibility of education important and due to the change in the New Education Policy. New voca-

tional courses are being introduced in colleges and how it will help to the people to generate income .On concluding she told about Mahila-e-Haat an organisation to help women entrepreneurs. The webinar ended with the question answer session. Dr Rehana Tariq praised all the three speakers and urged to exchange the students and teachers among the state of India to learn their basic skills and to be vocalised. This will upgrade the knowledge on how to be self reliant and to make ourselves go 'vocal for local'. Blessings and well wishes was given by the manager of the college Tazeen Ahsanulla.



Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari speaking at the virtual convention of Bharatiya Udyog Vyapar Mandal on Sunday.

Pioneer.

Gadkari hints at launch of electric trucks in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari hinted at the launch of electric trucks on Indian roads soon.

The government is already working in this regard, he disclosed.

Gadkari said work on facelift of the roads of many states, including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, was already going on.

The road transport minister said it would now take only 45 minutes for transportation of goods from Meerut to Delhi. Besides, he said, as against 55 hours taken for transporting goods from Delhi to Mumbai, the time would be reduced to just 26 hours.

Speaking at the virtual

Vyapaari Sammelan organised by Bharatiya Udyog Vyapaar Mandal on its 39th Foundation Day on Sunday, Gadkari said the condition of Indian roads was rapidly being upgraded and the government was thinking about launching electric trucks on Indian roads.

He said work for upgrading the roads in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar was being carried out on a large-scale and during the next two years, the condition of these states would drastically change.

He said many countries were now inclined to associate themselves with India and their investments in India would generate employment for the people of the country and increase their purchasing power. With the increase in

production, Indian economy would also be strengthened, he added.

Gadkari said the continuous suspension of trade activities during lockdown was not justified. He said traders could carry out their business activities by changing the schedule for customers.

The minister said people should learn to live with coronavirus. On getting a vaccine to contain the virus, they would soon regain their pace, he added.

He said traders should register themselves in GST, make transactions through banks, promote good packaging of their products with proper attention on logistics. These all would help them in rapid promotion of their trade activities, he added.

Gadkari said that instead of migrating to cities, people in villages should enhance their trade there itself. "Uttar Pradesh and Bihar can play a pivotal role in this," he added.

The minister said everyone was in distress in the present scenario and all trade and industry people were in quagmire. "This is the time for them to march ahead with the help of others with the use of latest techniques," he added.

The Vyapaari Sammelan was chaired by Bharatiya Udyog Vyapar Mandal national president Shyam Behari Mishra from Kanpur while senior vice-president of the organisation, Mukund Mishra, conducted the proceedings. Traders from all over India participated in this online convention.

Mayor warns LLR Hosp authorities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar Mayor Pramila Pandey has lashed out at the LLR Hospital authorities for their mismanagement and warned that stern action would be taken against them if they did not mend their ways.

She carried out an inspection of the LLR Hospital and summoned the health officials and gave them a dressing down.

The mayor said that whenever a team came from Lucknow for inspection it was misguided. She said the fact was that the entire functioning at LLR hospital was in a chaos.

Pandey said that many patients had complained that when they reached the LLR Hospital they were refused admission and guided to private hospitals and once their condition worsened they were referred back to the LLR Hospital due to which many patients had died. She said the modus operandi of the health officials had come under sharp criticism.

She said the cause of the high number of deaths in LLR Hospital was initial denial of admission to serious patients who were first referred to private hospitals.

The mayor then held a meeting with the health officials, including Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Mishra, GSVM Medical College Principal Dr RB Kamal, Chief Medical Superintendent Dr Richa Giri, Dr Manish Singh, Dr Prem Singh and several others.

The mayor asked them to improved the working of the hospital. She said the state government was sanctioning huge budget but it was not being managed efficiently.

Pandey said there was hardly any hoarding in the city to inform people about precautions to be taken to safeguard oneself from coronavirus infection. She directed them to put up awareness hoardings. She warned them of stern action if things did not improve.

Parents of disabled kids advised to keep in touch with trainers

KANPUR (PNS): Kanpur Nagar reported 341 new cases of coronavirus infection on Sunday.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Anil K Mishra said that 341 more people tested positive for coronavirus infection between Saturday evening and Sunday evening, taking the tally to 8,436.

He said with 40 COVID-19 patients being discharged from hospitals, 2,580 infected persons had been cured and there were 4,768 active cases in the city. The CMO said with 15 more COVID-19 deaths in the city, the death toll stood at 276 on Sundayday. He said 1,540 samples were taken for testing.

He said each team need to contact at least 400 such people and find out if they faced any health problem. He said a detailed list of such people be prepared and their blood pressure, blood sugar level and other serious ailments be monitored.

He said those in home isolation should be monitored regularly.

BEd-JEE: Around 30 pc candidates found absent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Around 30 per cent candidates were found absent in the BEd Joint Entrance Examination 2020 held in the city on Sunday. This was the first entrance examination conducted in the city amidst coronavirus pandemic. In comparison to their admit cards, centre managements paid more attention on whether the candidates had mask and sanitiser. After thermal scanning and pulse oximeter test, the candidates had to pass through sanitising tunnel to enter the college. At some of the centres, the invigilators were seen discharging duties in personal protective equipment.

There were 68 centres in the city to accommodate 31,000 candidates in the BEd entrance

examination on Sunday. In the first session, around 30 per cent candidates were found absent due to fear of contracting coronavirus or for other reasons.

Entry was allowed at the examination centres one hour before the scheduled time. During the entry, physical distancing norms were followed and the invigilators checked whether the candidates had mask and sanitiser. Each centre was paid ₹ 20 per candidate for sanitising the classroom during morning and evening sessions. At the Harsahai Degree College on P Road, invigilators checked the temperature and blood oxygen level of candidates with thermal scanner and pulse oximeter.

Out of the 500 candidates scheduled to take the test in the morning session, 250 were absent at Harsahai Degree

College.

At Dayanand Girls' Degree College in Civil Lines, also, out of 300 candidates scheduled to take the test in the morning shift, only 229 appeared in the entrance exam.

At DAV College, 60 per cent presence was registered while at DBS Degree College, out of 1,000 candidates, 730 appeared in the exams.

At PPN Degree College and VSSD College, 252 candidates each were found absent. As most of the regular teachers refused to discharge duties during COVID-19 pandemic on pretext of their higher age or illness, the college management had to outsource invigilators.

City coordinator Dr Sandeep Singh, associate professor at CSJM University, said directives had been issued to

arrange separate seating of candidates suffering from fever or cold. He said biometric presence and photo copy of admit card were made mandatory for the candidates.

He also inspected the centres with the team of Lucknow University during the first session.

President of Self-Financed College Association Vinay Trivedi said in the past, around 90 per cent candidates used to appear in the BEd entrance exams and this was the first time that such a large number of candidates had missed the entrance exam. He said this would impact the admission to BEd course. Trivedi said the state government should also allow admission to the absent candidates in the last counselling to enable all colleges to fill up their allotted seats.

DM inspects exam centres

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District Magistrate Sushil Kumar Patel himself took the command of the administrative arrangements for ensuring the fair conduct of BEd

achievement Superintendent of Police (SP) Dr Dharmveer Singh praised the incharge, IGRS cell, inspector Sajid Siddiqui and his team for working sincerely and disposing of cases through a regular follow



DM Sushil Kumar Patel inspecting the examination centre at KBPG College in Mirzapur on Sunday

Kotwali police have arrested two in connection with an FIR lodged at the police station for hindering the government work and manhandling a government employee. As per the reports received here, Prashant Kumar the teacher Junior High School Ratangarh had lodged an FIR on Saturday in which he had stated that Nanhaku, Ishtakar and Ashraf, residents of Ratanganj, had abused and mis-handled him and created a nuisance when he was getting the boundary wall of the school repaired. Thereafter the police swung into action and arrested two accused in this connection. SHO Katra Kotwali Ramesh Chandra Yadav said that raids were being conducted for nabbing the third accused.

DRIVER SERIOUS: A truck fell into the ditch near Khappar Baba turn under Ahraura police station. On getting information the police reached there, rescued the driver and sent him to a hospital at Varanasi in a serious condition, last reports received here said. The driver was identified as Ramchandra Yadav, a resident of Mahdepur village under Aurai police station, Bhadohi. The owner of the said truck (UP-63/T-8772) had reached the spot on the information of the police.

entrance examination on Sunday. The DM inspected all the examination centres and issued the necessary directives to the officials deployed on duty.

DISPOSAL OF CASES: District police secured the top position in July in the state regarding the disposal of cases registered through IGRS. For proper disposal the district secured 100 marks and stood at the top among 75 districts of the state, as per the ranking declared by CM portal. For the

up. To provide justice to common people the government has introduced the online system to register grievances through it and such applications are regularly monitored at each level of the system. The team after registering the case sent it to the police station concerned, sought the report, contacted the aggrieved and after their satisfaction considered it as disposed and then reported to the authorities concerned.

TWO HELD: Katra

Student's body recovered

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The body of a student of class IX, Deepraj (14), was found in Harpur village under the Gola police station on Saturday. On getting information about the recovery of the boy's body near a pond his family members and men in khaki reached there. The body of the victim had many bruises. After its identification his body was sent for the post-mortem examination. The motive behind the murder is not clear yet, last reports received here said. According to information, the victim, Deepraj, was a student of an inter college in Kakarhi. Late on Friday night his father, Chunnilal, got a call on his mobile phone and the student spoke to the caller concerned. He then left the house a little later. His family thought that he had gone to

sleep in another house but in the morning the some villagers were shocked when they saw his body lying along the pond in the village of Nayakan Tola with bruises on his neck and other parts of his body. During police investigation murder by strangling is coming to the fore.

The father of the victim, younger of two brothers, earned his livelihood by driving an auto-rickshaw. The exact reason behind the murder could not be ascertained yet. The forensic team too also investigated the matter. Circle Officer (CO) Gola Shyamdev said that the case was being investigated after registering a case against some unknown persons on the basis of the application received in this connection. He claimed that the case would be worked out soon.

FOUR INJURED IN

ATTACK: Four persons were injured when knives were used to attack one another during a clash in Siarampur Tola in Jaipur under the Gulriha police station. The four seriously injured persons had been admitted to a hospital. The police have taken five accused into custody. It is learnt that two youths were standing in front of the house of Shailendra Pratap, a resident of Siarampur Tola. When he asked them the reason behind their standing there unnecessarily at night they got angry. After some time they arrived there in a group and started fighting. In the quarrel Pintu, Shivpujan, Ankit and Shailendra sustained injuries. Meanwhile Station House Officer (SHO) Ravi Kumar Rai said that five persons had been taken into custody from both sides.

Two liquor smugglers held

CORRESPONDENT ■ CHANDAUJI

The Saiyadraja police arrested two liquor smugglers from Jethmalpur Tiraha during checking. They recovered 24 cartons of liquor from them. The smugglers were trying to take the liquor to Bihar on a white Safari. According to information received here, Gullu Ram, son of Sanjeev Kumar, and Mohammad Ravi Shah, son of Islammuddin Shah, residents of Buxar district of Bihar, had been arrested. A white Safari was recovered from which 1,152 bottles of



The two smugglers arrested by Saiyadraja police

illicit liquor had been seized. Syedaraja inspector Lakshman Parvat said that these people smuggled liquor illegally and carried it to Bihar and sold it at exorbitant prices. Based on the information from an informer the arrest was made and action was being taken.

GANJA SEIZED: A joint team of Mughalsarai Kotwali police and STF recovered 225 kg ganja from two vehicles from Chakia trifurcation around 8.30 am on Saturday. Meanwhile, the team apprehended five people on the charges of smuggling ganja. After this the police brought everyone to Mughalsarai Kotwali. Police registered a case against the arrested accused and was taking further action. The police said that cost of the ganja was ₹50 lakh. To avoid police the accused had put a tin sheet tin on the vehicle and coated it with cow dung in order to avoid suspicion. On Saturday the STF and Mughalsarai Kotwali police received information that ganja

was being carried in two four-wheelers At this the team started checking the vehicles at Chakia trifurcation. Police stopped two vehicles on the basis of suspicion. CO Sadar Kunwar Prabhat Singh said that a tin sheet was placed on the vehicles with a cow dung coated on them and ganja was kept in sacks under it. A total of 225 kg ganja was recovered from both vehicles. On charges of smuggling ganja Shafaqat, a resident of an area under Gauraj police station area in Vaishali district, Abdul Latif a resident Durg district in Chhattisgarh, Vedprakash Upadhyay and Ranjit Dubey residents of an area under Kadirpur police station and Ranjit Kumar of an area under the Lambhua police station in Sultanpur district have been caught. The team which made the arrest comprised Mughalsarai Kotwali incharge Shivanand Mishra, S-I Satyendra Vikram Singh, S-I STF Satyendra Vikram Singh, head constable Prem Singh, Prahlad Singh, Arvind Bhardwaj and head constable STF Brijesh Singh, Pradeep Singh, Anil Singh Chandel, besides Pramod Singh and constable Pritam Kumar.

LOST BAG FOUND: A man had dropped his bag containing money near Damodardas pond under Mughalsarai Kotwali. On being informed by people the Chandhasi outpost incharge Satendra Vikram Singh helped in ensuring its safe delivery to its rightful owner. It is learnt told that while going from Varanasi to Kaimur Bhabhua a man had dropped his bag containing important documents and ₹20,000 there. On being informed the outpost incharge Satyendra Vikram Singh went there and kept the bag safely with him. After some time one person reached there looking for it and after necessary investigation the outpost incharge returned the bag along with money to him. On getting his lost money along with the bag back his joy knew no bounds.

BODY RECOVERED: The body of a youth was recovered from a drain in Roja Colony under the Mughalsarai Kotwali on Saturday morning. On getting information, the police reached the spot and got the body out from there. After taking necessary action they sent the body to the district hospital for the post-mortem examination. It is feared that the victim may have been killed two days ago and his body was dumped there. From the Aadhaar card found in the youth's pocket it came to light that he was a resident of West Delhi. On this basis, the Kotwali police was trying to reach his house. Like everyday some persons were walking in Roja Colony under the Mughalsarai Kotwakili on Saturday morning when someone spotted the body in the drain. They informed the police and Kotwali incharge inspector Shivanand Mishra, reached the spot. Later, the police somehow got the body out of the drain. There were bruises on several parts of the body of the deceased. On searching the pockets of his pant, an Aadhar card, a PAN card and a voter ID were found. The name of Manoj Pandit was written on the Aadhaar card, while the address was of Delhi. After this the police took the body into custody and after necessary action sent it to the district hospital for the post-mortem examination. In this regard CO Sadar Kunwar Prabhat Singh said that an attempt was being made to contact the family on the basis of the documents found in the pockets of the trouser of deceased. On the other hand, after getting the post-mortem examination report would the cause of his death be ascertained, he added.

WOMAN ENDS LIFE: Fed up with family feud a married woman, Chanda (22) wife of Dharamjit, ended her life by hanging herself when no one was present in the house in Bhatraul village under the Shahabganj police station here recently. On getting information about the matter, the police reached the spot, brought down the body and after necessary action sent it to the district hospital for the post-mortem examination.

Andaman will be hub of ‘blue economy’: Modi



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Modi urges people to maintain ‘do gaj ki doori’

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the interaction, party workers described to the Prime Minister how they provided food and medical aid to people stuck in the island during the lockdown. Modi praised their efforts in serving the distressed people in the island during the coronavirus pandemic saying “you have passed with flying colours”.

He asked party workers to continue their work with the spirit of ‘Seva hi sanghathan’ motto.

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

Gehlot urges MLAs to save democracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I am confident that you all

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BJP MLA Nirmal Kumawat had alleged that the Congress government in Rajasthan was “harassing” opposition MLAs, and said they were on a pilgrimage to Somnath to seek mental peace.

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

“Let DDA file its response within one month failing which coercive measures under Section 25 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 read with section 51 of CPC may be the only option left with the Tribunal. The response be filed by e-mail,” the bench said.

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

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

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

Rahul flays centre over ‘looming unemployment’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Sunday hit out at the Centre over looming unemployment in the country. He accused the Narendra Modi Government of failing to meet its promise of jobs for two crore people every year, and then enacting policies that “destroyed India’s economic structure” and left crores without jobs.

His attack on the Government came as the Congress’ youth wing launched a “Rozgar do” campaign with the objective to raise the voice of the youth against alleged unemployment prevailing in the country.

“When Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister, he promised the youth of the country that he will give jobs to two crore youth every year. He sold a dream, but the reality is that 14 crore people have become unemployed due to the policies of Narendra Modi,” Rahul alleged.

Rahul alleged that the Modi Government’s decision of demonetisation and its “faulty” implementation of GST and the lockdown have “destroyed” the economic structure of the country.

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

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

“Please join the ‘Rozgar Do’ programme and along with Youth Congress, get jobs for the youth of this nation,” the Gandhi scion said.

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

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

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

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

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

“Anti-youth policies of the central government will be highlighted among the youth of the country through social media and other mediums,” it said in a statement.

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

The work, however, progressed at a slow pace due to Covid-19 lockdown.

Recently KVIC also distributed 250 honey bee boxes in Chullyu village which has rich flora for production of high-altitude honey.

Located on the main highway just 30 km before the most popular tourist spot Ziro, Chullyu is a scenic village known for its eco-friendly ways of living. It is easily approachable by tourists which is an advantage for the local artisans.

Kharif cultivation all set for new record this year

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The data shows that there is a spectacular 17.36 per cent increase in rice planting too. As compared to 274.19 lakh hectare planted in same week last year, the area under rice so far is nearly 322 lakh hectare, an increase of 47.60 lakh hectare.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.5L tele-consultations held via eSanjeevini, eSanjeevaniOPD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tele-consultation medical facilities -eSanjeevini and eSanjeevaniOPD- launched by the Centre is finding good response from the patients stuck at home due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

About 1.5 lakh tele-consultations have been completed on the tele-medicine service platforms of the Union Health Ministry.

“It is planned to implement tele-consultation in all the 1.5 lakh Health and Wellness Centres (as spokes) in a ‘Hub and Spoke’ model, by December 2022,” said a senior official from the Union Health Ministry.

So far, eSanjeevini and eSanjeevaniOPD have been

implemented by 23 States while others are in the process of rolling it out.

Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan in a review meeting said, “We have started implementing the vision of Digital India through broadband and mobile phones at the Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres.

“This has substantially augmented our health infrastructure during the COVID pandemic”.

Echoing similar sentiments, Minister of State for Health Ashwini K. Choubey said that it would be a “gamechanger for people in the rural areas who do not have easy access to medical specialists located in cities”.

Presently, telemedicine is

being provided through more than 3,000 HWCs in 10 States.

Owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Health Ministry launched the second tele-consultation service enabling patient-to-doctor telemedicine through ‘eSanjeevaniOPD’ free of cost in around 20 States.

Presently, on an average, around 5,000 consultations per day are provided through both the modes (eSanjeevani and eSanjeevaniOPD).

The telemedicine platform is hosting over 40 online OPDs, more than half of these are specialty OPDs which include gynaecology, psychiatry, dermatology, ENT, ophthalmology, anti-retroviral therapy (ART) for the AIDS/HIV patients, non-com-

municable diseases (NCDs) etc.

The top ten States which have registered highest consultations through eSanjeevani and eSanjeevaniOPD platforms are Tamil Nadu (32,035 consultations), Andhra Pradesh (28,960), Himachal Pradesh (24,527), Uttar Pradesh (20,030), Kerala (15,988), followed by Gujarat (7127), Punjab (4450), Rajasthan (3548), Maharashtra (3284) and Uttarakhand (2596).

The majority share in the doctor-to-doctor eSanjeevani consultations at AB-HWCs has been of Andhra Pradesh (25,478) and Himachal Pradesh (23,857) while Tamil Nadu leads in the patient-to-doctor eSanjeevaniOPD services with 32,035 consultations.

India at worst phase in its Covid fight : Dr VK Paul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Niti Ayog member Dr VK Paul on Sunday said India has 1,466 cases per million whereas the world average, into the seventh month of the pandemic, is around 2,500 per million even as he warned people not to be complacent if cases begin to decline.

“The trailer is over I think, but we are still before the interval,” he said at a webinar organised by the India International Centre on the topic towards a holistic long-term healthcare system.

He pointed out that currently, India is experiencing the worst phase in its fight against Covid-19 with a total of 64,399 new coronavirus cases getting

Mortality rates in India continue to be low

reported in the last 24 hours, taking the overall caseload to 21,53,011, while the death toll mounting to 43,379 with 861 fresh fatalities.

But there may be a silver lining said Dr Paul.

Citing the day-wise daily new cases data, he said, “If we look at the five-day moving average, we could see some kind of stabilisation; I do not know whether it is true or random, that only time will tell. Maybe, there is something out there, which is indicating that we may have moved away from

the exponential rise and we may be stabilising. But that only time will tell.”

Dr Paul said that the first phase of the Covid-19 pandemic was in the most populous cities, in the western half of the nation, where the pandemic originated.

It seems now that the pandemic in this part of the country is now reaching some kind of peak. “As we have seen in the context of Delhi,” he added.

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

tance.”

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

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

CPCB proposes fine up to ₹1L for incessant honking, loud construction activity at odd hours

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Incessant honking, loud construction activity, loud-speakers at odd hours among other noise pollution actions will attract fines ranging from ₹1,000 to ₹1 lakh, country’s top pollution watchdog Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has proposed.

The new fines have been proposed in response to a set of cases going on in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) regarding noise pollution wherein the applicants complained that despite sever-



al court orders, the problem of noise pollution continues in the national capital.

In November 2019, a bench headed by the NGT chairperson A.K. Goel had



asked the CPCB to look at revising fines for bursting crackers and for repeated violations. The tribunal had also asked laying down stringent

compensation for tampering with the sound limiters.

In a report filed with the NGT in June this year, the CPCB came out with a string

of penalties for violation of noise pollution norms.

For instance, violation of norms regarding the use of loudspeakers/public address system can result in seizure of the equipment and a fine of ₹10,000.

Similarly, violation of noise pollution norms regarding the use of diesel generator sets can result in sealing of DG sets and a fine of ₹10,000 to ₹100,000 depending upon its size.

The violation in cases of sound-emitting construction equipment can result in a

fine of ₹50,000 and its seizure or sealing.

The violation of noise norms while bursting fire-crackers beyond the time limit (prescribed by the Supreme Court) could attract a fine of ₹1,000 (in the residential, commercial or mixed zone) and ₹3,000 (in a silence zone).

But in case of violation of norms during public rallies, marriage procession or any religious event, a heavier fine of ₹10,000 could be levied on the organiser in residential/commercial or mixed

zone and ₹20,000 in a silence zone.

In case of the first violation of noise rule within a fixed premise in a function organised by the resident welfare organisation, a marriage function, public or institution event, banquet hall, open ground functions, a fine of ₹20,000 may be levied while a second violation could result in a fine of ₹40,000.

However, more than two violations could result in a fine of ₹100,000 and sealing of the premises, as per the CPCB proposal.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Tragedy in Kozhikode

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



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

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

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

Breaking stereotypes

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



The recently published results of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) civil services examination, 2019, have thrown up some powerful stories of triumph, surpassing gender, caste, economic and religious barriers. Stories of grit and inspiration abound as most candidates who have made the cut have done so under challenging circumstances and modest means. While some never gave up despite repeated failures, there are others who had to overcome physical as well as family limitations to prove that courage is the only mark of success. The topper, Pradeep Singh, though already an IRS officer, is the son of a farmer from Sonipat. Surprisingly, Jatin Kishore and Pratibha Verma, too, not satisfied with their earlier results, reappeared for the exams and have now become the second and third rankers and the top scorers among women. Overall there are three women candidates in the top 10 list. But setting a new record are 12 candidates from Jammu and Kashmir, including Nadia Beig, the youngest officer from Kupwara, at a time when young people in the blacked out State are suffering on account of lost opportunities. In yet another example of perseverance, a son of a petrol pump worker from Madhya Pradesh has bagged the 26th position. Neither financial struggles nor a missed opportunity last year, when he failed to make it to the list by just one slot, could deter this young officer. Aishwarya Sheoran, who bagged the 93rd position, has become a classic example of beauty with brains. A former Miss India finalist, she has broken the stereotype that models aren't smart enough by clearing the exams in her first attempt. A former child actor, too, is an inspiration for he is a COVID warrior and is ready to become an officer. And Purana Sunthari, a 25-year-old visually impaired woman from Madurai, has proved just how no vision can be out of sight.

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

opinion08

Unending Ladakh story

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



DEEPAK SINHA

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

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

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

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



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

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

aster clearly showed. There was no reason why Atal Bihari Vajpayee's attempts at engaging Pakistan should have led to complacency on the part of either the intelligence or the security establishment. It was all very well to have blamed it on "systemic intelligence failure" but why nobody thought it necessary to ask the question: While the intelligence agencies may have failed to discern Pakistan's intentions, how was it that the latter occupied our territory without detection by the Army? Instead of taking it to task, we made much of our top military brass, treating them as heroes for reclaiming — at great cost one might add — what we should not have lost in the first place. Of course, the Government of the day could not have acted in any other manner as that would have been seen as a blemish on its performance as well.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

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

Prime Minister
—Narendra Modi



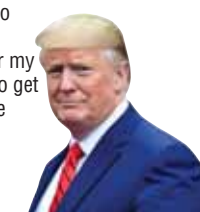
If a new actor is launched today, even if in a small film, they (public) should support them, write good comments on their posts and stop crying nepotism, nepotism.

Actor
—Gurmeet Choudhary



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

US President
—Donald Trump



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

Former India batsman
—Sanjay Manjrekar



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

China cannot be trusted

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

Rashmi
Via email

Debt restructuring

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

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

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

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

Raging rainforest a climate threat

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

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



Ganapathi Bhat
Akola

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

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

Shivansh
Via email

Deal with compassion

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

Ashok Malik
Via web

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

October surprise awaits the US?

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



GWYNNE DYER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—J&K CHIEF SECRETARY
BVR SUBRAHMANYAM



SUBRAHMANYAM AND HIS TEAM ARE LEAST EXPECTED TO KNOW HOW THE PEOPLE FEEL. TO QUOTE GANDHI, THEY ARE RULING J&K FROM THE 500TH FLOOR.

—PDP LEADER AND FORMER J&K MINISTER
NAEEM AKHTAR

Nip the NPA crisis, now

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



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



— which was so assiduously pursued by the RBI during the last few years. This has seen a steady decline in their GNPA ratio from 11.5 per cent in March 2018 to 8.5 per cent in March this year. Though this reduced their CRAR, however, it still remained above the Basel III-compliant RBI norms. Now, the loans are likely to rise to a 20-year high as a result of the crisis triggered by the pandemic.

As the RBI Governor said in the foreword to the FSR, “The financial system in India remains sound. Nonetheless, in the current environment, the need for financial intermediaries to proactively augment capital and improve their resilience has acquired top priority. In the evolving milieu, while risk management has to be prudent, extreme risk-aversion would have adverse outcomes for all.” Under the current crisis, risk-aversion, both by banks and borrowers, is only to be expected as evidenced by the banks parking their excess liquidity with the RBI instead of lending. Credit demand has not picked up despite the easing of the lockdown and financial vulnerabilities are likely to be amplified, leading to a further deterioration in the asset quality of the banks due to the piling up of mountains of bad loans.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Did an Islamic State ever exist?

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



NADEEM PARACHA

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

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

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

According to the noted political anthropologist Professor Irfan Ahmad, till the 17th century, “the State governed by not governing.” Seldom did it interfere in most affairs of its subjects. Its main interest was to extract levies and taxes. Its administrative scope was limited. The French philosopher, Michel Foucault, claimed that the scope of the State began to expand from the 16th century. The idea of the State in non-Western regions was no different. According to Irfan Ahmad, the nature of the State in Muslim-majority regions and in regions being ruled by Muslims was also static. It was only interested in gathering taxes and aiding the monarch and his vassals to

retain their wealth and power.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Courtesy: Dawn)

Death toll in Idukki landslide at 42 now

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kerala reports 1,211 new cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

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

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

6 people of the same family were found infected in Jawaharnagar. The infected patients were not admitted even after 20 hours had passed. Meanwhile, the family members continued to do their work like other days. Such carelessness is coming to the fore. That too in a situation when the infection of corona in the district is spreading rapidly.

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

erly. Infections are also spreading by seeking contact with infected patients and delaying their reports. Systems like Containment Zone and Red Zone are no longer visible anywhere. There is a provision for penalty on entering the market without wearing a mask. But there is no shortage of people who are taking risks themselves and putting other people's lives at risk as well. Policemen are remaining mute and simply spectating people roaming around the streets without masks. Social and physical distance is also not being followed in the market. For this, no concerned efforts are being done by the district administration.

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

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

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

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

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

Temple trust land given free on rent to Church in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

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

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



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

Ramesh said the land and building given to the Salvation Army are worth ₹2.5 lakh per year but the HRCE has not collected anything till date from them. This land and building belong to the Temple Trust and as per the by-laws governing

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

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

The HRCE officials remained incommunicado according to Ramesh, they refused to part with any information despite his efforts to get the terms and conditions on which the premises has been given to the Salvation Army.

H Raja, national secretary, BJP, who launched the Hindu Temples Reclaim Movement

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

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

Army intelligence, national intelligence agency question fake colonel

PRADEEP SAXENA ■ ALIGARH

A fake lieutenant colonel resident of Nurpur, Ludhiana, who cheated people in the name of being admitted to the Army, was questioned by the Army Intelligence and intelligence agency in the district prison. Along with this, the site of arrest of this fake lieutenant colonel was also checked.

It is said that the Army Intelligence also closely inspected the vehicle recovered from the fake colonel. They also recovered three SIM cards. It has been told that there are 15 cases of cheating on this fake colonel in Punjab as well as in Haryana and Rajasthan. Police of three states were looking for

him.

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

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

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

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

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

FROM PAGE 1

DESI PUSH BANS 101 DEFENCE IMPORTS

All necessary steps would be taken to ensure that timelines for production of equipment as per the Negative Import List are met, which will include a co-ordinated mechanism for hand holding of the industry by the Defence Services, they said.

The officials clarified that the list was prepared after several rounds of consultations with all stakeholders, including Army, Air Force, Navy, DRDO, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and private industry to assess current and future capabilities of the Indian industry for manufacturing various ammunition, weapons and related equipment within India.

The list comprises of not just simple parts but also some high technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircrafts, light combat helicopters (LCHs), radars and many other items.

Similarly, the Navy is likely to place demands for submarines with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which it expects to contract about six at an approximate cost of almost Rs 42,000 crore.

For the Air Force, it is decided to enlist the light combat aircraft LCA MK 1A with an indicative embargo date of December 2020. Of these, 123 are anticipated at an approximate cost of over Rs 85,000 crore. Hence, there are highly complex platforms that are included in the list of 101 items.

2L COVID CASES IN JUST 3 DAYS

substantially when the testing is ramped up.

On Sunday, the country saw its highest single day death count of around 1,000 with Maharashtra alone reporting 390 deaths during the last 24 hours. Maharashtra reported 12,248 new cases, 390 deaths, while 13,348 patients discharged today. The total positive cases in the State rose to 5,15,332 including 3,51,710 recovered patients and 17,757 deaths. Active cases stood at 1,45,558.

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

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

showing hike in the number of positive cases.

As part of aggressive testing carried out across the State, 68,179 persons were tested on Sunday. The number of persons discharged from hospitals till date crossed the 2.38 lakh on Sunday. This is against the 2.96 lakh persons diagnosed with covid-19 till date in the State. There were 53,336 active patients across Tamil Nadu on Sunday.

Andhra Pradesh and karhnataka reported 10820 and 5985 new cases and 97 and 107 deaths respectively on SWunday while delhi reported 1300 new cases and 13 deaths.

CENTRE TRANSFERS ₹17,100 CR TO FARMERS

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and a large number of farmers, cooperatives and others also participated in the video conference.

"On this auspicious occasion, a special fund of Rs 1 lakh crore has been launched to create agriculture-related infrastructure facilities in the country. This will help in creating better storage facilities and modern cold storage chains in villages. Many employment opportunities will get created in villages," Modi said after the launch.

The Prime Minister reiterated that India has a huge opportunity to invest in post-harvest management solutions like warehousing, cold chain, and food processing, and build a global presence in areas such as organic and fortified foods. He also mentioned that this scheme provides a good opportunity for start-ups in agriculture to avail the benefits and scale their operations, thereby creating an ecosystem that reaches farmers in every corner of the country.

Citing reasons for poor investment in agri-infrastructure, the Prime Minister said there was a "negligible" investment due to legal hurdles in the wake of a provision of the stock limit under the Essential Commodities (EC) Act.

"Now, we have surplus production. The stock limit not only affects the farmers but also the country's economy and consumers. But surprisingly the law (EC Act) was still continuing when we have become a surplus producing nation. This law is not required now," he said.

This law was creating hurdles in setting up of good godowns and farm industry in villages. "Unfortunately, babus misused this law to threaten traders and investors. Now, traders and investors are freed from this threat," he said.

"Why don't farmers get similar facilities? Why is this injustice happening with farmers? It is not that a soap factory set up in a city will sell the product in that city's vicinity. Soap can be sold anywhere. In agriculture, it was not happening. Farmers sell their produce in local mandis alone," he said.

Modi questioned if there are no

middlemen in other industries, why should they be present in the farm sector. If the infrastructure is developed to boost industrial growth, then why shouldn't modern

Under the Agri-Infra Fund, about Rs 1 lakh crore will be sanctioned under the financing facility in partnership with multiple lending institutions as loans to Primary Agri Credit Societies (PACS), farmer groups, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), agri-entrepreneurs, start-ups, and agri-tech players.

12 BJP MEN DESERT PARTY IN VALLEY

Condemning the attack on a BJP worker, Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina said the increasing attacks on party workers in the Kashmir valley show Pakistan's frustration and that his party would not be cowed down by such attacks. He said that Pakistan cannot stop the growing popularity of the BJP in the Valley by such "cowardly acts".

He said, "We will intensify our activities and will hoist the tricolour and party flag in every house".

Meanwhile, repeated appeals made by the elected representatives to provide them adequate security cover and safe accommodation have fallen on deaf ears.

Even announcement of an insurance cover to the tune of Rs 25 They claimed in the absence of adequate security cover it is becoming difficult to step out of their houses and monitor ongoing developmental works in the area.

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 Lokhbawan in Anantnag district.

11 MEMBERS OF FAMILY FOUND DEAD

According to a police officer, the victims lived under threat from the family of their daughter-in-law, the wife of Kewal Ram (35), the surviving member of the victim family.

"She has been living with her family in Jodhpur for the past some time due to some dispute," said the police officer, citing this as a possible trigger for their suicide. According to Kewal Ram (35), they had dinner between 9 pm and 10 pm on Saturday night and went to sleep.

"I went to guard our crop from animals and slept there," he said. In the morning, when he came back, he found all his family members dead. "I then called my nephew who rushed

to the spot with some other persons and informed police," said Kewal Ram, expressing his ignorance about the incident. Those, who died have been identified as Budharam (75); his wife Antara Devi; son Ravi (31); daughters Jiya (25) and Suman (22); grandsons Mukdash (17) and Nain (12); Laxmi (40) and three minor sons of Kewal Ram. The bodies have been sent for autopsy in Jodhpur and a medical board has been constituted to find out the cause of their death.

STF GUNS DOWN CLOSE AIDE OF MUKHTAR ANSARI

SUV and gave it a chase after a police informer confirmed that the vehicle belonged to Rakesh. Seeing police force, the person in the driving seat stepped on the gas but the vehicle rammed into a tree before coming to a halt.

Rakesh and his men opened a burst of fire on the police team. The STF team returned fire. As the firing ended from the opposite side, the cops reached the scene and found Rakesh lying in a pool of blood. He was rushed to Sarojininaray CHC where he died during treatment.

The police said they recovered two pistols, seven live cartridges, 10 bullet shells and two mobile phones from the slain mafia. "His aides managed to escape the scene," the police said.

Rakesh was involved in the grisly murder of BJP MLA from Mohammadabad (Ghazipur) Krishna Nand Rai in 2005. In the murder, about half-a-dozen miscreants laced with AK-47 assault rifles had fired 400 shots on Rai's cavalcade, killing seven, including Rai. Rakesh was involved in the murder and he shot to infamy after the sensational incident.

After the death of Munna Bajrangji in Baghpatt jail, Rakesh took his place in the gang. He was also a co-accused in the murder of a contractor, Ajay Prakash Singh. In Singh's murder case, Mukhtar Ansari is also an accused.

ED SUMMONS RHEA, HER FATHER

A property located in the city's Khar area and another in Navi Mumbai, both linked to Rhea, are also being probed for the source of funds and ownership patterns.

While Chakraborty's Income Tax Returns show an income of about Rs 14 lakh, the value of her investments are estimated to be much higher. Her father, Indrajit is a retired defence personnel getting a monthly pension of about Rs 1 lakh, the officials said.

However, Rhea has provided documents to justify the investment and so far ED has not been able to trace any wrongdoings in her financial dealings. During the questioning so far, the

actress told the agency that she had acquired the properties from her income, savings, and bank loans, they said.

The ED officials had also confronted Rhea, Shouvik and Modi with certain bank statements that purportedly show the transfer of small amounts into Shouvik's accounts from those of Rajput and Rhea.

Rajput's father Krishna Kumar Singh had in a complaint before the Patna Police on July 25 alleged that the actress was involved in abetting his son's suicide.

10 KILLED IN INFERNO AT VIJAYAWADA

According to the reports, nearly 31 persons were undergoing treatment in the hotel for Coronavirus and ten of them died due to suffocation and smoke as the fire broke out. The smoke swiftly spread in the three floors of the hotel which created a respiratory problem to the patients. The fire department entered the floors by breaking the glass windows and rescued 21 persons by bringing them out through ladders. They were shifted to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment.

Meanwhile two persons jumped from the second floor during the fire mishap to save their life and their condition was said to be stable as they sustained minor injuries. According to reports, electrical short circuit seems to be the cause of the fire mishap. As the hotel was situated in the centre of the city, the news about the fire mishap spread swiftly and relatives of the patients rushed to the hospitals to know about the condition of their beloved. Krishna District Fire Officer Sreenivasa Reddy said, "Around eight to 10 people are feared dead. There were 31 patients in total (at the centre). The rest have been rescued and sent to Ramesh Hospital. They were all Covid-19 patients admitted to the CCC run by Ramesh Hospital. There may be about 10 staff members.

Vijayawada Commissioner of police Battina Srinivasulu, Minister Velampalli Srinivas, district collector A MD Intiaz rushed to the spot and supervised the rescue operation. Minister Srinivas informed about thorough inquiry about the mishap and action against the hospital and hotel management for their negligence. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed grief over the fire accident and expressed condolences to the family members of the deceased. The CM announced Rs 50 lakh ex gratia to each person who died in the fire accident.

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan ordered the Government to take immediate rescue measures to save the lives of injured people in fire mishap. AP DGP Goutam D Sawang visited the Swarna Palace Hotel and started supervising the rescue measures.

WB OK's charter flights from abroad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gujarat's virus tally breaches 70K-mark

Gandhinagar: Gujarat's Covid-19 tally breached the 70,000 mark on Sunday as 1,078 fresh cases were reported, while 25 more deaths took the toll to 2,654, health officials said.

The state's total number of cases was at 71,064 following the detection of fresh infections.

As many as 1,311 patients were discharged on Sunday, taking the total number of recoveries to 54,138.

Surat, the new Covid hotspot registering 20.59 per cent of Sunday's positive cases, saw 222 cases, while Ahmedabad saw 153 cases coming up.

Vadodara once again after Saturday, saw its daily spike climbing to 110.

Vadodara was followed by Rajkot 95, Jamnagar 63, Panchmahals 47, Bhavnagar and Amreli with 35 each, Bharuch 28, Junagadh and Gandhinagar with 27 each, Kutch 25, Valsad 21, Dahod and Surendranagar with 18 each, Kheda, Mahesana and Patan with 11 each, Botad, Sabarkantha and Narmada with 10 each, Mahisagar, Banaskantha and Morbi with 9 each, Porbandar and Tapi with 7 each, Anand and Devbhumi Dwarka with 5 each, Navsari 3, Aravalli and Dang with 2 each and Chhota Udepur with one positive case.

The total number of Covid deaths in Ahmedabad has reached 1,638. Besides, 505 people have died in Surat, 100 in Vadodara, 46 in Gandhinagar, 45 deaths in Rajkot, 30 deaths in Patan, 26 deaths in Bhavnagar, 24 in Aravalli, 23 in Mahesana, 17 in Panchmahals, 16 in Banaskantha, 15 in Kheda, 14 in Anand and 11 in Bharuch.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Migration, Remittances, and Recipient Households in Developing Asia. "ADB economists estimate that the region faces remittance losses ranging from USD 31.4 billion to USD 54.3 billion. To reduce the economic and social impacts, policy responses are proposed in areas such as social protection, immigration, labour, and health," it said. In 2019, six of the 10 largest remittance recipients globally were from this region-India, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Vietnam, the Manila-headquartered multilateral funding agency said. The countries likely to face more severe effects from the pandemic-induced decline in remittance inflows are the ones where remittance shares to gross domestic product (GDP)

and per capita remittances are high.

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

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

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

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

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

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

severe impacts, as they often do not have regular contracts nor strong bargaining power, said the report. "Migrant workers are more vulnerable from layoffs once prolonged lockdowns and production breaks drive companies out of business.

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

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

employment in host economies of Asian migrants is contracting significantly.

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

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

by reducing restrictions and transaction fees, the ADB said.

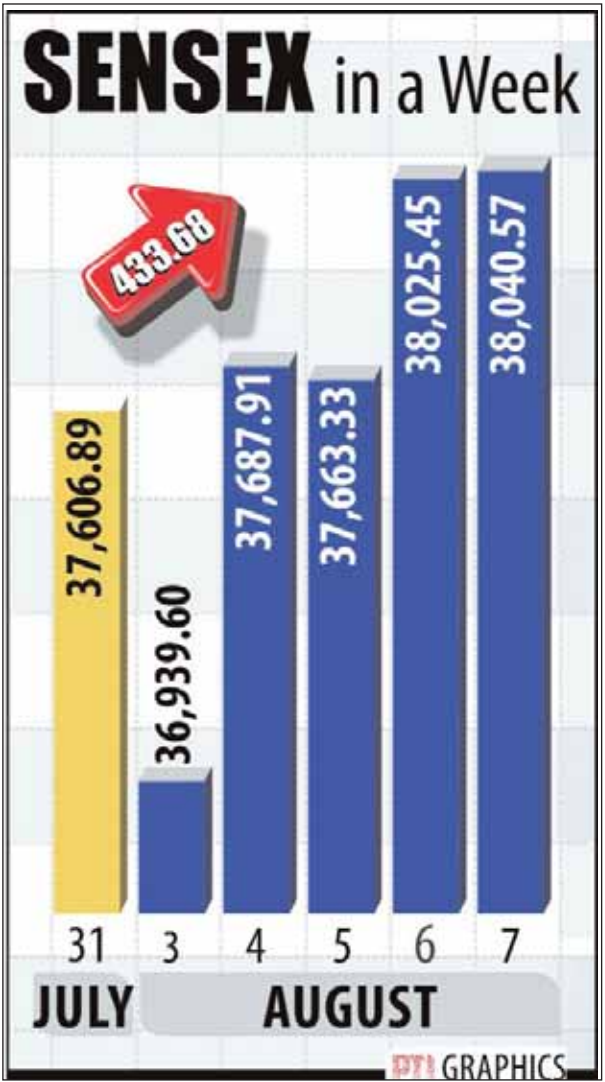
Citing a study of 10 migrant sending countries in Asia, the ADB said remittance dependent households are at risk of falling into poverty, as it is estimated that a 1 per cent increase in the share to GDP to remittances inflow from overseas is associated with a reduction in poverty gap by 22.6 per cent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

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

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

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

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



‘TRAI to give decision on priority plans within 2 weeks of telcos reply’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Telcos must clearly quantify the benefits being offered

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indian Railways committed to integrate with GeM portal: Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

protest against the British Raj.

While releasing the agenda of the 'China Quit India campaign', CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal "urged the central government to carry out an all-round siege of China and its activities in India." "Several Chinese companies have made large investments in Indian startups in sizeable numbers, all such startups should be asked to exclude Chinese investors and the government should announce a lucrative policy to encourage Indian people to invest in these startups," he said.

PTI

CBDT issues guidance note on MAP

STIPULATES CASES WHERE ITAT HAS PASSED ORDER

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

The guidance note also said that India shall provide access to MAP even in a situation where the Indian tax authorities apply domestic anti-abuse provisions. The CBDT also said that in case of orders of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, the Competent Authorities of India shall not deviate from the orders of the ITAT for the relevant year where the dispute is decided on merits," the CBDT guidance note said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aramco's Apr-Jun profit down 73%, but sees oil market recovery

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Energy giant Saudi Aramco has reported a 73 per cent fall in its profit, or the net income, for the April-June quarter to \$6.6 billion amid the pandemic.

During the same period of 2019, the company had reported a net income of \$24.7 billion. For the first half of 2020, it has reported a net income of \$23.2 billion, compared to \$46.9 billion reported during the corresponding period a year ago, the company said in a statement.

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

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

Noting that strong headwinds from reduced demand

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

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

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

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

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

E-auction dates for commercial mining of coal likely to be extended again: Sources

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The dates for submission of bids For online auction of coal blocks for commercial mining could be further extended due to disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, sources said on Sunday.

The Centre had earlier extended the dates for submission of technical bids. According to the revised schedule, the last date for submitting a technical bid is 2 pm of September 29, and e-auction would be carried out for qualified bidders between October 19 and November 9.

However, the sources said further extension is likely to be sought by investors, keeping in mind the COVID-19 restrictions on travel and movement.

"We are not sure whether this extension will be enough for bidders to complete evaluation and feasibility studies, which have to be conducted with rigorous on-ground data and inputs

. If needed, fresh extension would be sought," a senior official of a large corporate bidder told PTI.

BSNL to enhance data speed in Andaman Nicobar by 10 times from Monday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

from the customers, according to details shared by the company.

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

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

"BSNL FTTH (Optical Fibre) customers are also provided with higher speed up to 100 Mbps and up to 15 times data volume download ranging from 60 GB to 1500 GB in a month on its existing plans. The data speed restriction after the download limit, is also enhanced from 512 kbps to up to 4 Mbps in various plans," the statement said. BSNL customers who have subscribed to the high end plan of ₹7,999 will be upgraded from 10 mbps speed to 100 mbps download speed.

Planned layoffs at British companies surge

AP ■ LONDON

The number of British companies planning to cut staff numbers in June was five times higher than in the same month a year earlier, in an ominous sign of Covid-19's economic impact.

Figures obtained by the BBC show that 1,778 companies informed the Government of plans to cut a total of 139,000 jobs.

A year earlier the figure was 345 companies announcing a total of 24,000 job losses. Businesses are required to inform the Insolvency Service if they plan to cut 20 or more jobs.

During the pandemic the government has been paying the salaries of almost 10 million furloughed workers. Economists are predicting a surge in unemployment when that program ends in October.

The U.K. Economy shrank by more than 20 per cent in the first half of 2020, and despite some signs of recovery the Bank of England says the economy will end 2020 9.5 per cent smaller than it started the year.

81% micro enterprises confident of recovery post Covid-19, says survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Despite several businesses remaining closed during the lockdown, 81 per cent of micro enterprises polled are confident of a recovery post Covid-19 whereas 57 per cent reported not having any cash reserves to survive, according to a survey.

Initial results of a six-month survey that is underway by GAME (Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship) in association with LEAD at Krea University covering 1,500 micro enterprises also reveal that 40 per cent tried to borrow money to cover expenses.

However, only 14 per cent of the overall borrowing was from formal borrowing sources.

As per the revised criteria, any firm with investment up to Rs 1 crore and turnover under Rs 5 crore is classified as a "micro" enterprise.

Madan Padaki, co-founder of GAME, said COVID-19 has left a devastat-

ing impact on the Indian economy, especially micro-enterprises that comprise around 99 per cent of all firms in India.

"Through this longitudinal survey, we intend to truly understand the on-ground situation and challenges faced by microenterprises in managing cash flows, dealing with broken supply chains and delayed payments. By keeping our ears to the ground, we want to provide specific recommendations to all ecosystem actors to accelerate the recovery of these enterprises," Padaki said.

The survey also revealed that across all respondents, female business owners faced more household challenges than men.

In fact, 70 per cent female business owners suggested inter-house conflicts as the biggest challenge while 53 per cent men responded to the same. Women also faced more unaffordable expenses than men, with 46 per cent suggesting the same, the survey said. PTI

Trump signs virus relief order for Americans

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Supporters of the SLPP lit firecrackers to celebrate his

swearing-in as the 13th Prime Minister at the Rajamaha Viharaya in Kelaniya, a north Colombo suburb, at the auspicious hour of 9:28 am local time.

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

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

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

Baglay recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had complimented the people and Government of Sri Lanka on the successful conduct of elections and had acknowledged the impressive electoral performance of the SLPP. **PTI**

Azar leads highest-level US delegation to Taiwan in decades

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

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

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

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

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

response to the virus pandemic.

The US maintains only unofficial ties with Taiwan in deference to Beijing, but is the island's most important ally and provider of defence equipment.

Azar is the first health secretary to visit Taiwan and the first Cabinet member to visit in six years. In 2014, the Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy visited Taiwan, sparking protests from Beijing.

Azar's office said he will hold discussions on COVID-19, global health and Taiwan's role as a supplier of medical equipment and technology. Azar's visit was facilitated by the 2018 passage of the Taiwan Travel Act, which encouraged Washington to send higher-level officials to Taiwan after decades during which such contacts were rare and freighted with safeguards to avoid roiling ties with Beijing.

China has cut contacts with Tsai over her refusal to recognise China's claim to the island and has brought increasing diplomatic, economic and

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

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

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

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

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

Afghan council frees Taliban prisoners to set up peace talks

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

The declaration read out in both of Afghanistan's official languages of Pashto and Farsi calls for an immediate start to negotiations and cease fire. The move looks to bring the United States a little closer to returning its troops and ending its longest military engagement.

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

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

at ending decades of war.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani praised delegates for their decision, urged the Taliban to stop fighting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pak welcomes Afghan council's recommendation

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

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

"We hope that with the implementation of this step

relating to the prisoners' release, as envisaged in the US-Taliban Peace Agreement, the intra-Afghan negotiations will commence at the earliest," the Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement. The deal negotiated between the US and Taliban calls for the government to free 5,000 prisoners and for the Taliban to free 1,000 government and military personnel in its custody as a goodwill gesture ahead of the start of negotiations. **PTI**

Officials resign in Lebanon in wake of deadly blast

Beirut: Lebanon's information minister resigned on Sunday as the country grapples with the aftermath of the devastating blast that ripped through the capital and raised public anger to new levels.

The resignation comes as about half a dozen lawmakers offered their resignation in protest over government performance. Local media also reported that another minister, and a close advisor to Prime Minister Hassan Diab, was also expected to resign.

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

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

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

Her resignation comes as about half a dozen lawmakers offered their resignation in protest over government performance. Local media also reported that another minister, and a close advisor to Prime Minister Hassan Diab, was also expected to resign.

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

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

Riot declared as fire burns in Portland police union offices

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

A group of demonstrators broke into the Portland Police Association building, set the fire and were adding to it when officers made the riot declaration late Saturday, police tweeted. Video shot by a journalist shows smoke and flames arising from inside the building.

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

Belarus strongman president faces strong election challenge

AP ■ MINSK

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

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

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

casting his ballot.

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

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

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



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

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

Jerusalem: Thousands of Israelis rallied outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem on Saturday as anger mounted over corrup-

tion allegations and his handling of the coronavirus crisis. "Your time is up", read the giant letters projected on to a building at the protest site, as demonstrators

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

North Macedonia cops find 94 migrants hidden in truck

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But after a strict nationwide, 10-week lockdown, vigilant tracing of new clusters and general acceptance of mask mandates and social distancing, Italy has become a model of virus containment.

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

New Zealand marks 100 days of virus elimination

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

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

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

Nagasaki urges nuke ban on 75th anniv of US A-bombing

Tokyo: The Japanese city of Nagasaki on Sunday marked its 75th anniversary of the US atomic bombing, with the mayor and dwindling survivors urging world leaders including their own to do more for a nuclear weapons ban.

At 11:02 am, the moment the B-29 bomber Bockscar dropped a 4.5-ton (10,000-pound) plutonium bomb dubbed "Fat Man," Nagasaki survivors and other participants stood in a minute of silence to honor more than 70,000 dead.

The August 9, 1945, bombing came three days after the United States dropped its first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the world's first ever nuclear attack that killed 140,000. On August 15, Japan surrendered, ending World War II.

At the event at Nagasaki Peace Park, scaled down because



of the coronavirus pandemic, Mayor Tomihisa Taue read a peace declaration in which he raised concern that nuclear states had in recent years retreated from disarmament efforts.

Instead, they are upgrading and miniaturizing nuclear weapons for easier use, he said. Taue singled out the US and Russia for increasing risks by

scrapping the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

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

nuclear disarmament at the NPT review process next year.

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

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

After taking part in the ceremony, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe criticized the treaty for not being realistic. None of the nuclear states has joined, and it is not widely supported even by non-nuclear states, he said.

"The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted without taking into consideration the reality of

the harsh national security environment," Abe said at a news conference.

"I must say the treaty is different from Japan's position and approach" even though they share the same goal of abolishing nuclear weapons, he said.

Abe has repeatedly refused to sign the treaty. He reiterated that Japan's approach is not to take sides but to serve as a bridge between nuclear and non-nuclear states to encourage dialogue to achieve a total nuclear ban. Survivors and pacifist groups say Japan is virtually siding with the US and other nuclear states.

Abe cited "severe national security environment and a wide gap between the two sides on nuclear disarmament" He also noted Japan faces threats of development and modernization of nuclear weapons from

"neighboring countries in the region." Taue, who spoke before Abe, disagreed, saying: "Among the nuclear-weapon states and countries under the nuclear umbrella, there have been voices stating that it is too early for such a treaty. That is not so. Nuclear arms reductions are far too late in coming."

While Tokyo renounces its own possession, production or hosting of nuclear weapons, as a US ally Japan hosts 50,000 American troops and is protected by the US nuclear umbrella. The post-WWII security arrangement complicates the push to get Japan to sign the treaty as it beefs up its own military to deal with threats from North Korea and China, among others. An aging group of survivors have expressed a growing sense of urgency to tell their stories, in hopes of reaching

younger generations to continue their effort toward establishing a nuclear-free world.

"There is not much time left for us survivors," said Shigemi Fukabori, 89. He was a 14-year-old student mobilized to work at a shipyard when Nagasaki was bombed.

"I'm determined to keep telling my story so that Nagasaki will be the last place on Earth to have suffered an atomic attack," Fukabori, who almost instantly lost four siblings, said he never forgets the pile of charred bodies, bombed-out street cars and the badly injured desperately asking for help and water as he rushed back to his house in the back of the Urakami Cathedral, which was also nearly destroyed.

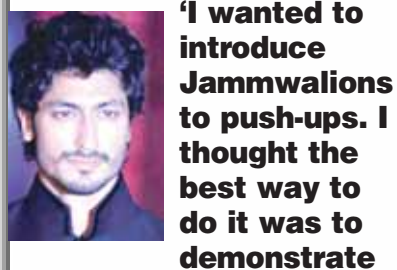
"We don't want anyone else to have to go through this," he said. **AP**

Trend Slazer

We will find light: Hrithik

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

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



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

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

—Vidyut Jammwal

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



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

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

'Co-writing a screenplay'

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

MODIFYING THE POLICY FOR REMOTE WORKING

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

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

REDRESSAL OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING WFH

Emerging dimensions of workplace conduct and safety are equally important. This period of lockdown has led to a staggering increase in domestic violence cases in India and globally. With social distancing in place, several people are unable to contact or seek help from their regular support system. Taking this into account, Twitter India has also launched search prompts to help domestic violence victims. Thus, with the merging of workplace and personal space, there is a need to keep safety of employees under check.

The policy says that the workplace covers both organised and unorganised sectors and includes any offsite, get-togethers, or any place that comes under the ambit of work-related relationship. Therefore, the need to safeguard the physical and mental safety of an employee within the new normal with a shift in the work space, work safety must continue to be a top priority for companies.

FOCUS ON LGBTQ-RELATED HARASSMENT

While some companies have made the POSH policy gender-neutral, a need for the POSH Act to be made into a gender-neutral act by law has also emerged. This indicates the need for LGBTQ-related harassment to be taken



Up close with new rules

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

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

CYBER BULLYING OR VIRTUAL HARASSMENT

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

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

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

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



POSH training during WFH

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

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

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

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

WEBBED



BIO HACKERS

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

CLASS OF '83

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



THE SLEEPOVER

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



Discovering the truth

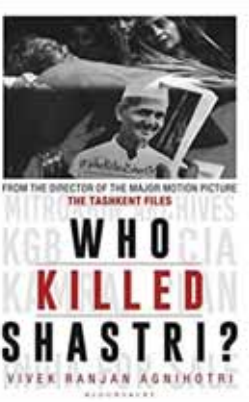
Filmmaker and author **VIVEK AGNIHOTRI**'s new book, *Who Killed Shastri?: The Tashkent Files*, uses the democratic Right to Information to question the mysterious death of a Prime Minister

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

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

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

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



ous death in Tashkent. That's how this journey begins after filling many RTIs and struggling with all the possible sources. We decided to chase the history and discover the truth behind Shastri ji's death and in his journey. I rediscovered the synergetic politics of India after the humiliating defeat by China in 1962 till the emergency. How India was sold and I concluded that whoever killed Shastri are the same people who sold India, too. This book is my spiritual journey into politics and very strongly conveys that it's because of the absence of spirituality and moral values in politics; how India has suffered generations after generations. This book is also a warning to the new generation as it aims to explain to them why they must fight in moral politics and always stand up and fight for right the truth."

Vivek's directorial film, *The Tashkent Files* (2019), also came with a hashtag question — Who killed Shastri? More than half a century after that fateful morning in Tashkent and the question still remains unanswered — Did Shastri really die a natural death or was it an assassination birthed from political disagreements? For the director, it was a tweet that inspired him to work on the mystery related to his death.

The filmmaker and author has also made the book available online for pre-orders. He has released the cover of the book on social media, for pre-orders and to get feedback. The book will hit the stands on August 28.

On the work front, Vivek will start working on his new project, titled, *The Kashmir Files*.



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

AFF ■ BARCELONA

Lionel Messi scored a brilliant solo goal as Barcelona saw off Napoli on Saturday but they are likely to need something even more special from their captain to beat Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Messi's weaving run and finish came between an early Clement Lenglet header and a Luis Suarez penalty, also won by Messi, as Barca stormed into a 3-0 lead in the first half at Camp Nou.

But Lorenzo Insigne gave Napoli hope just before the interval and an unconvincing second period from Barcelona

London dreams

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

left them hanging on for a 3-1 win on the night, 4-2 on aggregate.

"A second goal would have given them a feeling of euphoria that can hurt you," said Barca coach Quique Setien.

"It's normal to get a little nervous."

In winning the penalty, Messi took a heavy kick from Napoli's Kalidou Koulibaly and needed treatment.

"It was a heavy knock," said Setien. "It will have to be treated but I don't think there is a problem."

After finishing five points

behind Real Madrid in La Liga, Barca resumed in the Champions League with doubts hanging over the form of the team and the future of their coach.

And victory against Napoli eases the pressure but the performance will not inspire confidence, even with Messi seemingly rejuvenated after three weeks rest.

Napoli, whose own league season only finished last weekend, should have had the advantage of rhythm but a disastrous opening half an hour left them with too much to do.



Barcelona's Lionel Messi, right, embraces Napoli's goalkeeper David Ospina after the end of Champions League round of 16, second leg soccer match. AP

Koulibaly, linked with a move to several elite European clubs this summer, endured a particularly disappointing night.

Yet Barcelona will have to improve significantly to match Bayern, who advanced after putting seven past Chelsea over two legs and are arguably favourites to win the tournament.

"It's going to be very complicated," admitted Setien ahead of the quarter-final on Friday.

Messi now has four goals in his last three games and in a one-off match in Lisbon, the Argentinian is capable of anything.

But Bayern have their own trump card in Robert Lewandowski and a more complete team that makes them heavy favourites to reach the semis.

7-1 IN TWO LEGS

At Allianz Arena, treble-chasing Bayern Munich seal a 4-1 home win over Chelsea in the last 16, return-leg tie after Robert Lewandowski netted twice to.

"The anticipation is enormous. Barcelona has a good team with very good players, but if you look at the last few weeks, we can fly to Portugal with a lot of confidence," said Bayern defender David Alaba.

Lewandowski, the



Champions League's top-scorer, bagged his 12th and 13th goals in Europe this season and played a part in all four Bayern goals in Munich on Saturday.

Leading 3-0 from the first leg at Stamford Bridge in February, before the coronavirus pandemic halted the competition, Bayern progressed 7-1 on aggregate.

"We can be pleased, it was our first game for a month and it's not easy to keep the rhythm," added Alaba.

"We have prepared for this for the last two weeks and you could see the result."

Lewandowski netted a penalty with just 10 minutes gone at the Allianz Arena.

Winger Ivan Perisic then doubled Bayern's lead before England striker Tammy Abraham tapped home a loose ball to give Chelsea brief hope.

However, replacement midfielder Corentin Tolisso put the result beyond doubt when he fired home a Lewandowski pass with 14 minutes to go.

"I am really happy with how we played over the 90 minutes, the first 30 minutes we shut Chelsea out," said Bayern head coach Hansi Flick.

This was a world-class display from Lewandowski who added a late header to his pair of assists.

He is now four goals short of

NUMBER GAME

66 With a brace against Chelsea, Robert Lewandowski is now the outright fourth-highest scoring player in Champions League history, with 66 goals

7 Chelsea's 7-1 defeat on aggregate to Bayern Munich was the second-heaviest inflicted on an English team in CL history, behind only Arsenal's 10-2 aggregate defeat in the last 16 in 2016/17, also against Bayern Munich

7 Robert Lewandowski was involved in all seven of Bayern's goals against Chelsea this season (3 goals, 4 assists). He was the first player to register 3+ goals & assists against an opponent in a season since Luis Figo in 2004/05 vs Roma

35 Lionel Messi has scored against 35 different clubs in the CL; two more than the next best Cristiano Ronaldo

53 Robert Lewandowski has scored 53 goals in 44 appearances in all competitions this season, finding the net in 36 of those 44 matches (82%)

1 Lorenzo Insigne is the first Italian player ever able to score at least one goal at Bernabeu vs Real Madrid and one goal at Camp Nou vs Barcelona in the UCL history

Cristiano Ronaldo's record of 17 Champions League goals in 2013/14.

"It's not a goal of mine," said Lewandowski when asked about Ronaldo's record. "We have a few more games in the knock-out round and I am just as happy creating goals as scoring them."

The Poland star was also coy when asked about a rivalry with Barcelona star Lionel Messi. "We have to perform well and show our quality as a team against a good Barcelona side, it's a big game for everybody."

Pirlo is new Juve boss

AFF ■ TURIN

Former Italy and Juventus star Andrea Pirlo was appointed the Italian champions' new coach, just hours after Maurizio Sarri's sacking with the club promising a "new chapter in world football".

Sarri, 61, leaves Juventus after just one season, a day after the Italian giants crashed out of the Champions League in the last 16 to French club Lyon.

The 41-year-old Pirlo, with no previous top-level coaching experience, recently took over the Juventus U-23 side and arrives on a two-year contract.

"The choice is based on the belief that Pirlo has what it takes to lead from his debut on the bench, an expert and talented squad to pursue new successes," Juventus said.

"Today, begins a new chapter of his career in the world of football: from Maestro to Mister."

Pirlo's swift appointment, a day after their Champions League exit, is again a bold choice for club president Andrea Agnelli.

Other former players have turned to coaching such as Zinedine Zidane, Frank Lampard and Gennaro Gattuso, but Pirlo does so without experience.

The former midfielder does, however, know Juventus and its players well after an impressive four-year spell from 2011 to 2015.

"Pirlo has had a legendary career as a player. In



his four years at the centre of the Juventus midfield, he won as many league titles, a Coppa Italia and two Italian Super Cups," Juventus said.

He also won two Champions Leagues and two league titles with AC Milan.

At Juventus, Pirlo will now find himself coaching some of his former teammates such as Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, a year older at 42.

Verstappen wins Silverstone race

AFF ■ SILVERSTONE

Max Verstappen delivered Red Bull's first victory at Silverstone since 2012 on Sunday when he made the most of a superior strategy in sizzling conditions to beat both Mercedes and claim victory in the 70th Anniversary Grand Prix.

It was the Dutchman's first victory of the season and the ninth of his career and the first time a race had been won by a driver who did not start on pole position in seven races since last year's Mexican Grand Prix.

Verstappen owed his victory to a team decision to start the race on hard compound tyres while his main rivals all launched from the grid on mediums, the two Mercedes men struggling to manage tyre-wear throughout the race.

During the race, Red Bull asked him to ease off, but he replied saying "I don't want to drive like a grand-ma" before the team relented.

Verstappen won by 11.326 seconds ahead of championship leader and six-time champion Lewis Hamilton who passed Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas in the closing stages.

Bottas, who started from pole, said: "Very frustrating for me, to start from pole and finish third. "It's not ideal and I think that as a team we were sleeping at some points in the race. My strategy was far from ideal."

Hamilton's podium finish meant he equalled Michael Schumacher's career record of 155 podium finishes. It was also his record-extending 38th points scoring finish in a row.

Charles Leclerc came home fourth after a sterling drive for Ferrari ahead of Alex Albon in the second Red Bull, Lance Stroll and his Racing Point teammate Niko Hulkenberg. Esteban Ocon finished eighth for Renault ahead of Lando Norris of McLaren and Daniil Kvyat of Alpha Tauri.



BCCI may start domestic season from Nov 19

NEW DELHI: The BCCI is mulling November 19 as tentative date for start of domestic season with Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament but Indian players in various IPL teams won't be able to play first few rounds due to quarantine protocols in place.

The delay in the beginning of the domestic season due to pandemic means that only Mushtaq Ali trophy and Ranji Trophy (Dec 13 - March 10) comprising of 245 games (across formats with 38 teams) will be played.

There will be no Vijay Hazare Trophy, Duleep Trophy or Challenger Series this year and as of now there is no provision for Irani Cup also.

"This is a tentative list that has been prepared and it has gone for approval of president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah," a senior BCCI official told PTI.

While this is a draft schedule, it is being asked how the Indian players, who will return from IPL, will play since they will have to be in a 14-day quarantine as per Government rules.

"That's an issue primarily for the uncapped players, who would be with the squad and would like to play some cricket. Now even a player's team is



knocked out before play-offs, he won't be back before November 3 and till Nov 17 will be in quarantine.

"For those whose teams are in play-offs and may reach finals, they will have to miss the first few rounds in that case. But again this is a draft proposal and there could be some tweaks in it," the official said.

However with BCCI expecting to conduct the next IPL in India, starting end of March or early April, it is imperative that they keep a three-week window between Ranji final and beginning of IPL which will help the domestic stars recover after hectic tournament.

PTI

Shan, Woakes rise in rankings

DUBAI: Pakistan batsman Shaan Masood's century in the first Test has propelled him to a career-best 19th place in the ICC rankings for Test batsmen while Chris Woakes's match-winning 84-run knock in England's chase helped him jump 18 places.

L e f t - h a n d e r Masood's first-innings knock of 156 pushed him up by 14 places and Buttler's innings of

he is now second-highest ranked Test batsman for Pakistan behind Babar Azam (6th). Masood's previous best was 32nd position in February this year.

Woakes is now ranked 78th in the batsmen's list. Woakes, who scored 19 and 84 in the match, has also jumped to seventh position in the list of all-rounders.

Buttler's innings of

38 and 75 have lifted him from 44th to 30th while Ollie Pope has attained a career-best 36th after scoring 62 and seven.

In the bowlers' list, Pakistan leg-spinners Yasir Shah moved up two places to 22nd place after finishing with eight wickets in the match. Shadab Khan has re-entered the rankings at a career-best 69th position.

PTI

Root hails Poms mental strength after 'brilliant chase'

AFF ■ MANCHESTER

England looked all but beaten when they stumbled to 117-5 in their pursuit of a 277-run target set by Pakistan at Old Trafford but captain Joe Root felt confident about his team's battling qualities.

"We knew it would take something special but after last summer it is very hard to stop believing. It's a real strong trait of ours," he said.

Almost a year on from Ben Stokes' heroic batting display to stun Australia in the 2019 Ashes at Headingley, Jos Buttler and Chris Woakes combined to deliver a counter-attacking display in a 139-run sixth-wicket stand.

Buttler (75) was trapped leg-before with 21 runs still required and the second new ball due, but Woakes (84) stuck it out, edging the winning boundary down to third man to seal a famous victory.

"It was a brilliant chase. I couldn't be more proud of the lads," Root said.

"Jos, it shows the mental



Chris Woakes returns to pavilion after he guides England to win in 1st Test. AP

strength, to play that situation and manage different passages of it, calculating risks, manipulating the spinner, brilliant innings, and Chris was magnificent too.

Stokes out of series for 'family reasons'

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

England's star all-rounder Ben Stokes will miss the remainder of the three-match Test series against Pakistan due to family reasons, the country's cricket board announced on Sunday.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), however, did not specify the exact reasons for his pull-out.

"Stokes will leave the UK later this week and travel to New Zealand. He will



miss England's two Test matches against Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl starting on Thursday 13 August and Friday 21 August," the ECB said in a statement.

He will be flying to Christchurch — where his parents Ged and Deb live.

Stokes' father — a former rugby league international — was hospitalised days ahead of England's Boxing Day Test against South Africa in December last year, and has since been recuperating at home in New Zealand.

"The more important thing is we back it up again, and keep learning, but the clarity with which they played shows the maturity of the group too."

With England losing four quick wickets after lunch, Woakes and Buttler had no

choice but to reel in the target in one-day mode.

"It was good idea to take them on and put them under pressure," Woakes said. "He is one of the best white-ball players in the world — one of best run-chasers — and he showed why today."

Serena fit & ready to play

LEXINGTON: Serena Williams on Saturday said that she is pressing ahead with plans to play in the US Open despite a wave of player withdrawals from the upcoming Grand Slam event over coronavirus fears.

The 23-time Slam winner returns to tennis next week at the inaugural Top Seed Open WTA event in Lexington, Kentucky, relaunching her season after a six-month hiatus caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Williams, who was one of the first players to commit to the US Open despite the pandemic, said her plans remain unchanged, adding that she was tentatively planning to go to



Europe for the rescheduled French Open.

"I see myself doing it all if it happens," Williams said when asked about her schedule during a virtual press conference.

"But I am not planning for the future, as tournaments got

cancelled I was just like, 'Let me just work on today and see what happens.'"

Williams revealed that she had been practicing on her own court, built with the same hard-court surface used at the US Open. She has also stayed fit with construction of a home gym.

Serena, who is also scheduled to play the Western and Southern Open tune-up event in New York before the US Open, admitted that only tournament play would allow her to properly gauge her fitness.

"Everyone has an opportunity to be more fit now, because we spent so much time at home

to work on ourselves," Williams said. "Fitness wise, there is going to be a tonne of fitness, but match fitness is different to fit-fitness."

Williams, who turns 39 in September, meanwhile said she was unable to say whether she would be at the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

"That is just looking too far ahead, I don't know if Tokyo plans to be in Tokyo, we will have to wait and see," she said.

"I don't know what to expect. One thing I have learned is don't plan, I am living for the day and for the moment, in a good way but I am not making plans too far out."

AFF