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₹38,900 cr defence deal OK'd

Amid LAC stand-off, Rajnath approves acquisition of 33 fighter jets, missiles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid volatile situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday approved defence deals worth over ₹38,900 crore. They include acquisition of 33 front-line fighter jets besides missiles and ammunition.

The approvals for procuring 12 SU-30 and 21 MIG-29 fighter jets come a week after Rajnath's visit to Russia for the Victory Day Parade there. He had held discussion with top Russian defence leadership on ensuring time-bound delivery of weapon systems and defence co-operation.

The fighter deals also include upgrade of 59 existing MIG-29 jets. Other deals include Pinaka missile system ammunition, armoured vehicle BMP armament upgrades, Software Defined Radio (SDR) for the Army, long-range land attack cruise missile systems of over 1,000 km range, and Astra Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air missiles for the Navy and Air Force. All of these will be procured domestically and worth an estimated ₹31,130 crore.

"While the MIG-29 procurement and upgrade from Russia is estimated to cost ₹7,418 crore, the SU-30 MKI will be procured from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at an estimated cost of ₹10,730 crore," Defence Ministry officials said.



These inductions, likely to take over the next two to three years, will shore up the squadron strength of the IAF's fighter fleet.

The 21 MIG-29s have already been partially manufactured by Russia in the past for an unfulfilled order and will now be upgraded and delivered to India. These will add to the three MIG-29 squadrons in service with the IAF which are already undergoing an upgrade. One squadron has 18-20 jets.

The 12 SU-30 MKIs are

meant to replace the aircraft that have crashed over the years. India has in different batches contracted 272 SU-30 jets from Russia, majority of which have been licence manufactured by HAL in India.

The IAF has currently 30 fighter squadrons against a sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons. It will start adding the first batch of Rafale multi-role jets this month end. Another deal for 83 Light Combat Aircraft Mk-1A estimated to cost ₹38,000 crore is expected to be signed in the next two months.

Meanwhile, giving details about the other deals given the go-ahead, officials said weapon systems and equipment will be manufactured in India involving Indian defence industry with participation of several Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

"The Indigenous content in some of these projects is up to 80 per cent of the project cost. A large number of these projects have been made possible due to Transfer of Technology by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to the indigenous industry," the Defence Ministry statement said.

These include Pinaka Multi-barrel Rocket Launch System ammunition, BMP armament upgrades and SDRs, Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile Systems and Astra Missiles. The cost of these design and development proposals is in the range of ₹20,400 crore, it stated.

On the missile systems, officials said acquisition of

Pinaka missile systems will enable raising additional regiments over and above the ones already inducted by the Army.

Rajnath defers Leh visit, reviews LAC situation with Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after India and China agreed to gradually disengage from the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh reviewed the situation with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar here on Thursday. In another development, Rajnath deferred his visit to Leh scheduled for Friday. He is now likely to visit the forward areas there late next week.

No reason was given for the postponement of Rajnath's visit, but it was learnt that following Corps Commanders' meeting between India and China on Tuesday, New Delhi wants to wait and watch the Chinese response, sources said.

The two commanders emphasised the "need for an expeditious, phased and step-wise de-escalation as a priority." Rajnath was also likely to brief the Prime Minister about the overall scenario.

India fastest among top 15 nations in Covid rate

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

After a spooky June that saw a three-fold rise in Covid-19 cases from 2 lakh to 6 lakh, India's doubling rate — a globally adopted yardstick to gauge the acceleration of the outbreak — stands fastest among the first 15 worst-affected countries.

In simple terms, the number of cases is rising much faster in India than other worst-affected nations.

Region-wise, Southeast Asia — Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam — has emerged as the latest hotspot in the world with cases doubling up in just 19 days — from 4,07,401 on June 11 to 8,08,506 on July 1.

While India took just 20 days to double — from 2,87,154 on June 10 to 5,85,792 on June 30, the USA needed 50 days to double from 12,71,640 on May 10 to 25,37,636 on June 30, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) data.

The USA, which leads the world both in number of cases and fatalities, is also witnessing a fresh surge following the reopening of the economy and "Black Lives Matter" movement sweeping across the country.

The next to India in term of the rate of doubling is Chile that took 21 days to go from 1,38,846 on June 9 to 2,75,999 on June 30. Brazil and Pakistan are next in order. Both took 22

While India took just 20 days to double cases, USA took 50 days



Health workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) conduct health check-ups of residents of Poddar Wadi Slum for the detection of Covid-19 cases at Vile Parle East in Mumbai on Thursday

days to double. Brazil went from 6,72,846 on June 8 to 13,44,143 on June 30, while Pakistan vaulted from 1,03,671 on June 8 to 2,09,337 on June 30.

Between June 10 and 30 when cases in India increased two fold, the death count more than doubled, from 8,106 to 17,410. During the same period, the number of recovered cases went up by nearly two-and-a-half times — from 1,40,928 to 3,47,839.

In the past, Indian health officials have shown a remarkable obsession with the so-called rate of "doubling". In fact, when the Tablighi Jamaat episode came to light, they

made it a point to 24x7 harp on how these "super spreaders" had reduced India's rate of doubling from six days to four days.

Twenty days duration would look a great improvement on that timeframe, but then one will have to disregard the fact that the rate of doubling is bound to slow down with a progressive increase in the total count.

The other nations in the lists are: Mexico 23 days; Saudi Arabia; Peru 30 days; Russia 38 days; Iran 47 days; US 50 days; UK 53 days; Turkey 68 days; Germany 84 days; Spain 86 days; Italy 87 days.

Trump sees Chinese aggression in Ladakh as sign of its 'true nature'

New York: US President Donald Trump sees China's aggressive action along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh confirming the Chinese Communist Party's "true nature", according to his

Spokesperson Kayleigh McEnany.

Asked at her briefing about China's attack on Indian troops, McEnany said, "Trump had said that China's aggressive stance along the India-China

border fits in with the larger pattern of Chinese aggression in other parts of the world. And these actions only confirm the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)."

12 of Scindia men get ministerial berths in expanded Shivraj Govt

Total 28 inducted into State Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led BJP Government on Thursday inducted 28 new ministers with around a dozen Jyotiraditya Scindia's loyalists whose exit from the Congress in March led to fall of the Kamal Nath Government.

The much-delayed Cabinet expansion has 20 Cabinet Ministers and eight Ministers of State.

This is the second expansion of the Chouhan cabinet. The first one was on April 21 where five ministers, including two former Congress MLAs close to Scindia — Tulsi Silawat and Govind Singh Rajput were inducted.

Former BJP Ministers including Gopal Bhargava, Vijay Shah, Jagdish Devda, Yashodhara Raje Scindia, Bhupendra Singh, Brajendra Pratap Singh and Vishwas Sarang were among those inducted in Thursday's expansion.

From Jyotiraditya Scindia camp, Bisahul Singh, Aidal Singh Kansana, Imarti Devi,



Prabhuram Choudhary, Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Pyadyumna Singh Tomar, Hardeep Singh Dang, Rajwardhan Singh Dattigaon were inducted as Cabinet Ministers, while Brajendra Singh Yadav, Girraj Dandotia, Suresh Dhakad and OPS Bhadoria were sworn in as Ministers of state.

From BJP, Prem Singh Patel, Om Prakash Saklecha, Usha Thakur, Arvind Bhadoria and Mohan Yadav were inducted as cabinet ministers, while Bharat Singh Kushwaha, Inder Singh, Those inducted from the Scindia camp are not MLAs as they resigned from the Assembly in March.

Byelections will be held for 24 seats, 22 were won by the Congress rebels who resigned, and two were held by MLAs who died before the political crisis began for the previous government.

2 more die of virus; State's total toll 27

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State recorded two more Covid-19 deaths on Thursday, pushing the total toll to 27.

While a 49-year-old man succumbed to the disease in Ganjan district, a 57-year-old man of Angul died while undergoing treatment, said the Information and Public Relations Department.

As many as 229 new positive cases were detected on the day. While 193 cases were reported from quarantine centres, 36 were local contact cases. With this, the State's total positive cases jumped to 7,545.

Ganjam district reported the day's highest 95 cases followed by Baleswar 24, Jajpur 22, Khordha 21, Sundargarh 17, Cuttack 12, Jharsuguda 10, Balangir seven, Nayagarh five, Puri four, Boudh three,

Mayurbhanj two and one each in Angul, Bargarh, Deogarh, Gajapati, Jagatsinghpur, Keonjhar and Koraput districts.

However, 149 more patients recovered on the day, taking the total recoveries to 5,502. The maximum 49 was from Ganjam district, followed by 24 in Khordha, 14 in Mayurbhanj, 13 in Cuttack, six each in Kalahandi and Kendrapada, five in Rayagada, four each in Angul, Jharsuguda and Sundargarh, three each in Balangir, Bhadrak, Jajpur and Puri, two each in Baleswar, Jagatsinghpur and Nayagarh and one each in Bargarh and Koraput districts.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 6,26,538
DEATHS: 18,226
RECOVERED: 3,79,786
ACTIVE: 2,28,460

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	1,86,626	8,178	1,01,172
Tamil Nadu	98,392	1,321	56,021
Delhi	92,175	2,864	63,007
Gujarat	33,999	1,888	24,601
Uttar Pradesh	24,825	734	17,221
West Bengal	19,819	699	13,037
Rajasthan	18,662	430	14,948
Telangana	18,570	275	9,069
Karnataka	18,016	272	8,336
Andhra Pradesh	16,097	198	7,313
Haryana	15,509	251	11,019
Madhya Pradesh	14,106	589	10,815
Bihar	10,682	78	7,994
Assam	8,956	14	6,107
Jammu & Kashmir	7,849	115	4,974
Odisha	7,545	35	5,502

13 new Covid+ in BBSR, total now 345

9 patients recover

BHUBANESWAR: As many as 13 more new Covid-9 cases were detected in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. Out of them, eight were from home quarantine and five local contacts, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.

With this, the total positive cases in the capital city rose to 345 with 143 active ones.

The home quarantine cases included a 24-year-old man, a 32-year-old man and a 28-year-old woman of Tankapani Road near the Rajarani Mandir

linked with an earlier positive case.

Besides, a 44-year-old man and a 30-year-old woman of Tankapani Road, Bijayalaxmi Colony linked to an earlier positive case, a 30-year-old man and 32-year-old man of Nuagaon near Samantapur linked with an earlier positive cases and a 25-year-old man of Unit-1 near the high school with a travel history of Bangalore were found positive.

The locals contact cases included a 21-year-old woman from Khandagiri Saradhapali Basti with a travel history to

Jajpur district, a 32-year-old man of Old Town, Bhimatangi Road with a travel history to Cuttack district.

This apart, a 56-year-old man of Salia Sahi, who is a railway staff and a native of Jajpur district, a 57-year-old man of Niladri Vihar near the Utkal Institute of Medical Science, his family member, who is an Assam returnee, and a 18-year-old girl of Jayadev Vihar, Nilachakra Nagar also tested positive.

However, nine patients recovered from the disease on the day. PNS

State to provide ₹1,040-crore agricultural credit

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

For the post-lockdown period, the State Government has initiated steps for extending agricultural credit to landless cultivators in a hassle-free manner.

A high-level meeting in this regard was held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy on Thursday where different aspects of the proposal made in collaboration with the NABARD were discussed.

It was decided that IMAGE and ATMA would be the nodal agencies at the State and district levels, respectively. It was also decided to incentivise Krushak Sathis and VAWs through ATMA for formation of JLGs, linking them to the banks, mobilising disbursement of credit and facilitating repayment of the loan.

Each bank would finance at least 10 JLGs in a year. There are around 7,000 branches of different banks and PACS in rural and semi-urban areas. Each JLG would have five members. Each group could be extended loan up to Rs 1.60 lakh. It was decided to cover around 7 lakh landless cultivators through 1.40 lakh JLGs in two years. The credit would be available as normal crop loan. The rate of interest and interest subvention would be as per the existing Government norms. PNS

Women trafficking a dehumanising crime: HC

Advices State Govt to take action against offenders

PNS ■ CUTTACK

In a major judgment, the Orissa High Court has expressed serious concern over increasing women trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and advised the State Government to address the issue appropriately.

While disposing of a petition for bail, Justice SK Panigrahi strongly favoured for taking drastic action to curb such crime.

The crime of trafficking girls is dehumanising as well as utterly shameful to our civilised society. Despite constitutional dictums and legal provisions, the humanity is still struggling to combat human trafficking, he observed.

Quoting from official records, it is noted in the judgment that there were about 30 lakh women in the prostitution trade. As per NCRB report, 5,264 human trafficking cases were reported in India in 2018. Disturbingly, about 25 per cent of such cases were for purposes of sexual exploitation for prostitution and child pornography.

The court in its order further observed that prostitution is seen as a worst expression of

the unequal distribution of power between men and women. Despite the substantial role of poverty in promoting sex commerce and human trafficking, the complexities of cultural values, attitudes and practices towards sex deserved serious consideration as well.

Justice Panigrahi while recognising the menace of human trafficking he has directed appropriate authorities to take up such issue for strengthening the institutional machineries and various statutory agencies to end such heinous crime.

The factual matrix of the instant case is that one Ibrahim Khan and another Ruksar Begum of Dangohiri from Pipili were regularly traf-

ficking girls from Kolkata and other places and engaging them in sexual exploitation for commercial purposes. These girls were forcefully sent to various hotels and lodges in Bhubaneswar where they were subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Superintendent of Police, STF, Bhubaneswar nabbed the kingpin Ibrahim and his wife from a rented building in Bhubaneswar and rescued six girls brought from Kolkata.

During raid, the police also seized huge cash and objectionable materials from the premises. Boss of the sex racket used to give only a sum of Rs 1,000 per day to the victim girls and pocketed lion

share of the amount received from the customers.

Justice Panigrahi observed that even if the accused had a limited role in selling the victims or in the prostitution business, no leniency can be shown to him in as much as he played a major role in the racket to push the helpless and innocent girls into prostitution. If any leniency is shown for committing such heinous crime, like forcing a girl into prostitution, it would amount to an affront to the statutes which govern the field and more importantly the Constitution of India.

Marching a step forward, the Judge further remarked that the nature of the crime is such that grant of bail will only

embolden such harden criminals who keep evading the law and punishment to perpetuate such heinous crime.

The complex and troubling issue as emerged in the instant case, in essence, demonstrate a conflict between collective morality of the society and markedly skewed legislations which miswatches the culpability of the participants in such crime and the recipient of the services, he said.

He has further clarified that his observations in the present judgment shall not come in the way of fair trial and the competent criminal court will proceed to decide the matter on its own merits, on influenced by the observations in the present case.

State to start plasma therapy for Covid patients

BHUBANESWAR: The State is taking steps to start plasma therapy for treating Covid-19 patients. For this, a technical committee would be set up, said Health and Family Welfare Minister Naba Kishore Das on Thursday. Initially, it would be started at the SCB Medical College Hospital Ashwine Hospital, SUM Hospital and KIMS Hospital and plasma bank would be set up, Das said.

The State Government is providing Remdesvir and Fabiflu medicines to the critical and very

critical coronavirus patients.

SOA University Vice-Chancellor Dr Ashok Mahapatra, KIMS Medical College Director Subrat Acharya, Health Department Special Secretary CBK Mohanty, RMRC Director Dr Sanghamitra Pati, medicine specialist Dr Jayant Panda and Dr MR Patnaik were present.

Notably, plasma therapy is an experimental procedure where plasma from the blood of a recovered Covid-19 patient is transfused to a critically ill coronavirus patient. PNS

Minimise coaching trains op, State urges Rlys

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the increasing Covid-19 positive cases in the State, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy on Thursday wrote to Railway Board Chairman Vinod Kumar Yadav to minimise operation of coaching trains in the State with immediate effect till July-end.

Stating that a majority of the corona cases in the State have travel history to Delhi, Howrah, Mumbai, the Chief Secretary recommended the Railway Board Chairman to adopt the following measures for operation of coaching trains so as to contain the disease.

(1) No increase of any coaching trains, either originating/terminating or passing through with stoppages in

Odisha, be permitted beyond the current level of operations till July 31

(2) Any further new trains introduced between stations outside the state and passing through may not be given any stoppage in Odisha.

(3) The occupation of Special Mail express trains require to be factored and frequency of the existing trains to Delhi and Howrah/ Sealdah may be reduced from the present level.

(4) Stoppages of currently running Howrah Chennai Mail be limited to Baleswar, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Khurda Road and Brahmapur railway stations. And stoppages of

Howrah-Mumbai Express train be limited to Rourkela and Jharsuguda railway stations (Barbil permitted for the branch line). All other stoppages for originating as well as through trains to be withdrawn till July 31.

(5) Only Intercity and other intra-state trains may operate with all stoppages as notified earlier.

Currently, Odisha is dealing with six pairs of terminating Coaching Mail/Express Special Trains and four pairs of such special trains passing the state with various stoppages in Odisha. Besides, intercity coaching trains have also been permitted within the state, the letter stated.

Visit to Secretariat restricted



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the steep rise in the Covid-19 cases in the capital city, the State Government has restricted the entry of visitors to the Lok Seva Bhawan (State Secretariat), the Kharavel Bhawan, the Rajiv Bhawan and the Krushi Bhawan in the city till July 31.

Official sources also said that

it has been decided to keep in abeyance all passes issued to visitors for these offices till July 31.

Any request for entry of outsiders and pass holders would only be entertained on the requests received from the office of the secretaries of the concerned departments to the Special Secretary, Home Department, the sources added.

IIPM holds 10-day yoga camp in city

Many from country and abroad join

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A ten-day Yoga Camp which commenced at the International Indecency Prevention Movement (IIPM) Ashram premises at Chandrasekharpur on the International Yoga Day on June 20 ended on June 30.

Many persons from different age groups participated. Yoga practitioners and experts also joined the programme through online. The participants were from the USA, Singapore, Malaysia, Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata etc. Former Parliamentarian Dr Prasanna



Kumar Patsani inaugurating the camp had exhorted to the participants for regular yoga and body fitness. On the valedictory day on June 30, Yoga research scholar Dr Amrita from USA, former Director of Information Government of India Dr RN Behera, former Army officer Sukhdev Khuntia, Er Pabita

Mohan Barik from Mumbai, Ajay Behura from New Delhi, educationist Raghunath Mandal, social worker Gayadhar Panigrahi, Er Sandip Routray, Neeradbaran Khuntia, Manoranjan Mohanty, Abhaya Pandey, Borada Mohanty and Dr Pratysha Priyadarshini among others had joined.

Online classes in varsities, colleges from July 13

Govt issues direction

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government has directed all universities and colleges to begin online teaching for students of intermediate year/semester from July 13.

In a letter, Higher Education Department Secretary Saswat Mishra has asked the institutions to set up a helpline each through teachers to frequently contact students telephonically to counsel them in these difficult times. This would also help students regarding queries on various matters such as online teaching, examinations, projects and assignments and scholarships. This apart, issue of books to students from library would also be facilitated.

The institutions were asked to complete evaluation/alternative evaluation of final year/semester students so that their results could be published by August 31, he letter stated.

The letter also asked the higher education institutions (HEIs) to carry out their official works, (except teaching in physical classroom mode and running of hostels) with 50% employees' strength till August 31.

"Wherever the HEI campus/building is used by the district administration for Covid-19 quarantine centre/hospital, the head of the HEI shall ensure that the employees of the HEI carry out their official work/duty from other campus/building of the HEI. Simultaneously, the district administration should also be requested to vacate the HEI campus/building at the earliest," it said.

S Mishra takes over as Rotary Governor

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Soumya Ranjan Mishra has taken over as Governor of 3262 district for the 2020-21 Rotary year.

Outgoing Governor Debashis Mishra handed over the responsibility to him. During the new governor's tenure, extensive tree planting would be carried out to protect ecological balance; and re-schooling of school dropouts is also among his plans.

Soumya R Mishra also said a comprehensive programme would be undertaken to prevent the pandemic in the State.

He and his first wife Sarita Mishra have returned from a formal training course in Santiago, USA with an aim of



making the Rotary service more meaningful. He has provided grant of Rs 50 lakh for the 'Little Hope' programme sponsored by the Rotary India to make students face the school.

Rotarians Shivabrata Das and Ravi Nanda also spoke on the occasion. PP Prashant Mohapatra, general secretary Mrinal Nayak, Prasanna Lenka, Media Cell chairman Bibhuti Bhusan Kar and Rotarian Tapan Panigrahi were present.

₹11L seized from K'put DAO car

KORAPUT: Vigilance officials on Thursday seized more than Rs 11.73 lakh from a car by which Koraput District Agriculture Officer (DAO) Pradeep Kumar Mohanty was travelling.

Mohanty, who was heading towards Bhubaneswar after his transfer, was intercepted by the Vigilance officers near a ghat at Jeypore in Koraput district.

Later, cash of Rs 30,000 from his purse and the rest of the money from a bag kept in the car was seized by the Vigilance officials.

This was the highest amount of cash ever seized by Vigilance during interception of any public servant carrying unaccounted-for money.

Mohanty was then arrested and forwarded to court. Further investigation into the matter was underway to ascertain the source of the huge sum of money.

Bargarh Excise Super under Vig scanner

BARGARH: The Vigilance police on Thursday raided the office and residences of Bargarh district Excise Superintendent Makardhwaj Barge at eight places on the charge of amassing properties disproportionate to his known sources of income. Separate teams of the anti-corruption wing conducted the raids simultaneously.

The Vigilance officials searched Barge's office chamber at Bargarh, a residential house in Sambalpur, a double-storied residential building in Burla town, a residential building near the Balangir NH office, a house at native village in the Rampur police station area of Subarnapur district, an HP Gas godown in the name of his relative at Durguripally in Subarnapur, a rented house of his relative at Barpally in Bargarh and a flat near the Ganapati Hotel in Bargarh.

Assets worth a total of over Rs 1.55 crore were detected from his and his family members' possession.

Thakur made Home Spl Secy

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In view of the increasing number of Covid-19 cases, the State Government on Thursday gave additional charge to IPS officer Amitabh Thakur as the Special Secretary in Home Department to tackle the pandemic situation.

The 1998-batch IPS officer, who is currently posted as the State's Inspector General (Operations), would look after the matters relating to Covid-19 in addition to his existing duties.



Prior to his appointment as the Home Special Secretary, Thakur was supervising a 24x7 control room, which was opened to monitor the issues regarding enforcement of lockdown to combat spread of Covid-19 in the State.

'Nonattached Attachment'

Governor Lal's new book published

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On the Bahuda Yatra of Lord Jagannath, the PEN IN Books publishing house has handed over the first copy of spiritual book 'Nonattached Attachment' to Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal on Wednesday. This book, based on Bhagavad Gita, is written by the Governor.

PEN IN Books director Subhransu Panda handed over the copy to Prof Lal at the Raj Bhavan. The Governor's wife Sushila Devi was present.

The Governor said no power can confine the



Bhagavad Gita within religion, country, or time zone and added that the Gita's relevance pervades through ages. Although the Bhagavad Gita is a small book, its elucidation and interpretation is very tough, he added.

Panda said that due to the coronavirus pandemic it is very difficult to make the book available in various stores of the country. However, this book is available on the e-commerce portal <https://www.amazon.in/dp/9388863232>.

Trinity decorated with quintals of gold

Public barred from most popular temple event due to Covid

SAROJ KUMAR MISHRA ■ PURI

Decorated with quintals of gold, diamonds, jewels, gem stones and costumes on their bodies, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and sister Devi Subhadra exhibited themselves on the occasion of Suna Besha here on Thursday.

The deities appeared near

the Lions Gate of the Jagannath Temple, from where the Suna Besha festival began at 4 pm on the chariots.



However to enjoy the famous Suna Besha, no one excepting security forces and officials, was present due to the Covid guidelines.

The devotees watched it live on television. Nearly 150 kg of ornaments were used for the Besha of the deities. In the past,

deities used to wear 208 kg of 138 designs of ornaments. However, due to security issues nearly 30 designs with less weight are used presently.

Among the five Suna Beshas of the deities observed annually, this one is displayed outside the shrine.

Cop's 4 family members test +ve

CUTTACK: Four family members of a senior police official of the DSP rank have tested positive for Covid-19 in the Athagarh area of Cuttack district, informed an official source on Thursday.

All the four persons were under home quarantine after the DSP in the Cuttack (Rural) area had tested positive for the virus recently.

During their stay in quarantine, the swab samples were sent for test and the results came out positive.

A contact tracing exercise is in progress following detection of the fresh cases in the Athagarh area.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Coalmining privatisation not to be beneficial to Odisha



MANAS JENA

The decision of the Centre to privatise commercial extraction of coal may not be beneficial for Odisha having 25 per cent of the coal reserve of the country.

There has been persistent suffering of people in coal reserve areas due to mining for last few decades with very little enforcement of environ-

mental legislations and entitlements for the affected people and areas as reparation against the loss. The coal royalty periodic revision and its sharing depend on the Centre as it comes under the Central Act. The Centre must respect the spirit of cooperative federalism over resource ownership and its management as well as benefit sharing with States.

During Covid-19, the recent move of the Central Government with amendment of Coal Mines Special Provision Act 2015 through ordinance, without any discussion at appropriate forums has allowed private sector to go for commercial extraction and the Government has been steadfastly going to ensure infrastructure out of public money to facilitate the private companies in extraction process for profit. Privatisation of commercial extraction will

allow the miner to trade the coal and coal based products in open market. There was virtual auction for 41 coal blocks in five States where eight are in Talcher and Chendipada of Angul district and one in IB Valley of Jharsuguda.

The formal process of consultation with locals has not been followed as well as the various social, economic and environmental assessments have also not been done. It is virtually the Central Government which has taken it for granted that there is no need of consent of the affected people. The State of Jharkhand having little more coal reserve than Odisha has gone to the Supreme Court against the decision of the Centre raising concern over environment and STs. Both Odisha and Jharkhand have about 170 billion tonne coal deposits which is about 50 per cent of the total reserve of the country. They also have large

presence of ST population and forest wealth.

With increase in extraction of coal, the coal reserve areas are going to get the most burden in terms of displacement and environmental issues as well as many ancillary problems for coal mining and coal based industries. Already the open caste coal mining has caused huge displacement in the coal reserve areas.

Almost all major industries have been depending on coal to run their captive power plants. Coking coal has good demand for steel industries and mostly non coking coal is mainly used for thermal power plants (TPP), which has a higher ash content. It is also used in industries such as cement, fertilizer, glass, ceramic, paper, chemical and brick manufacturing.

It is being reported by many including Government officials, environmental activists and others that the

coal extraction industry and TPP together have caused huge losses to locals and in coming days will bring more disasters in Angul, Jharsuguda and Sundrgada. It will further change the local political-economy and environment with destruction of forest, land, water and air pollution as a huge area of land will be taken for mining along with coal wash and fly ash management purpose. Past experience shows fly ash management has brought disaster in Angul and affected many nearby villages and agriculture field. The NTPC along with private companies has a plan to set up more TPP for commercial purpose taking the advantage of availability of river water and coal.

While thermal power is a reality in India since about 70 per cent of our electricity generation comes from TPPs and 85 per cent of TPP are coal based. The search for other alternative sources of energy as substitute

has not been explored sufficiently. The fossil fuel burning has been globally a matter of concern in the context of climate change and many countries have aimed to close their coal fired plants such as Germany by 2038.

The coal reserve areas in Odisha mostly dominated by farming communities, land, water and forest based small producers, farmers, Adivasies, Dalits and fisher folks who are also largely educationally and socially backward. The coal areas of Hemagiri of Sundargada is also a fifth schedule area where no rules of PESA and FRA and many other related acts are not being followed. The Laxmanpur block in Jharsuguda and Talcher, Chhedipada and Kaniha blocks in Angul district are no way developed blocks and lag behind in all kinds of social indicators. In spite of increasing mining and industries for last so many years even

the basic problem of drinking water and sanitation has not been solved in these areas.

The earlier villages are getting converted into slums. There has been no improvement in health and education of the people in the areas and slowly these areas remain difficult for living of the poor without land, housing and basic amenities for life. The DMF which is established for last five years with huge money has remained unspent and diverted to other areas. The CSR funds of industries in these areas also largely continue to be unspent though people in these areas have been displaced and lost their traditional livelihood due to mining.

The direct employment scope for the locals has not improved much due to discriminatory employment policy. The move of privatization of mining sector in general and coal in particular will further

pave the way for more privatisation of public sector companies such as Coal India and Mahanadi Coal Fields Limited (MCL) while limiting its sole monopoly over coal mining in Odisha. This is going to impact public sector employment scope for locals and its welfare activities for the people of Odisha and locals. Because private sector does not follow any employment policy that is socially inclusive and does not protect the interest of the affected and displaced.

The MCL has been a major player in coal mining along with other companies having captive mines but MCL has provided direct employment to about 22,000 people as regular employee and many contractual employees under private contractors along with its CSR activities. MCL has supported the SUM Hospital for a 500 bedded COVID-19 hospital.

(manasbbs15@gmail.com)

Weekend shutdown extended to 5 more dists

Now total 15 districts come under restrictions

PNS ■ NAYAGARH/BARGARH/BALANGIR/NABARANGPUR/PHULBANI

In view of steep hikes in Covid-19 cases, the authorities have announced weekend shutdown in five more districts to contain spread of the deadly virus. The weekend shutdown is now to be enforced in Nayagarh, Balangir, Baragrh, Kandhamal and Nabarangpur districts. Since the Covid-19 cases

are likely to peak in the month of July, the administrations of the respective districts took precautionary measure by enforcing weekend shutdown. With the move, all commercial establishments and movement of private vehicles, hotels, restaurants and bars excluding essential and health-care services would remain shut for two days on Saturday and Sunday every week. The weekend shutdown will remain in force till end of July. In Nayagarh, the shops will remain open from 7 am to 2 pm every day other than weekend. Besides, three wards under the Nayagarh NAC have been declared as containment zones following detection of fresh cases.

Nabarangpur Collector Dr Ajit Kumar Misra has declared a two-day weekend shutdown to be executed till July-end. The Collector has appealed to people to adhere the protocols of Covid-19. He too warned persons found violating norms would be put in quarantine centres for days as desired by the administration. Already, the weekend shutdown is in force in 10 districts, Ganjam, Gajapati, Khordha, Cuttack, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Baleswar, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Jharsuguda, till July 31. Based on the number of active cases, the State Government has categorised these districts under Zone-1.

No vehicle movement in Ganjam till Jul 31

PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR

Amid the rapidly rising Covid-19 cases in Ganjam, the district administration has taken an important decision of banning the movement of vehicles in the district till July 31, official sources said on Thursday. However, vehicular movement in connection with agriculture, goods and health purposes would be allowed. Movement of two-wheelers would be permitted with authentic I-cards only. District Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange has requested the people not to leave their

houses and not to travel more than one km. Senior citizens must stay at home, the official said. "Please don't travel if not an emergency. Stay at home or at your workplace only. Avoid outside food as there are chances of social distancing violations. Don't put your life at risk," the Collector tweeted. Notably, Ganjam district has registered the highest number of coronavirus cases in the State with more than 1,400 people having tested positive for the virus in the district. This apart, the disease has claimed 14 lives, also the State's highest, in the district so far.

7 injured in J'suguda steel unit blast

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA

Seven workers of the SThakur Prasad Sao & Sons Private Limited (TPCL) steel plant at Lahandabuda under the Dhuruhadihi police station in Jharsuguda district were injured when an explosion in the factory took place on Thursday. The mishap occurred in a blast furnace on the second floor of the plant at around 9.30 am. The seven on-duty workers sustained burn injuries when hot liquid iron from the furnace fell on them.

The injured persons, identified as Rabi Shankar (40), Ananda Sahu (45), Ganesh Swain (30), Ranjit Singh (32), Sumant Majhi(24) and Sahdev Patel (30), were first rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) here. Since the DHH has no burn unit, they were shifted to the Rourkela Ispat General Hospital (IGH), informed Jharsuguda Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Jagdish Chandra Barik. The conditions of two of the injured were stated to be critical.

Refused cell phone, boy ends life

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

A minor boy committed suicide at Palanaghati village under the Ghatagoan police limits in Keonjhar district on Thursday night as his sister refused to give him her mobile phone to use. According to reports, the 14-year-old boy asked his sister, a teacher by profession, to let him use her mobile phone. As she refused, he ended his life by hanging himself with a saree from a ceiling fan in the house. The incident took place when the siblings' parents had gone to Mayurbhanj. Police recovered the boy's body for postmortem and started an investigation into the incident.

Villagers kill croc, distribute meat



PNS ■ MALKANGIRI

Cruelty to animals was at its height as some locals killed a crocodile and distributed its meat among villagers at Kaldapalli under the Padia police limits in Malkangiri district on Wednesday. Videos and photos of the incident have gone viral on social media. According to reports, some local youths

dragged a 10-foot-long crocodile from a nearby river to the village and tied it with ropes. They then hanged the reptile from a tree, following which locals gathered at the spot to witness the scene. After the crocodile dies, the youths distributed the meat among some villagers. Till last reports came in, the Forest Department was yet to take any action in the incidence.

Goa firm to invest ₹1K cr for Odisha units

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Goa-based company Sociedade De Fomento Industrial Private Limited (Fomento) has evinced keen interest in investing over Rs 1,000 crore in Odisha in an iron ore beneficiation plant and pellet plant. The Fomento Group, which has bagged the Nadidih iron block in Koira circle of Sundargarh district, will set up a 3.6 MTPA iron ore beneficiation plant and a pellet plant of 3.2 MTPA at Dhamra in Bhadrakh district, sources said. Both projects will come up with an investment of Rs 1,040 crore, officials said. The Fomento Group requires 440 acres of land for both the plants in different places with employment potential of 700 persons, both direct and indirect, the sources said. According to sources, the group has decided to commission the project within 24 months from the date of land allotment. According to official sources, Fomento will use low grade fines generated from its own and nearby mines.

CM urged for 50% slash in power bill to people

BIJAY MISHRA ■ ANGUL

The Citizens Action Forum (CAF) has urged the Chief Minister to immediately reduce at least half of the electricity bills of the consumers for Covid-19 crisis. Forum president Rabin Prasad Pattanaik said, "Already the Covid-19 lockdown has affected everyone leaving them with no money. The latest power bill has come as a shock to domestic consumers." The MP CM declared a concession for the people. The Delhi Government has announced rebates and incentives on power bills raised between March 24 and June 30. The Maharashtra Government, which is facing one of its worst-ever public health crisis in the form of the coronavirus outbreak, has announced a steep reduction in industrial power tariff to prop up the struggling industry. From subsidised electricity to stimulus package, while

other State Governments have announced a slew of relief measures in wake of the rapidly spreading Covid-19 pandemic, the Odisha Government must come forward to help the people. Recently, Chief Secretary Asit Tripathy in a letter to Union Power Secretary, Sanjeev Nandan Sahai suggested measures to ease the immediate burden of the power sector, so that the State Government can provide substantial relief on electricity tariff to the public. He urged the Central Government to extend a financial package to the power sector reeling under such an unforeseen disaster for the refit of the poor consumers and continuity of essential services. On the other hand, during the present pandemic crisis the Union Government on an urgent basis, started the process of enacting the Electricity Act, 2020. In 2014 and 2018, there were attempts to bring in sim-

ilar legislation. However, due to strong opposition from the State Governments and the power engineers and employees, the Bills were not introduced in parliament. The Electricity Bill 2020 requires the elimination of subsidies and cross-subsidies. Therefore when enacted, electricity would become a luxury commodity. Due to this reason, Electricity Bill 2020 is opposed by people at large. In the meanwhile, Ananda Mohapatra, a power analyst, told power transmission is the backbone of electricity sector. It is time to hive off the functions of the State Transmission Company into three separate 100 per cent Government companies as provided in the Act for optimum utilisation of generation and transmission of electricity in the States and to maximise the economics thereunder. In a letter to the CM Odisha and the OERC, he stressed upon sustainable electricity.

NEWS BRIEFS

3 DIE AS TRACTOR PLUNGES INTO POND IN S'GARH
Sundargarh: Three persons, including two women, died and 10 others sustained injuries as a tractor carrying them plunged into a pond at Kolo village under Jarda panchayat in Sundargarh district on Thursday. The deceased were identified as tractor driver Beda Bagh, Sulochana Bhukta and Tapaswini Pujahari. The mishap took place when the victims were heading towards the panchayat office for receiving PDS rice. Police admitted the injured persons to the Gurundia Primary Health Centre.

ELDERLY MAN KILLED AT FARMLAND IN NAYAGARH
Nayagarh: An elderly man was crushed to death with stone at his farmland near Dianpada village under the Nayagarh Town police limits on Wednesday night. He was identified as Prahllad Jena (65). He had gone to the farmland to guard crops. As he didn't return on Thursday morning, his son went to the farmland and found him lying dead with grievous injuries. Police reached the spot, recovered the body for postmortem and initiated an investigation.

OSL to represent BMW in twin city

BHUBANESWAR: The BMW Group India has announced the launch of BMW Facility NEXT in Cuttack. OSL Prestige now represents BMW and BMW Motorrad in the largest full-fledged integrated retail and service facility in eastern India. The new facility showcases the exclusive range of both BMW cars and BMW Motorrad motorcycles. It is located on the National Highway-16 at Bhanpur in Cuttack and is headed by Charchit Mishra as Dealer Principal. BMW Group India, acting president Arlindo Teixeira said, "The BMW Group's promise of joy extends beyond its products and services and touches its customers and fans in every way they connect with us." **PNS**

SOG busts Maoist camp in Kandhamal

Explosives, literature seized

PNS ■ PHULBANI

The Special Operations Group (SOG) of State police busted a Maoist camp operating in the Summarbandha forest area under the Phiringia police station in Kandhamal district on Thursday. Being tipped-off about the presence of a group of Red rebels, a SOG team launched an operation in the forest area on June 29. However, somehow the rebels managed to get wind of the police operation and fled the area, leaving behind explosives and literature. It is suspected there were 15 to 20 rebels in the camp including some women. Kandhamal district SP Prateek Singh: "We had infor-



mation that Area Commander Dasrup, Mamata, Aakash, Suryan and some other cadre were present there." Police seized 15 kg of explosives containing urea, gunpowder and other substances. During the search, 28 detonators, multimeters, bags,

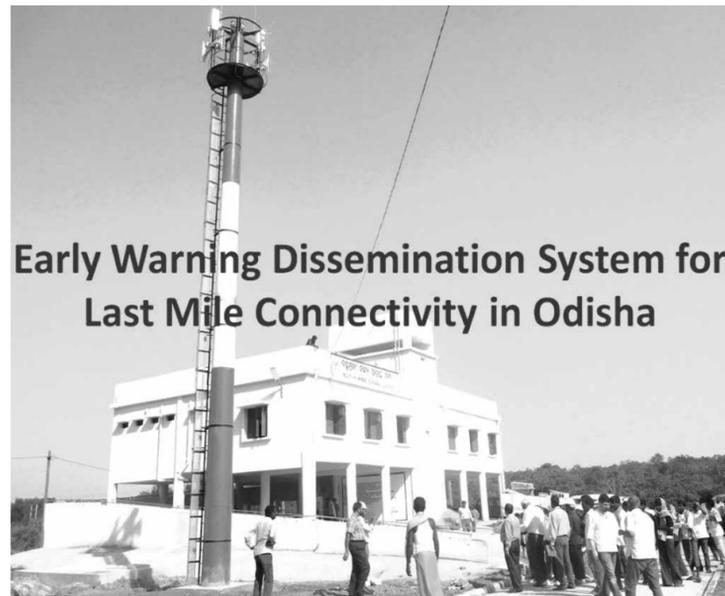
blackcaps, rechargeable batteries, camp equipment, Maoist banners, posters and literature were also recovered. It is suspected that the ultras were planning to launch an attack. While the Maoists fled the spot, security personnel has intensified the combing operations in the border areas.

Monsoon on; siren alert systems defunct in K'pada

Systems used to warn people of cyclone, flood, tsunami beforehand

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

As many as nine siren alert centres out of 20, which were set up at the coastal pockets of Kendrapada by the State Government in 2018 to alert the coastal people to save their life and property during natural disasters, are lying defunct. It may be noted here that the siren alert centres were set up under the Revenue and Disaster Management Department and being maintained by Larsen and Toubro Limited. There are 26 Early Warning Dissemination System (EWDS) towers, including 20 siren alert centres, three repeater siren alert centres and three monitoring towers to alert the coastal people about



Early Warning Dissemination System for Last Mile Connectivity in Odisha
tsunami, cyclone and flood. The installed EWDS towers enable loud sirens to go off simultaneously from towers at several locations, including fish landing centres, to warn people. The sound emanating from the towers can be heard in

localities up to a radius of 1.5 km, said District Emergency office sources. The siren alert centres generally enable authorities to alert people in smaller pockets, depending on the severity of the disaster. People would start moving to safer places before Government agencies commenced evacuation. As nine of the siren systems have become defunct, it has a severe bearing on effective disaster management in Kendrapada even as the monsoon season has started with cyclone, flood and high tide on the cards, said the DPO of OSDMA Ajay Kumar Mohanty. There are technical glitches in the laid optical fibre lines. Whereas low voltage, misutilisation of battery for other purposes, non receiving of licence and also theft of copper plates were the reasons behind the dysfunctioning of siren alert centres, said sources. "We have written to the contract firm for immediate repair and maintenance," informed Mohanty.

11 more infected in B'swar; total 190

BALESWAR: Baleswar reported 11 more Covid-19 cases on Thursday, taking the total number 190 in the district. Of the 11 persons found positive, 10 were Mumbai returnees and one a Delhi returnee. The all the cases were reported from different quarantine centres in the district. Among the infected, two persons were from the Kamargadia area in Basta, three from Khunta, one from Saradiha in Jaleswar, two from Allabindha, one from Palasia in Bhogarai area, one from Andrei in Simulia and one from Jagannathpur in Bahanaga. With the news case, the total number of active cases in the district now stands at 52. A total of 137 patients have recovered from the disease in the district. **PNS**

No house, no income Bleak future stares Nuapada orphan kids in face

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA

Utmakant Majhi (7) and his two younger siblings Siba (5) and Malti (5 months) of Bhainsadani village under Boden block of Nuapada district are now orphans after the loss of their mother, Madana, who died due to snake bite on Wednesday. Their father, Krushna had died six months ago due to tuberculosis. The snake bite occurred at about 4 am when Madana was sleeping inside her house with the children. She was immediately taken to the CHC, Boden by her brother-in-law. "The condition was serious; so the doctor referred her to the Sub-divisional hospital at Khariar, where she died," said the brother-in-law. "My son-in-law succumbed to his chronic illness without getting proper treatment; the doctors could not save the life my daughter. I am unable to think, how would the children lead their lives," said the grandmother of the children. According to the villagers, the family is very poor. They have a mud house with thatched roof covered by a polythene sheet. "Krushna ran to the block office several times to get a house under PMAY, but he didn't get any because his name was not in the list. Look at the condition of the house where they are living," reacted the villagers. The villagers further

informed that, Krushna was a "Pargania" (bard) of Gond community; his living depended upon the contributions made by the members of his clan during various occasions. "After the death of Krushna, his wife could not visit houses for collecting contribution; she was dependent on the relatives," added the people. Bholanath Nag, Sarpanch of Bhainsadani provided Rs 2,000 under Harish Chandra Yojana. "I tried to pursue the relatives to send the children to an orphanage, but they didn't agree. They want to keep the children with them," said the Sarpanch. "It would be better, if they are included in rural housing scheme," he added.

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Let students be assured this academic yr not wasted

K RAVI

The ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) has come to the conclusion that the Covid pandemic will continue till November and as such it would be better to close down all types of educational institutions till the end of November 2020 and then plan to re-open in December in a phased way, if conditions are conducive. Coronavirus has interrupted the academic year 2020-21 from KG to PG and even professional courses had to be closed indefinitely. Even the online session for higher classes is unable to reach village and tribal children who form more than 60 per cent in the State.

The only beneficiaries are English medium students residing in cities and big towns. It is a well-known fact that 70 per cent of the institutions in India have no proper infrastructure like good drinking water, toilets and ventilated class rooms. The class rooms are small in size and so it is not possible for maintaining social distance if the institutions are re-opened. Most of the rural institutions are crowded and lack hygienic conditions. In these circumstances it would be better to declare 2020-21 as Zero Academic Year during the 2021-22 for classes KG to IX, they may be given reduced syllabus to cover both the classes

in a single year. Our teachers are capable of doing it provided the Government reduces all holidays and vacations. For the students of class X,XII, classes may be conducted in December with utmost care to enable them to appear for the public examinations. Degree, PG and professional courses may be considered after a review in November. Health and safety of children are more important than the conduct of classes in a hurry. It is a known fact that the parents are totally exhausted in looking after their children during the pandemic period without school and outing. Let them think positively that this is an opportunity for the parents to build a strong bond

with their children which is very much lacking in modern society. Parents are advised to teach their children some hobbies, indoor games and try to involve them in day-to-day household duties. Reading habits may be cultivated. Let us hope for a brighter tomorrow and I am sure the students at all levels will understand the problem and co-operate with their family members. The Government should ensure the students that the Academic Year will not be wasted. (The writer works with NSS,CHSE, Odisha and lives at E-237,GGP Colony, Bhubaneswar, M: 9437616497, The views expressed are his own)

Transgenders' induction Home Ministry seeks CAPFs' views

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry has sought comments from the CAPFs like the CRPF, SSB, ITBP and CISF on the issue of incorporation of transgenders as a third category along with male/female for recruitment of officers in the paramilitary ranks.

In a communication to these forces, the Ministry said the comments for including transgender as a Third gender along with Male/Female in the Rules of CAPF (Assistant Commandant) Examination, 2020 is yet to be received from CRPF, ITBP, SSB and CISF.

"CRPF, ITBP, SSB & CISF are once again requested to examine the issue and furnish comments to this Ministry on... 02.07.2020 positively for taking a final view on the matter," reads the letter sent to the forces on Wednesday.

The CAPF refers to Central Armed Police Force or the Central paramilitary force. The views have been sought in order to explore the possibility of recruiting transgenders by allowing them to appear for the entrance under a separate category by modifying the recruitment rules. While the UPSC conducts the examination for the recruitment of the cadre officers, every paramilitary



force has its own recruitment rules, paramilitary officials said.

Last month, as reported first by The Pioneer, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) had taken the lead in seeking comments and views from all its formations across the country on inclusion of transgenders as third gender in the rules for recruitment of officers.

The move by SSB was taken in the wake of directions from Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to include transgenders as Third gender along with male/female for recruitment of Directly Appointed Gazetted Officers

(DAGO) or cadre officers in the rank of Assistant Commandant.

In a communication titled "Views on Inclusion of Transgender as third gender in the CAPF (AC) Examination, 2020" sent across all the formations on June 19, the SSB headquarters had said, "As per direction of DoP&T, inclusion of transgender as third gender along with Male/Female has been included as candidate for the examination with the notification of Civil Services Examination, 2020 and requested to examine the matter to incorporate the same in the Rules of CAPF (AC)

Examination, 2020." All Inspectors General, Frontier and Directorate besides SSB, Academy are requested to offer their comments on the subject by Tuesday (June 23, 2020), the letter said, requesting perusal and comments from the Inspectors General. However, the SSB is yet to furnish the view on the issue to the Ministry.

On April 20, the DoPT had issued an office memorandum for inclusion of Third Gender/any Other Category in the application forms in recruitment to various posts under the Central Government.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 was passed by both Houses of the Parliament and received the assent of the President on December 5, 2019. This Act (No 40 of 2019) was notified in the Gazette of India on December 5 last year.

"The matter regarding inclusion of 'Third Gender/any Other Category' in the application forms in recruitment to various posts under the Central Government was under consideration of the Government for quite some time. Based on the provisions of the Act and the legal opinion obtained on the subject, Civil Services Examination Rules, 2020 have been notified on 05.02.2020 providing for inclusion of 'Transgender' as a separate category of gender for the said examination," the DoPT had said in its circular issued in April.

The DoPT further said, "All ministries/Departments of Government of India are requested to modify the relevant examination rules providing for inclusion of 'Transgender' as a separate category of gender, so as to make the said Rules in conformity with the provisions of The Transgender Persons (Protection) of Rights) Bill, 2019.

Cong launches 'Bole Bihar, Badle Sarkar' drive in Bihar

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

With the BJP already setting the stage for the Bihar Assembly elections, the Congress on Thursday launched a digital membership drive in the State giving the call for "Bole Bihar, Badle Sarkar" (Bihar wants change). The party expressed confidence in stitching up an ideological alliance, with the RJD certainly being the major partner, but it set aside any speculation on the coalition's "CM face" saying these are petty things to be discussed in politics at this stage.

Bihar Congress AICC General Secretary in-charge Shaktisinh Gohil launched the digital membership drive for the Bihar voters.

All the political parties are trying to connect to their voters through digital medium with Home Minister Amit Shah already addressing an online rally almost a month ago. Last week, former Union Minister Yashwant Sinha too launched his Bihar ambitions calling for a non-BJP, non-Congress front to remove the NDA regime from Bihar in the most interesting political battle likely to be witnessed this festive season amidst the scare of the Coronavirus pan-

demic.

Launching the online portal taking into account the perils of the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing norms, Gohil said that the current NDA Government of Bihar has done only power politics, but the Congress is moving ahead with a positive thinking.

"The people of Bihar are now fed up with the Government of power politics and want a change this time and this Government is certain to go in the coming elections," Gohil, who was elected to Rajya Sabha last month, said in his virtual message.

Talking about the failure of core 'Mahagathbandhan' partners like RJD, RLSB, HAM and others coming on board to deliberate further on the coalition formula, Gohil said all like-minded parties and those with similar ideology have been in touch with each other and soon discussions will begin. Gohil's reactions come following 'restlessness' in some of the grand alliance partners and the possibility of a couple of them switching sides not being ruled out.

On the issue of an alliance face to counter the reigning popularity of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the Congress

spokesperson said first all stakeholders are concerned over stitching an alliance at the earliest and this time all have realised there should be no delay in this as the elections will be held anytime in November.

"Talking about a united political face to contest the elections is something very petty. Our main aim, like the people of Bihar, is to dethrone the unrealistic, unsocial Nitish Kumar-led Government. It is known to the world how Nitish backstabbed after sailing to power on the shoulders of parties who are now in Opposition. Nitish is an exposed man now and so is his alliance partners. People of Bihar are now looking for a change," Gohil said.

Bihar State President Madan Mohan Jha in his address said that during the Corona period people cannot interact much. "Therefore, Congress has started a digital membership campaign. This campaign will be conducted at the panchayat level so that more people can connect with it," Jha told The Pioneer.

Senior Congress leaders Sadanand Singh and MLC Premchand Mishra too were in attendance at the Congress membership drive event.



Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar inaugurates an urban forest with 12,000 seedlings of 59 species in the park of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) office in New Delhi on Thursday. The Miyawaki method of forest creation is aimed at controlling air pollution in the national Capital. The area is likely to develop into a full-fledged forest in the next two-and-a-half-years or so and serve as a role model for offices in Delhi. The species selected are part of Delhi's potential natural vegetation and are best suited to the region's terrain, climate and soil

Coordinated efforts showing good result in curbing virus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid rising cases of Covid-19 across the States, there is a silver lining: consistently increasing gap between recoveries and active cases. The Union Health Ministry on Thursday said that coordinated efforts at all levels for prevention, containment and management of the disease are showing encouraging results. As on date, there are 1,32,912 recovered cases more than the active Covid-19 cases.

"Timely clinical management of Covid-19 cases has resulted in more than 10,000 daily recoveries. During the last 24 hours, a total of 11,881 Covid-19 patients have been cured, taking the cumulative figure to 3,59,859. This further takes the recovery rate to 59.52 per cent," the Ministry said.

Presently, there are 2,26,947 active cases and all are under medical supervision.

The top 15 States in terms of absolute numbers of Covid-19 recovered cases are Maharashtra (93,154) followed by Delhi (59,992), Tamil

Focus on mental well-being, suicide prevention: WHO to nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pointing out that the global Covid-19 pandemic has hit hard the lives and livelihoods of the people besides causing fear and depression in them, Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO, South-East Asia Region on Thursday asked the countries in the region to pay greater attention to mental well-being and suicide prevention.

"Besides hitting lives and livelihoods, the pandemic is causing fear, anxiety, depression and stress among the people. Social distancing, isolation and coping with perpetually evolving and changing information about the virus have both triggered and aggravated the existing and pre-

existing mental health conditions, which need urgent attention," she said in a statement here.

The South-East Asia region accounts for 39 per cent of the global suicide mortality figures.

Singh emphasised that as the Covid-19 pandemic is still accelerating and impacting people in multiple ways, it is essential for countries in the South-East Asia region to pay greater attention to mental health and suicide prevention.

Citing WHO South-East Asia Region's Suicide Prevention Strategy, Singh said that it is important to work towards providing comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social-care services in community-

based settings.

She insisted that the stigma associated with Covid-19 may also lead to feelings of isolation and depression. Citing the issue of domestic violence during the pandemic, Singh said that another precipitating factor impacting mental health amid Covid-19 could be domestic violence, which is reported to have increased during lockdowns in the region.

"Early identification of mental health conditions, recognition of suicidal behaviours and appropriate management through a multi-sectoral approach is important, even as we continue to focus on arresting further spread of the pandemic," said Singh.

In India, a study by

Lybrate, a health and wellness platform said that Indians are grappling with multiple forms of mental health issues that have risen exponentially post coronavirus outbreak.

The platform witnessed over 150 per cent jump in online consultations sought by females for issues related to mental health, while the percentage for the same grew 85 per cent in males reaching out to doctors online.

Overall within the age brackets, the jump in patient consults was highest in the age group of 25-45 years.

People in the 45-60 age bracket were next who asked the majority of queries on the platform regarding mental health.

The testing lab network in the country is further strengthened. With 768 labs in the Government sector and 297 private labs, there are as many as 1065 labs in the country.

All monuments likely to be opened in non-containment zones by July 6



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Almost a month after the opening up of around 800 heritage buildings that double up as places of worship, the Government is likely to open all monuments in the non-containment zones across the country by July 6 but with a rider keeping in mind the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Only asymptomatic visitors will be allowed while the number of visitors will be capped, as per the SoP issued by the Union Culture Ministry.

Union Culture Minister Prahlad Patel on Thursday said the government has taken a decision with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to open all monuments across the country with com-

NEW NORMS AT MONUMENTS FROM JULY 7, 2020

- ❑ Only those monuments/Museums which are in the non-containment zone will be open for visitors.
- ❑ Entry tickets shall be issued by e-mode only. No physical tickets will be issued until further orders.
- ❑ At the parking, cafeteria etc. only digital payment is allowed.
- ❑ There shall be designated routes for entry & exit and movement within the monument. The route shall be one way only with single line maintaining norms of social distancing.
- ❑ ASI can restrict access to vulnerable and interior part of any monument.
- ❑ Visitors shall be asked to stick to time limits inside the monument, as far as possible. The security staff inside the monument shall ensure that there is no crowding at any point inside the monument.
- ❑ No group photography will be allowed within the premises.
- ❑ The cafeteria and kiosk inside the monument shall only serve bottled water on digital payment.
- ❑ All the staff shall be well protected as per health protocol
- ❑ Cleaning and sanitization of monuments and museums including toilet blocks, benches and frequently used surfaces shall be done at regular interval.

plete security from July 6.

All historical and cultural monuments across India except 821 have been closed since the coronavirus-induced lockdown was imposed towards the end of March.

The SoP mandates wearing

masks while entry tickets and at the parking and cafeteria, only digital payment will be allowed.

There are a total 3,691 protected sites. 821 monuments were thrown open to visitors from June 7.

2,765 foreign Tablighis to be put on trial, not deported, SC told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday told the Supreme Court that 2,765 foreign Tablighis who violated the visa norms will be put on trial and not immediately deported. The Ministry also said that as many 1906 foreign nationals are still absconding and a Look Out Circular is issued against them.

In an affidavit filed before the Apex Court, the Home Ministry said visas of 2,679 have been cancelled, 2,765 blacklisted, 205 FIRs lodged and 1905 lookout notices issued against those absconding. The MHA said the Tablighis from more than 35 countries will be put on

trial for serious violation of Foreigners Act, NDMA Act and Epidemic Diseases Act, apart from the charges of visa violation norms.

"It was decided not to deport them after the quarantine ended as appropriate punitive action is required to be taken," the MHA's affidavit filed through Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said before the Bench of Justice AM Khanwilkar.

The court is hearing petitions filed by a large number of foreign Tablighi members challenging government orders blacklisting around 2,500 of them from 35 countries and not allowing them to go back to their respective countries.

Nadu (52,926) and Gujarat (24,030). The other States where recovery rate has improved are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and

Telangana to name a few. As per the "Test, Trace, Treat" strategy, there has been a steady rise in the samples tested every day with more than 90 lakh samples being tested till

date. During the last 24 hours 2,29,588 samples have been tested.

The cumulative number of samples tested, as on date, is 90,56,173, said the official.

CBI carries out searches at GVK group premises in Mumbai, Hyd

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has carried out searches at the offices of the GVK group in Mumbai and Hyderabad after registering a case against its chairman, Venkata Krishna Reddy Gunupati, in connection with alleged irregularities to the tune of ₹ 705 crore in the running of the Mumbai airport, officials said.

The agency operation was conducted on Wednesday and continued till late in the evening, they added.

The case pertains to the alleged siphoning off ₹ 705 crore from the funds of the Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL), a joint venture under public-

private partnership (PPP) between the GVK Airport Holdings Limited and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) besides other investors, by showing inflated expenditure, under-reporting of revenues, fudging of records among others, the officials said.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked Gunupati, a director in MIAL, his son GV Sanjay Reddy, managing director in MIAL, the companies MIAL, GVK Airport Holdings Limited (a GVK group company) and nine other private companies allegedly used to camouflage the inflated figures through sham deals and unidentified AAI officials, they added.

Will assess feasibility of conducting CA exams amid spike in Covid-19 cases, ICAI tells SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) informed the Supreme Court on Thursday that it would assess the feasibility of conducting CA exams, scheduled between July 29 and August 16, in view of the spike in number of COVID-19 cases across the country and consult states and examination centres on this issue.

The ICAI's counsel told a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar that cases of coronavirus have increased and some of the states have extend-

ed the restrictions imposed amid the spike in the number of infection.

He sought time from the bench, also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Sanjiv Khanna, for contacting examination centres to access the ground situation and explore the feasibility of conducting the exams.

The top court was hearing through video conferencing a plea which has challenged the 'opt out' option provided by the ICAI to the candidates alleging that it "arbitrarily" discriminates between the aspirants in the May cycle of CA examina-

tion. The apex court, after hearing the submissions, said it would hear the matter on July 10.

On June 29, the apex court had observed that ICAI should be flexible in conducting exams amid the COVID-19 pandemic and take care of candidates' concerns.

It had suggested that option for change in examination centre should be made available to the candidates till the last week before the scheduled exams considering the fact that an area may become a containment zone.

हरीयाणा सरकार					
CORRIGENDUM NOTICE					
Sr. No.	NAME OF BOARD CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	NIT NO GHN-3/2020-21	To extend the date of acceptance of Bids is 15.07.2020 - 1:00 PM & opening of Bids at 3:00 PM on the same day.	www.uhbvn.org.in	9354726389 xenopuhvngghana@gmail.com
2	UHBVN	NIT-1/2020-21	Hiring of 2 nos. of Vehicles for SDO OPS/DIVN UHBVN Bahu & Matan Hai. Tender opening date 07.07.2020 at 3 pm.	www.uhbvn.org.in	xenoberi@uhbvn.org.in
3	UHBVN	NIT II /2020-21	1.lump sump contract for sweeping and cleaning of 11 Nos Sub Stations/Offices. Tender opening date 07.07.2020 at 3 pm.	www.uhbvn.org.in	xenoberi@uhbvn.org.in
4	DHBVN	NIT NO. 33/EQH-720/VOL-1/2020-21 (TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_127589_1)	Date extended up to 20.07.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	70273-48444 estateofficerhisar@dhbvn.org.in
5	DHBVN	NIT NO. 34/EQH-624/VOL-1/2020-21 (TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_127619_1)	Date extended up to 20.07.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	70273-48444 estateofficerhisar@dhbvn.org.in
6	DHBVN	NIT NO. 35/EQH-609/VOL-1/2020-21 (TENDER ID NO. 2020_HBC_127645_1)	Date extended up to 20.07.2020	www.dhbvn.org.in	70273-48444 estateofficerhisar@dhbvn.org.in
7	DHBVN	NIT NO. 1/XEN/CIVIL/GGN/2020-21 DATED 11.06.2020	Date Extended upto 10.07.2020 (13:00 Hrs)	www.dhbvn.org.in	8059922323 xencivilggn@dhbvn.org.in
8	UHBVN	1/UH/GA-953 DATED 19.03.2020. REG - VARIOUS FIRMS FOR PROVIDING LEGAL SERVICES TO UHBVN	Regarding extending NIT-1 (previous closing date 25.06.2020 at 1:00 pm) now extended closing date 20.07.2020 (1:00 pm)	www.uhbvn.org.in	0172-3019132 usga@uhbvn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeaprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in RO NO. 81566

5 cops held in TN custodial death

CB-CID files fresh FIR against Inspector, 4 others

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The CB-CID wing of Tamil Nadu Police probing the custodial death of the father-son duo of P Jeyaraaj and J Fenix arrested five police officials of Sattankulam Police Station in Thoothukudi on Thursday. The arrested include an Inspector of Police, two sub-inspectors and two constables

who had picked up Jeyaraaj from his mobile phone shop on June 19 allegedly for violating lockdown rules that mandated shopkeepers to down the shutters by 9 pm. Jeyaraaj and Fenix, who was arrested the same night, succumbed allegedly due to police torture on June 21 in the Government General Hospital at Sattankulam. The Tamil Nadu

Government had transferred the case to CBI but the Madras High Court which had taken suo motu petition on the custodial deaths asked the CB-CID to take over the probe till the CBI takes charge of the investigation. The High Court was upset that the cops of Sattankulam Police Station had threatened the Judicial Magistrate who went to the station as part of the judicial enquiry and ordered the district collector to entrust the police station to revenue officials pending enquiry.

Interestingly, the CB-CID officials who took over the probe prepared and registered

a new First Information Report under Section 302 of the IPC. The District Police which had earlier probed the case had registered a FIR under Section 174 of the CrPC (suspicious death).

The CB-CID police booked Inspector Sridhar, two SIs Raghur Ganesha and Balakrishnan and two constables Murugan and Muthuraj under three Sections, including 302 and 301 of the IPC.

The death of the father-son duo as a result of police torture had created a nation-wide uproar with many celebrities including film star Rajinikanth demanding justice for the deceased.

BABRIDEMOLITIONCASE

Uma Bharti appears before CBI court

Lucknow: Former Union Minister and senior BJP leader, Uma Bharti, on Thursday, appeared before a special CBI court here to record her statement in Babri mosque demolition case.

The special CBI court is currently recording the statements of 32 accused under CrPC section 313 (court's power to examine the accused), a stage in the trial that follows the examination of prosecution witnesses.

Uma Bharti, 61, is the 19th accused to depose before the



court in over 27-year-old case. Thirteen other accused, including former deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and senior BJP leaders, Dr M.M. Joshi and Kalyan Singh are yet to be examined by the court. Their lawyers have informed the CBI court that they would prefer to appear

through video conferencing, in view of the Corona pandemic. The court has already directed the government to ensure facility for video conferencing.

The CBI court is conducting day-to-day hearings to complete the trial by August 31, as directed by the Supreme Court.

Babri mosque in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992 by 'kar sevaks' who claimed that an ancient Ram temple had stood on the same site.

IANS

4,343 test +ve on single day in TN

State inches towards 1 lakh cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu is inching towards the 1,00,000 mark in the number of persons diagnosed with coronavirus and it could happen in two days, if one goes by the numbers released by the State Government's Department of Health on Thursday.

For the first time since the covid-19 hit the State as a pandemic in late January, a record number of 4,343 persons were diagnosed with the pandemic on a single day. Out of the 4,343 tested positive on Thursday, Chennai accounted for 2,027 patients.

The day also saw the death of 57 persons afflicted with coronavirus and this took the number of fatalities in the



State till date on account of the pandemic to 1,321.

While Tamil Nadu has diagnosed 98,392 persons with Covid-19 till date, there are 41,047 active cases in the State on Thursday. The change in the total number of persons tested till date is because of the number of persons who were

cured as well as those who succumbed to coronavirus.

Out of the 57 who breathed their last on Thursday, 45 had chronic ailments or pre-existing morbidity, according to the medical bulletin.

Tamil Nadu Government has not reduced the rate of test-

ing for coronavirus. As on Thursday, the State had 91 laboratories functioning in full steam. Thursday saw 32,456 persons getting tested all over the State. This took the number of persons tested till date to 1.17 million, the highest numbers at least in Tamil Nadu.

Though the Tamil Nadu Government is yet to accept the possibility of community transmission, Dr Kulanda Swamy, former director of public health and preventive medicine said the best alternative to counter the virus is to tighten up the social distancing and hand washing rules. "I feel it is better for the aged and inform to be taken to villages from big metropolitan cities like Chennai. The districts with rural ambience has succeeded in preventing the coronavirus from trespassing their borders," Dr Kolanda Swamy told The Pioneer.

Since schools and other educational institutions will take time to re-open, it would not be a problem for those with their own houses in rural areas to shift, he said. "My apprehension is about those who are in the 60+ age group. They and the children are the most vulnerable groups," said the doctor, a specialist in public health whose counsel is sought by the Tamil Nadu Government despite his remitting office in May 2020.

Gold smuggling racket busted in Kochi: Role of film stars suspected

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

An incident that came to light as a one-off crime report last week in Kochi has snowballed into a major criminal case with international ramifications. Some of the prominent Malayalam film stars are being used as couriers to smuggle in gold from West Asian countries to various groups including terrorist gangs, if the reports coming out of Ernakulam Police Station are any indication.

It all started with Shamna Kasim, an upcoming film artist complaining to the Police that a group of people who had approached her parents with marriage proposal were hatching a plan to kidnap her with the intention to ask for ransom money.

Shamna's mother filed a police case against five persons who had approached the family with a marriage proposal. The group had furnished fake identities about the youth and his family. This was followed by

the group calling on Shamna's parents at her Kochi home. Their dubious behaviour aroused suspicion in the minds of her parents who filed a complaint.

The police arrested all the five youth mentioned in the complaint and took into custody five more persons who are said to be their associates. It turned out that they were members of a major racket specialising in gold smuggling, blackmailing and flesh trade. On interrogation, the youth disclosed that they were in contact with many more film personalities.

Ernakulam City Police Commissioner Vijay Sakhare who is personally monitoring the case told mediapersons on Thursday that the arrested persons have wider contacts in film circles and they were associated with many popular artists. "We have understood that they were in touch with many stars in Malayalam films. Shamna Kasim is just one of the artists. They were being

exploited for all kind of illegal activities," said Sakhare.

The incident took a curious turn when police grilled Dharmajan, a small time actor and comedy artist.

Though the actor denied any kind of association with the gang, police are yet to be convinced of his claims. The covid-19 shut down of the film industry has put hundreds of artists and technicians out of work since February 2020. The police suspect that it is likely that some artists might have fallen prey to the gang members and might have worked as gold couriers.

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) too has pitched in Ernakulam tracking the flourishing gold smuggling industry in the State.

It was reported that Customs officials had seized gold worth millions of rupees from Kozhikode Airport smuggled into the country by chartered aircraft which were evacuating expatriates from West Asia.

Maha seeks ₹10K cr from Centre to revive power undertaking

PNS ■ MUMBAI:

Maintaining the "financial health" of "Mahavitaran" had deteriorated, Maharashtra Energy Minister Nitin Raut on Thursday urged the Centre for an immediate assistance of Rs 10000 crore to prevent the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Limited (MSEDCL as Mahavitaran is known) "from slipping into coma".

In a letter shot off to Union Energy Minister, R K Singh, Dr Raut said that Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Limited (MSEDCL or Mahavitaran) had incurred huge financial losses due to Covid pandemic and was facing precarious financial situation and demanded immediate assistance of Rs 10000 crore to help the state electricity overcome the liquidity crunch.

He has said due to Covid-19, Mahavitaran which was the largest distribution company of India, was grappling with acute fund shortage. The lockdown period continued for almost 3 months and it still continued in major parts of Maharashtra.

Dr Raut said out that during the lockdown period industrial and commercial consumption reached to the bottom. The industrial and commercial consumption which amounted 60 percent of the revenue could not get realised during the period which put Mahavitaran in a precarious financial condition.

He said the industrial and commercial consumption was the main source of providing subsidized rates to residential and agriculture consumers, drop in its sale added to the financial woes of the Mahavitaran as the residential and agriculture consumption continued unabated. Rather domestic consumption showed rising trend during the summer due to heat and work from home, he averred.

"Almost all of the industrial and commercial consumption stopped during lockdown period. All the consumers were given time extension to pay their electricity bills. Thus, the realization of revenue almost halted in April and May; whereas, the power purchase costs (mainly Fixed), staff salaries, tax liability were not reduced," the state minister said.

10 more deaths due to Covid in J&K

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir on Thursday recorded 10 more deaths due to Covid-19 while 154 new cases of coronavirus tested positive taking the total tally to 7,849 cases.

The death toll rose to 115 while 118 more patients were discharged from different hospitals after they recovered and tested negative for Coronavirus.

According to the media bulletin, "nine deaths were reported from Kashmir while one patient died due to Covid-19 in Jammu, taking the total tally to 115". According to the media bulletin, "154 new patients of coronavirus were detected in Jammu and Kashmir and on the recovery front, a total number of 118 patients were discharged from different hospitals after they tested negative."

Out of 154 new positive cases, 20 were reported from Jammu and 134 from Kashmir division.

The highest number of 51

154 fresh cases take total tally to 7,849

patients tested positive in Srinagar.

Situation remained grim in two districts of Srinagar and Baramulla as a maximum number of 1021 and 928 positive cases have been detected there.

Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag have reported 801, 846 and 692 cases respectively. Jammu district reported a maximum number of 363 cases with 71 active positive undergoing treatment followed by Udhampur with 284 cases (102 active), Ramban 223 cases (36 active) and Kathua with 232 cases (66 active).

According to the media bulletin, out of 7849 total cases, 2760 are active positive in Jammu and Kashmir. 432 are active in Jammu division and 2328 in Kashmir. More than 4900 patients have recovered, 1204 in Jammu and 3770 in Kashmir division.

Brigadier dies of corona, IAS officer down with disease

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A senior Army officer attached to the Eastern Command headquarters at Fort William has died of corona, Army sources said. The Brigadier rank officer was suffering from the disease for the past few days when he was admitted to the Barrackpore Army Hospital.

Later he was shifted to the Command Hospital at Alipore even as his condition deteriorated. The officer died on Thursday, sources said adding however that his wife and son had recovered from the disease.

In a second case a senior IAS officer of the Joint Secretary rank have been diagnosed with the dreaded disease. The senior officer working with the Land and Land Revenue Department has been home quarantined and her office on the sixth floor of the State secretariat at Nabanna has been sanitized, sources said. She is the first IAS rank officer to contact the disease in the



State. The government employees who had come in contact with the officer too have been sent for home quarantine.

Meanwhile, amid rising pandemic cases in Bengal there was some respite for Capital Kolkata where the number of containment zones came down from around 1,800 to 1496 on Thursday, sources said adding however that the total number of containment zones in the State was about 3,500 on the second day of Unlock - II period.

Apart from this, two districts including Alipurduar in

North Bengal have once again entered the "green zone" back from "red zone" while the remaining 21 districts were still in the red zone category.

Elsewhere, senior Trinamool Congress leader and MP Sougato Roy on Thursday welcomed the proposed Central amendment in the electoral laws enabling the people above 65 years of age and those suffering from corona to vote from home. The new regulations were likely to be implemented in the coming Assembly elections in Bihar which goes to polls later this year.

"It is good that the corona afflicted people will get a chance to vote along with those in the high risk group but for that the entire electronic voting system including the mobile telephony will have to be adjusted accordingly," he said adding the same rules may not be required during Bengal polls next year by when the corona crisis will in all probability blow over.

NIA likely to probe Malda e-rickshaw blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The National Investigation Agency will investigate into the Malda e-rickshaw blast that killed its driver and damaged several nearby houses late on Wednesday noon, sources said.

The reason behind the NIA's intervention is the intensity of the blast, officials said adding the "explosion was so massive that it ripped off the roof of a nearby structure and shattered the window panes of nearby houses besides its sound being heard from a great distance."

A hand and the head of the driver were torn and tossed several feet away due to the impact of the blast suggesting "there was something more than met the naked eye."

The police in its preliminary findings however suggested a short circuit in the battery box that might have caused

the blast while locals said they had noticed a shattered white box at the blast site.

The State Crime Investigation Department (CID) was presently conducting the investigations alongside the forensic experts, sources said.

The identity of the Toto (e-rickshaw) driver was yet to be established, the police said adding he might have been an outsider working to earn his living in Malda, a town which borders Bangladesh on one hand and Bihar's Katihar district on the other. On the third side lie Pakur and Shibganj districts of Jharkhand.

A similar blast in October 2014 killing two persons was initially passed off as a result of a cylinder explosion until the NIA unearthed an elaborate network of Bangladesh terror group Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) which was training its moles in this side of the border.

PRIYANKA'S GOVT ACCOMMODATION

Modi Govt's order smacks of cheap politics: Maha Cong

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

Castigating the Modi Government for its decision to revoke Priyanka Gandhi's security and take away her official residence, the Maharashtra Congress on Thursday charged that the ruling BJP dispensation "feels threatened" by the increasing popularity of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka and it had no answers to questions being raised by the two leaders.

In a statement issued here, Maharashtra Congress president and senior Minister in the "Maha Vikas Aghadi" Government Balasaheb Thorat alleged that the Modi government was trying to stifle Priyanka's voice, "but Priyankaji and the Congress party don't give importance to such actions." Dubbing the ruling BJP's decision to strip Priyanka of her security and take away her residence was "unfortunate" and it smacked of "cheap politics", Thorat said: "Priyanka has witnessed horrific deaths of her grandmother and Prime

Minister of India, Indira Gandhi and father Rajiv Gandhi. Even today, when the threat to the Gandhi family has not subsided completely, the BJP government's decision to do away with her security and residence is a symbol of their cheap politics". "... the BJP Government is trying to stifle her voice, but Priyankaji and the Congress party don't give importance to such actions. We will continue to raise their voice on the issues concerning the common man and also against the anti-democratic actions of the central government," Thorat said.

"The BJP Government feels threatened by the increasing popularity of Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi. The questions raised by Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi on the wrong decisions taken by the BJP government leave them with no answers and so this is an attempt by the BJP Government to put pressure on them," the State Congress chief said. Accusing the BJP Government of trying to put

pressure on the two Congress leaders against targeting the Modi Government, Thorat said: "No matter how much pressure the BJP government tries to exert on them, Priyanka

and Rahul Gandhi will continue to raise their voices on issues that are in the interest of the people and will continue to fight on the issues of the common man".

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE	
The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/Const./Northern Railway, 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi-110001 invites e-tender under Single Packet System for the under noted work:-	
1. Name of work and location	Hiring of one no. Non AC vehicles for 3 years- Jagg/Cypps/Fats Sumo or similar on monthly basis under Dy. Chief Elect. Engineer / Const./ 4th Floor, DRM Office, New Delhi
2. Completion period of the work	36 Months
3. Approx. Cost of work	Rs. 16,99,668/-
4. Earnest Money amount (to be deposited Online)	Rs. 34,000/-
5. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender	Tenders may be uploaded upto 11.30 hrs. on date 29.07.2020 on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The bidders can participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 11.30 hrs on 29.07.2020.
6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in. Above tender document will be available for submission of offer on IREPS web site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 15.07.2020 to 29.07.2020. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tender are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.
No. 307- Dy.CEE/C/NDS/2019-20 Dated: 02.07.2020 1474/20	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority			
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida 201301 (U.P.)			
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com			
E-TENDER NOTICE			
E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com and https://etender.up.nic.in . Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.			
Fresh - Tender work			
(A) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 16.07.2020 upto 5.00 pm. shall be opened/downloaded on dated 17.07.2020 at 11.00 am.			
Sr. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1.	38/GM(R)/SM(WC-5)/2020-21	M/o Road (Construction/Repair of road and drain in front of Plot No. B-45 to B-42, B-42 to B-44 and B-44 to B-43 in Sector-58), Noida	66.42
Re - Tender work			
(B) The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 09.07.2020 upto 5.00 pm. shall be opened/downloaded on dated 10.07.2020 at 11.00 am.			
Sr. No.	Job No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
3.	14/GM(R)/SM(WC-2)/2020-21	M/o Drain (Repair of B/W, Plaster & P/F Precast slab over drain from Botanical Garden Bus Station Sector 38A to Electric Sub-Station on DSC road), Noida	33.07
4.	03/GM(R)/SM(WC-2)/2020-21	M/o Road (Repair of RCC Central Verge at different location on DSC road from Sector-18, underpass to Sector-15 Metro Station), Noida.	34.02
General Manager (R), Noida			
CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA			

Now, a telecom war

There are alternative vendors but costs would go up. We must encourage equipment manufacture with innovation and now



Yes, the economic realities of China dominating much of our product supply chains, from electronics to drugs, weigh heavy on us. Yes, we are deeply aware of sudden disruptions, litigation and fair trade violations if we take a dramatic step of boycotting China overnight. And while building self-sufficiencies is a long-term and sustained effort, there is no reason why we cannot begin taking *atma nirbharata* seriously while we can. For the latest Chinese ambush at Ladakh has cost us 20 soldiers and over-tested our patience and strategic responsibility in the region. China continues to eat into our territory as it always has. It won't settle as long as it doesn't get what it wants and this presumed supremacy has finally got the Government thinking about reducing our dependencies on it. For the summit diplomacy, which has yielded nothing on the ground except encouraging more hostilities, has been a colossal waste of time that smartly sidestepped contentious border issues and helped China deepen its market access as part of trade deals. So Union Minister for Road Transport and MSMEs Nitin Gadkari has said that no Chinese company will be allowed to participate in any highway or MSME project either directly or indirectly, the latter implying outsourcing consultancies by the bidder company. He even suggested alternative technologies that would help us compete on cost effectiveness and gave the example of PPEs, something which we thought would have to come in bulk from Chinese factories and something which we are exporting now. The shrinkage of trade volume to India won't impact China much, which can only be upset about being denied entry to a future vibrant market, and it is not that current commitments are not being honoured. It is just that manufacturing our own is a sovereign decision and COVID-19 and the Galwan attack have just been accelerators. Similarly, the Department of Telecommunications cancelled the much anticipated 4G upgradation tender of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) to avoid participation by Chinese companies like Huawei and ZTE. Local operators such as Airtel, Vodafone and Jio have been asked to reduce dependence on Chinese companies. Meanwhile, the Indian Railways has already cancelled a ₹471 crore contract with the Beijing National Railway for a project on the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor. Of course, the US, too, has been red flagging concerns about Huawei and ZTE being a "national security risk" because of their data mining and surveillance operations while working their telecom grids. It is even exerting pressure on its allies, India now getting top billing, to comply by banning them.

But that's not the reason why India is going for a drastic decision on telecom. It is choosing sectors where either an alternative supply chain exists or where it is possible to magnify home-grown capacities. Compared to the mobile handset industry, where replacing Chinese supply chain and products is almost impossible, in the telecom equipment market that is very much possible. There are European nations, too, in the business though supplies from here would come at a cost. The size of the telecom equipment market in India is around ₹12,000 crore and the share of Chinese products is currently around 25 per cent, simply because their prices are attractive to operators. That's why the 4G network of big players like Airtel and Vodafone have been built by Huawei and ZTE. Huawei alone has aggressively made inroads into nearly 25 per cent of the total telecom equipment market in India. While Bharti Airtel uses up to 30 per cent Chinese telecom equipment, including Huawei, for its networks, Vodafone Idea uses as much as 40 per cent. Reliance Jio is the only operator functioning without a Chinese vendor as its network is fuelled by South Korea's Samsung. But replacement, be it from South Korea, Taiwan or any other Southeast Asian nation, can only work in the short-term if self sufficiency is our ultimate goal. Remember that despite the "Make in India" launch in 2015, there has been no impetus for localised equipment production. The ban comes at a time when India is seeking to raise \$84 billion from a sale of airwaves, particularly for new technology, which would revolutionise connectivity. So we need to immediately ramp up existing electronic manufacturing facilities and divert them towards 5G equipment manufacturing if we are to exclude Chinese firms from 5G trials. Indian innovation has always risen to the top during crisis and we could leverage our home-grown talent to re-engineer receivers and emitters in discarded mobile devices to make 5G equipment in a cost-effective manner. We should be as enthusiastic about announcing innovations and encouraging R&D than just announcing a ban that spooks markets.

Size does matter

In the Indian car market, the smaller you are, the better your sales. Last month has been much better for the auto sector



The past quarter has been traumatic for the Indian car and bike industry. However, after April, when companies registered zero sales, things have improved much. On the whole, for most automobile manufacturers, sales in June were around half of what they were last year, same month. While we must remember that 2019, too, had seen a decline in automobile sales, the one positive this year has been that firms have been able to recover. Sales for almost every manufacturer doubled from May to June as unlocking began. In the two-wheeler market, the largest manufacturer, Hero Motocorp, sold 450,744 units in the past month, almost three-quarters of the number it sold in June. Bajaj Auto, too, saw an increase in sales, although the manufacturer had a tough time controlling the unfortunate spread of the Chinese virus at its Waluj plant. This came just a few weeks after its boss, Rajiv Bajaj, attacked the Government for the lockdown. Most manufacturers, dealers and workshops across the country are mostly open now, other than those inside a containment zone. Yet, there are some interesting trends that are emerging from last month's sales. The first is that rural demand has contributed much towards a sharp recovery. This is evident due to the fact that Mahindra Tractors, the largest player in the agricultural vehicle market, has seen a rapid climb in its sales figures. This is indicative of a positive monsoon so far. Similarly, for two-wheeler companies, there is a seeming rural bias, evident in greater sales of commuter motorcycles and a decline in urban-focussed scooters and 150cc plus motorcycles. For cars as well as firms such as Maruti, Hyundai and Tata, who have a larger small car portfolio, are seeing sales pick up. Larger and higher specification vehicles are seeing a commensurate decline in their aggregate demand. However, manufacturers were quick to warn against picking up too many future trends based on last months' sales as the process of unlocking continues with a bit of confusion still reigning in major cities, such as Chennai and Mumbai, the former being a major automobile production hub.

At the same time, manufacturing remains impacted. Large-scale manufacturers have not been able to move to three-shift operations and smaller suppliers are dealing with not only a smaller labour pool but also the current Sino-India brouhaha. Several intermediate components, as well as manufacturing tools and dyes, come from across the border. Manufacturing might not stabilise before 2021 and not every manufacturer, component supplier, transporter or dealer might be able to deal with the crisis that far. Some Government support will be of great help though.

The enemies within

For the sake of better governance, police reforms are a must. But more than anything else, our forces need an attitudinal change. The police-public relationship needs an overhaul



AJOY KUMAR

Sir Robert Mark, a legendary police officer in the UK, who cleaned the Metropolitan police of corruption and who was subsequently knighted for his efforts, narrated an episode that stayed with him throughout his career as an officer. As part of his job, he was required to serve an internment order on an Italian waiter, who had lived in Manchester for over 30 years. Sir Robert Mark met the waiter and reported that he was harmless. The waiter was nonetheless deported as an "enemy alien." Eventually, he died on a transport ship that was torpedoed by a U-boat. "That experience taught me there was neglect, carelessness and worse in the police system," he wrote later. "It was a lesson I never forgot."

Coming to the Indian police system, the one thing that I can say with some certainty is that there is no shortage of such experiences that can serve as a wakeup call for its officers. To Mark's words, I would like to add that there is not only "neglect" and "carelessness" in the Indian police system but a heavy dose of "malice", too. A recent horrific and brutal crime in Tamil Nadu brought this aspect to the fore. As per reports, on June 19, a trader, Jayaraj and his son, Bennix, who ran a mobile showroom, were at their shop when the Sattankulam police picked up the former and started assaulting him. When Bennix intervened, the police beat both of them mercilessly after taking them to the police station. The officers brutalised Bennix by allegedly inserting a baton into his anus. This triggered uncontrolled bleeding, which led to his death. His 60-year-old father was not spared either and was declared dead 10 hours later. The story is a brutal one but hardly unique in its brutality or display of violence by the police. A report published by the National Campaign Against Torture (NCAT) noted that a total of 1,731 people died in custody in 2019. This works out to roughly five people a day.

This is indeed a shocking number only if one is unfamiliar with the long, painful history of police brutality in India. But for anyone, who pays even little attention to the news, given the trend of police brutalities, hardly a day passes without a report of atrocity or impropriety. They may not always be as brutal as the Tamil Nadu incident but there are thousands of instances of police malice that are not even registered or those that do not show up on our radar until it culminates into a brutal killing and perversity. Take the example of an incident in Uttar Pradesh, where a station house officer (SHO) of Bhatni police station was suspended for masturbating in front of a woman who sought to register a complaint. Thankfully, the Uttar Pradesh police registered an FIR in this case.



However, there are innumerable such cases where perpetrators of horrific crimes are policemen themselves and no FIRs are registered. In terms of action, the numbers back up the view that the police do not take crimes committed by themselves seriously. According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), 3,146 people died in police and judicial custody in 2017-18. There have hardly been any convictions for these deaths though. This isn't surprising and even in the case of Bennix and Jayaraj, reports state that police officers have shown reluctance in coming forward to the station where the horrific incident occurred. This kind of behaviour must change.

So how do we bring about behavioural change? How do we stem the rot that seems to be entrenched among our officers? How do we fix the system, where powerful officials abuse their position and take the form of the very criminals they are supposed to apprehend?

The role of the judiciary in ensuring that justice is done and that investigation into custodial deaths is not compromised in such cases is crucial. One would also welcome anti-torture legislation. To this extent, the legislature can also contribute. However, in my humble opinion, the lack of a specific law is not the reason for an unabated rise in crime and criminals in an institution that I was proud to serve for many years. The Supreme Court's string of judgments

between 1986 and 2015 in *DK Basu vs State of West Bengal*, "created a valuable and seamless web of legal principles and techniques to reduce custodial death and torture," as was explained by distinguished lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who was *amicus curiae* in the matter.

The judgments *inter alia* detail procedural safeguards that must be followed, including the carrying of name tags by police officers, the preparation of an arrest memo which is to be attested by a family member or a respectable member of the locality among others. There are also directions to set up State Human Rights Commissions where there were none; to fill vacancies that may already exist; and to set up human rights courts under the NHRC Act. I have merely tried to sum up the position and there are a lot more guidelines and directions in the judgments mentioned above. Therefore, the lack of a law on the subject is not the issue at hand. In fact, our immediate response to heinous crimes is often straight to an amendment of an old law or induction of a new one. This had happened with reactions calling for the death penalty in cases of rape as well. While I support the sternest action against rapists, we tend to ignore the fact that more than 90 per cent of the cases involving sexual abuse is perpetrated by the family members themselves or people known to the victim. By imposing strict penalties, rarely has the benefactor been the victim or society but the per-

petrator himself since victims are more hesitant to report crimes with such strict penalties.

In the case of custodial deaths, too, our immediate reaction should be proper implementation of the current law rather than implementing a new one and then forgetting about it. We would make a heavy dent in arresting criminal behaviour if we: (i) Manage to ensure that FIRs are registered by the police against their own personnel. This is a Herculean task because getting an FIR registered against a criminal outside the police force is hard enough. (ii) Place CCTV cameras in police stations. (iii) Reward police personnel, like the DGP of Orissa who dismissed and initiated a Crime Branch inquiry against an inspector who was accused of raping a 13-year-old girl.

This accountability, however, is not limited to the police. Often, the reason why police officers are allowed to get away with murder is because custodial deaths are categorised as deaths due to suicide or due to natural causes by the doctors who conduct the autopsy. This is an abject failure on the part of the medical professionals who conduct the autopsy of victims and issue such reports, presumably under duress or for bribes. Such doctors allow these crimes to go unacknowledged and unregistered. The strictest possible action must be taken against such people who should be treated as accomplices to these crimes.

There is a certain segment

in the force who will argue that the Indian police suffers because of the lack of attention. With all of these safeguards, catching criminals will be near impossible. This suggestion can only be scoffed at. On the first point of providing support to the police, I have written in the past as well, that the police suffers from a lack of funding, a lack of training, non-implementation of reforms etc. But here, too, police officers need to demand change from their political masters instead of cushy or powerful parties. Furthermore, political parties should be questioned why they have not implemented police reforms if indeed they are serious about tackling police violence and corruption.

On the second point of how the above-detailed safeguards prevent the police from doing their job, the fact is that these checks and balances only prevent actions that are violently criminal in nature. They are in place precisely so that actual criminals are apprehended on the basis of evidence and good police work, rather than due to a signed confession by a suspect beaten to a pulp. We must remember that in order to truly tackle the problem, we need to change the mindset and confront the criminals within and, therefore, harbour the same ambition that Sir Robert Mark had for the Metropolitan police, "To arrest more criminals than we employ."

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUNDBITE

Shashankji must be having mixed feelings from what could have been done for the promotion of cricket at the international level and what was done to the game during his tenure.

Former BCCI secretary —Niranjan Shah



Nepotism, favoritism and camps are different subjects. Even I have been a victim of nepotism but nobody speaks of that. I'm happy to see people from film institutes come to the forefront.

Actor — Saif Ali Khan



He (US President Donald Trump) just ended H-1B visas the rest of this year. That will not be in my administration

Democratic presidential candidate —Joe Biden



Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Bengaluru have reached their saturation. You (companies) can go to tier-II/tier-III cities where skilled manpower is already available.

Union Minister —Nitin Gadkari



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Damp squib

Sir — Given the kind of hype that was created by some television news channels, it seemed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was about to make some big announcements during his television address to the nation but it all ended as a damp squib. His decision to extend the free food grain scheme until November is a welcome step though. The move will help reassure the poor, who are unable to earn a livelihood as a result of the COVID-induced lockdown and the economic crisis that ensued. What is unfortunate is that the Prime Minister related this move to Hindu festivals. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi was quick to react, reminding him about Bakrid this month.

By mentioning only Hindu festivals, the Prime Minister seems to have sent a message that only poor Hindus go hungry. Hunger has no religion. For the poor, god can only appear in the form of bread. Such announcements should not be treated as election pitches for the Bihar and West Bengal polls.

N Nagarajan Secunderabad

Changing the rules of engagement

This refers to the editorial, "Ban on China apps" (July 1). By banning 59 video and file sharing Chinese apps, the Government has fired a warning shot to China that if there is no peace on the borders, there can be none in the cyberspace either. That the Government is using the internet as a retaliatory tool is a decisive break from the past, signifying that engagement rules with China are being rewritten once for all. The banning eroded these companies' valuations overnight. China's border aggressions and violation of privacy and security concerns by various agencies forced the Government's hand on this issue. Since all Chinese technology companies are the totalitarian state's extension, their apps and equipment are globally suspected to be breaching the host countries' data. More countries shall follow India's footsteps. Just a day after India's action, the US declared telecom gear from Huawei and ZTE as "national security threats." India has already asked BSNL not to use them to upgrade its network. Keeping in view prevalent sentiments, private operators, too, are likely to boycott them.

However, a ban on apps may not be enough as it only signals the Government's intent to retaliate. More needs to be done both in the short and long term.

SK Prabhakar Gurugram



Multidimensional retaliatory strategies — involving diplomacy and manufacturing reforms — are needed. According to a recent study, Chinese imports can be immediately reduced by up to 25 per cent by leveraging on the existing manufacturing base. Therefore, India must rationalise existing imports to not only bridge the trade deficit but also to warn the Middle Kingdom of the consequences and costs that shall follow its rampant expansionism.

Further action needed

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Ban on China apps" (July 1). The axing of Chinese apps by the Indian Government has undoubtedly hurt the dragon's ego because, within hours of the

action, it showed displeasure. Taking a jibe, the editor of *Global Times*, the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpiece, said, "Even if Chinese people want to boycott Indian products, they can't really find many Indian goods." This reveals their imperialistic trade mentality and an arrogant

assumption that without China, there is no global business or trade. As China gives first priority to trade, it has to be assumed that anything against its products and business will hurt it emotionally and economically.

Now, the Modi Government will have to execute the aat-

manirbhar Bharat scheme on a war footing. With the support of our huge population, it will have to make the dream of self-reliant India come true. With a large market, skilled labour pool and abundant resources — a big percentage of which is yet untapped — we can achieve that goal.

M Pradyu Kannur

Mumbai sets example

Sir — I welcome the timely decision of Mumbai's Lalbaughcha Raja Ganeshotsav Mandal to cancel the Ganesh Chaturthi festival in view of the Corona pandemic. A huge crowd of devotees gathers at Lalbagh and King circle to witness the unveiling of the most popular Sarvajanik Ganapati idol every year. However, this time, Mumbai being a COVID-19 hotspot, could witness a massive scaling down of celebrations. All Ganesh mandals must desist from keeping idols this year.

Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

An eco-friendly innovation

Bhoovastra serves the purpose of retaining the Earth's moisture, protecting plant roots and preventing soil erosion during a heavy downpour



KOTA SRIRAJ

As the monsoon season slowly envelops Kerala, the myriad canals in the State are undergoing a quiet but innovative makeover, with an eco-friendly cloth draped over their banks that is designed to stop erosion during the rains. This eco-friendly cloth called coir Bhoovastra is a natural cover made from coconut fibre that can be spread over the walls of canals, streams, farms and ponds. Bhoovastra serves the amazing purpose of retaining the Earth's moisture, protecting the roots of the plants while at the same time preventing the soil from eroding during a heavy downpour. The fabric has a life of five-six years, post which it automatically disintegrates and biodegrades, thereby providing rich compost to the soil, which in turn promotes lush vegetation growth. Kerala is one of the foremost States that has introduced Bhoovastra in a major way on scores of its canals and streams. God's own country, replete with its backwaters, idyllic ponds and other water-bodies is benefitting immensely from this innovative coir product. It has not only provided a fillip to the coir industry in the State, it has given employment to nearly two lakh families who are dependent on coir-making for their livelihood. Hence, Bhoovastra is an ideal combination of an eco-friendly initiative that protects the environment and also provides the benefit of a stable employment.

Bhoovastra is a geotextile product that has immense potential given its wide-ranging customisable applications and numerous benefits. The high tensile strength of the coir fabric is perfectly suitable for consolidating topsoil in steep embankments where heavy water flows and debris movement are common. Besides this, coir has excellent water absorbency capacity which helps in it acting as mulch on the surface and as a wick in the soil mantle.

With benefits such as these, it is quite surprising that the embankments and slopes adjoining water-bodies across the country are yet to see Bhoovastra as a common feature, despite the fact that we are battling with the problem of soil degradation. Soil erosion is a major problem for the farmers of the country as it reduces soil fertility, which in turn negatively hits crop yields and forces growers to use more fertilisers, further harming the environment. Erosion of soil also sends soil-laden water downstream, which can create heavy layers of sediments that prevent streams and rivers from flowing smoothly and can eventually lead to flooding.

As soil erosion degrades land, it supports fewer plants that absorb climate-warming carbon dioxide. According to experts, soil could insulate enough greenhouse gases in a year to equal about five per cent of all yearly emissions. Better land management through the use of innovative products like the Bhoovastra can help keep soil intact so that it can grow more carbon-absorbing vegetation.

So, this lack of interest in using Bhoovastra to save precious soil, despite the fact that the green movement and demand for natural products is rising by the day across the world and in India, is puzzling. How come, when we have such a simple and eco-friendly solution to the huge problem of soil erosion, we are not talking about it or embracing it the way we should?

Given an opportunity, geotextiles such as Bhoovastra can play a stellar role in turning the clock back on degraded and eroded lands and help restore riparian and terrestrial habitats. The relatively high monetary and ecological cost of gravel, cement and other non-environmentally friendly building materials makes geotextiles the obvious choice for public work projects, especially when they involve rivers and other water bodies. Developed nations have already been leveraging the benefits of geotextiles, especially coir nets such as Bhoovastra for the last three decades. India, in fact, has been one of the largest exporters of coir geotextile products, with nearly 60 per cent of its coir production being exported to about 80 countries through a network of nearly 200 exporters.

Sadly, the domestic utilisation of geotextiles stays uninspiring. India produces a whopping 12,500 million coconuts and coir production is about 3,69,400 metric tonnes. However, husk utilisation is dismal at only 36 per cent, with the rest being used as polluting fuel or just being wasted. It is a mystery as to why the Government has not extracted the full potential of the coir industry in India. As it is, State-run entities such as the Coir Board are not able to hit a high gear either in marketing, sales or product branding and innovation due to bureaucratic hurdles or lethargy. On top of this, the handloom nature of the sector intuitively inhibits mass production, which in turn stunts growth possibilities. Given the brilliant product potential and abundance of raw material, it is time for the coir industry to become one of the most profitable industries of the country. For this to happen, the Government must work on mindsets and create awareness as well. For instance, the civil engineering profession currently focusses less on eco-friendly approaches for construction and more on the usage of brick and mortar. This needs to change. The use of organic and eco-friendly products like the Bhoovastra must be comprehensively implemented. This initiative can not only change the manner in which we conserve our water bodies and surrounding soil but more importantly can alter the way we perceive coir while providing jobs in a difficult economy.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

IF ANYONE DREAMS OF UNSEATING THE PRIME MINISTER (OF NEPAL) FOR PUBLISHING THE MAP AND INCLUDING IT IN THE CONSTITUTION, DON'T EVEN THINK OF IT.

—NEPALESE PRIME MINISTER
KP SHARMA OLI



NOT INDIA, IT IS ME WHO IS DEMANDING YOUR RESIGNATION. YOU MUST FURNISH PROOF OF SUCH IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS.

—CHAIRMAN OF THE NEPAL COMMUNIST PARTY
PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL 'PRACHANDA'

It's not that elementary

Not being able to establish the source of a disease is not surprising, especially in a country where people are divided by gender norms and socio-economic classes



INDRANIL DE

The recent revelation made through a research paper published by William Joe in the *Journal of Global Health Science* raises alerts about the deficiencies of tracing Coronavirus victims in a divided society. The paper states that as of May, COVID-19 cases in men were at 66 per cent in India as compared to 34 per cent in women. However, the COVID-19 Case Fatality Rate (CFR) is 2.9 per cent for men and 3.9 per cent for women in the country. Interestingly, this is completely different from the worldwide scenario. According to UK Research and Innovation, a quasi-autonomous NGO, data from 18 countries evince that both men and women have an equal share of COVID-19 cases, except for Pakistan. Furthermore, men diagnosed with COVID-19 are more likely to die than women. These comparisons raise questions whether we are tracing and testing all social groups adequately. Women generally have a stronger immune system than men. However, there could be different social factors which impact women both favourably and adversely. Since, in a patriarchal social system women don't venture out of the home as much as men, they are also less likely to get infected. This may be the reason why in India and Pakistan more men are found to be infected than women. On the other hand, as patriarchal norms consider the male as the primary agent for productive activity, women are often ignored at home and society at large. This deprivation may reduce their access to healthcare as compared to men. They would not be given medical care unless seriously ill. This could increase their fatality rate as compared to men in India. Nevertheless, there could be another reason for the higher CFR in women. Maybe the actual number of women infected is much higher than what is being reported. If the number of infected women would have been higher, then the death rate of women due to COVID-19 would have decreased because they would have been treated. There is a major possibility that identification of infected women may not be happening due to inefficient functioning of the contact tracing mechanism.

Contact tracing is the process in public health through which the people who may have come into contact with an infected person are identified. Through the contact tracing process, the first set of people that the patient came into contact with are identified as the primary contact. Similarly, the first set of people that the primary contacts come into contact with are identified as secondary contacts. Through tracing of the primary and secondary contacts of suspected and confirmed cases, it is possible to track the spread and source of infection. According to the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the symptoms of Coronavirus infection may be as simple as fatigue, diarrhoea and nausea. It is important to start contact tracing without waiting for the test results.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins found that the chances of getting false negative results are higher in the early stages of the infection. Hence, a negative test does not guarantee that the person is not infected. And they are still able to spread the virus. Improper contact tracing may be the reason that in India there were many cases where it was not possible to find the source of the infection.

The Health Ministry is emphasising on the need for aggressive contact testing. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), there is a wide variation among the States with regard to the number of contacts traced. It ranges from less than 25 to more than 75 per infected COVID-19 case. The infected patients are in gen-

“ ONLY INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CONTACTS TRACED PER INFECTED OR SUSPECTED INDIVIDUAL IS NOT THE SOLUTION. IT MUST BE DONE OVER A FEW WAVES AND MUST ADEQUATELY COVER ALL CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE. IF NOT DONE PROPERLY, THE OUTBREAK OF THE DISEASE WOULD BE LURKING IN SOME OTHER CORNER OF SOCIETY. ONLY TO TAKE US BY SURPRISE LATER ”



eral reluctant to reveal their contacts or the authorities are not nudging them enough to provide their contacts. Even a State like Karnataka, which has been canvassed as a successful State for contact tracing, is increasingly finding infections from unknown sources. This is increasing the spread of the infection due to delayed detection.

To be honest, not being able to establish the source of a disease is not surprising, especially in a country where people are divided by gender norms and socio-economic classes. These deficiencies are akin to the problems of the respondent-driven sampling (RDS) method of data collection. RDS is applied when the population is "hidden." A hidden population may include people at the risk of contracting HIV or a group of injected drug users. The population may remain hidden due to privacy concerns and is rarely found among the general population. This is very similar to suspected Coronavirus infected persons. People may not be willing to get identified in public due to privacy concerns and the fear of adverse social repercussions. The number of COVID-19 infected until now is minuscule as compared to the population of the country. RDS assumes that the best way to access the hidden population is through their own peers. The initial sample individual is asked about the contact of their peers and thus contact tracing leads to revelation of the hidden population.

Three major deficiencies in this method of sampling are pertinent in the context of detection of Coronavirus infected persons. They are the problems of non-cooperative referrals, masking and inbreeding. The infected individual may not get the exact contacts of the people they have interacted with. The infected individual may attempt to mask the contacts as there are privacy concerns. They may avoid mentioning their close relative or loved ones with whom they have come in close contact. Furthermore, in a society divided by gender norms and

socio-economic classes, people may select contacts primarily from the same gender and socio-economic class. A street vendor or bus conductor, if infected, may not be able to provide contacts of customers as they would refuse to share their contacts. A security guard would not be able to provide contacts of the people s/he interacted with. Moreover, all of them would be extremely uncomfortable in sharing contacts of people they are dependent on for their livelihood. They may only share contacts of people belonging to a similar socio-economic class as theirs and that, too, of the same gender. The men would hesitate to share the contacts of female family members or co-workers and vice versa.

In the RDS system of data collection the problem of masking is resolved through providing incentives to divulge the contacts of peers. In the fight against the Coronavirus, offering incentives to unmask the hidden population may be financially challenging. There could be two mechanisms through which it can be tackled. People should be made aware of the benefits of disclosing their contacts through public campaigns. As a result, those infected would be comfortable in revealing their contacts and the contacted individuals themselves would not be upset over being identified. It would rather come out as an incentive for those infected to get their near and dear ones examined and also an incentive for the contacts to get tested on time. Thus, the problem of non-cooperation of the referrals may also be resolved to a large extent. Maintaining the contact details of people in close contact may be made mandatory by local authorities in shopping complexes and other public spaces. Contact verification may become necessary if individuals provide wrong information. Deliberate sharing of wrong contacts may be penalised as well.

The problem of inbreeding may be resolved through conducting the contact tracing exercise over several rounds. For example, if an infected woman provides

the contact of one man along with five women contacts, then to overcome the inbreeding problem, the man's contacts may be traced further assiduously. This is very similar to tracing the secondary and tertiary contacts but with an emphasis on tracing the odd ones in the whole contact list. Similarly, tracing people from a different socio-economic background as compared to the majority of the contact list should be given adequate attention. At present, the disaggregated data on primary and secondary contact tracing is not available in most of the States. Douglas Heckathorn, a social scientist from Cornell University who perfected the RDS methodology, suggested three to five waves of contact tracing to get rid of the problem of inbreeding.

Contact tracing is a more efficient methodology than random testing given the rarity of the infection in the population till date. Contact tracing, on the one hand, economises testing facilities and on the other hand, identifies the hidden population infected with the virus. The more the delay in reaching suspected individuals, the higher is the future burden of economic and social cost. Hence, non-cooperation of referrals should be dealt with through public campaigns. The danger of the contact tracing mechanism is that if masking and inbreeding are not dealt with adequately, then we would end up tracing and testing only one kind of a population. The initial sample would determine the prospective samples, unless infected ones are sensitised about the importance of unmasking the contacts and contact tracing is done for few rounds down the line of contact trail.

Only increasing the number of contacts traced per infected or suspected individual is not the solution. It must be done over a few waves and must adequately cover all categories of people. If not done properly, the outbreak of the disease would be lurking in some other corner of society, only to take us by surprise later.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Institute of Rural Management, Anand)

Put the migrant workers front and centre

Since the workers are the foundation of our economy which cannot grow without their toil, there is a need to implement the existing laws seriously to protect their rights



ONKAR NATH

While announcing the nationwide lockdown on March 24, the Prime Minister (PM) had exhorted all Indians to fight against the spread of the Coronavirus. Various State Governments had also come forward in support of the PM's appeal and people were assured that their needs would be taken care of during the pandemic. The Centre and many States repeatedly touted how the lockdown would help in containing the spread of COVID-19 and how it was good for all the citizens.

However, amid all this clamour, the nation forgot the migrant workers who had laid the foundation of the

Indian economy with their toil, blood and sweat. While tall claims about the good work being done by the Government were being made on various television channels, these workers started marching to their native places. The heart-wrenching images of migrant workers along with their women and children walking on foot, some hundreds of kilometres away, began to surface in the media.

Some of them lost their lives due to hunger and thirst on the way, while some became victims of road accidents and a few were overrun by trains. All these incidents have exposed not only the hollowness of our system but our societal values which, quite often, are trumpeted in great measure.

The sequence of events indicated that cogent planning was not in place from the word go. The migrant labourers did not start their journeys back home suddenly. Thrown out of work by unscrupulous business and factory owners, they patiently waited for help and stood for long hours in queues to

get some food. They waited for things to get better but that did not happen. They were harassed by landlords for rent, despite the fact that they did not have adequate money even for their day-to-day survival.

The Government brought back well-heeled Indians for free from foreign countries under the Vande Bharat Mission. It brought back stranded students from Kota in Rajasthan, including people from various parts of the country in special buses. Similarly, the Centre helped many Indians to fly to countries like England, US, Canada and Australia. All this was not possible without proper prioritisation, efforts and coordination with State Governments. But there was no such planning and urgency to help the poor migrant workers. Since there is no dearth of trains at the disposal of the Centre, free services should have been provided to take migrant workers to their home States without wasting much time. The tug of war between the Railway Ministry and State

Governments for many days over the issue of payment of 15 per cent of the fare by the latter was avoidable. While most of the State Governments were found fighting among themselves over the issue of migrant workers, the Centre remained a mute spectator, confined to issuing paper guidelines rather than handling the crisis decisively by ensuring camaraderie among them.

As it is India is fighting a two-front battle. One against the virus and the other against poverty, which we could not eradicate even after 70 years of Independence. India's fight on these two fronts contradicts its claims of being a world leader (*vishava guru*) thinking of the welfare of the world (*vishav kalyan*) as also its recent rhetoric of making India a \$5 trillion economy. Often, such rhetoric does not reflect ground realities. In this backdrop, asking for donations for the PM CARES Fund during COVID-19 is certainly a matter of contradiction in terms.

The Centre's decision to impose a

lockdown was not based on sudden developments. Actually, India had received clear signals about COVID-19 during January-February from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and from other countries, especially China. But much like the decision to announce demonetisation in 2016 with just a four-hour notice, the nationwide lockdown was also announced just as suddenly. Instead of a four-hour notice, at least four days were needed to enable all stakeholders viz; the Centre, State Governments, all establishments, the industry, supply chains and the common people to make appropriate arrangements to avoid panic, major inconvenience and save precious lives.

It is imperative here to ponder over the role of the Supreme Court, which can issue directions to the Government to take appropriate action on an urgent basis in any serious matter of public concern. The apex court, however, did not show any such concern on the issue of migrant workers for the first two

months despite Public Interest Litigations being filed. But after a few persons approached the court citing the deteriorating condition of migrants, the Supreme Court swung into action by directing the Centre and State Governments to provide food, shelter and transportation free of cost to the migrants. Timely, proactive action by the apex court could have helped in addressing the problem before it reached such massive proportions.

Most of the States for whose development the migrant workers had made huge contributions did not come to their rescue at the time of need. Their home States, too, were hesitant to accept them as they feared the spread of the virus. This is despite the fact that they, too, had benefited from the remittances sent home by the workers. Clearly, there were no takers for the hapless migrants, though no State is capable of running its economic activities without them.

The Parliament has passed many Acts such as the Inter-State Migrant

Workers Act and Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, to take care of the welfare of these workers. Had these legislations been implemented seriously, there would not have been much difficulty in taking care of the migrant workers.

Moreover, money available under the Workers' Welfare Fund and PM CARES Fund could have been utilised to send these workers home in a dignified manner without putting them through such hardship and exposing them further to the pandemic.

Since the workers are the foundation of our economy and it cannot grow without their toil and sweat, there is a need to implement the existing laws seriously to protect their rights and address their problems. This will enable them to lead a better life with a sense of dignity. It is the least we can do for them.

(The writer is a former Additional Deputy CAG)

HONG KONG CITIZENSHIP PLAN

China threatens retaliation against UK

London, United Kingdom: China warned Britain on Thursday it could retaliate with "corresponding measures" for London's decision to extend a broader path to citizenship for the residents of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong protester arrested on suspicion of stabbing police

Hong Kong: Hong Kong police arrested a man onboard a London-bound flight early Thursday morning on suspicion of stabbing a police officer during protests of the semi-autonomous Chinese territory's new security law, officials said.

Aus 'actively considering' offer of safe haven to Hongkongers, says PM

Melbourne: Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Thursday said Australia was "actively considering" an offer of safe haven to Hong Kong residents threatened by the imposition of a controversial security law by China that gave it sweeping powers over the former British territory.

China, pro-Beijing activists condemn 'foreign meddling' in Hong Kong

Hong Kong: China's government and pro-Beijing activists in Hong Kong condemned what they called foreign meddling in the territory's affairs on Thursday, as countries moved to offer Hong Kongers refuge and impose sanctions on China over a new security law.

Daniel Pearl's killers custody extended for 3 more months

PTI ■ KARACHI: Pakistan's Sindh province Government on Thursday extended for another three months the custody of British-born al-Qaeda leader Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and his three aides whose sentences in the abduction and murder of US journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 were overturned in April.

Landslide at Myanmar jade mine kills at least 162

Hpakant (Myanmar): At least 162 people were killed on Thursday in a landslide at a jade mine in northern Myanmar, the worst in a series of deadly accidents at such sites in recent years that critics blame on the government's failure to take action against unsafe conditions.



People gather near the bodies of victims of a landslide near a jade mining area in Hpakant, Kachin state, northern Myanmar on Thursday

Those taking part in the recovery operations, which were suspended after dark, included the army and other government units and local volunteers.

The London-based environmental watchdog Global Witness said the accident "is a damning indictment of the government's failure to curb reckless and irresponsible mining practices in Kachin state's jade mines."

OFFICE THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) ELECTRIC DIVISION JAMMU. NOTICE INVITING TENDER e-NITNo.EDJ/29of 2020-21 Dated 30-06-2020

The Myanmar Fire Service Department, which coordinates rescues and other emergency services, announced about 12 hours after the morning disaster that 162 bodies were recovered from the landslide in Hpakant, the center of the world's biggest and most lucrative jade mining industry.

rough and remote area in Kachin state, 950 kilometers (600 miles) north of Myanmar's biggest city, Yangon.

injured people were taken to hospitals. The tolls announced by other state agencies and media lagged behind the fire agency, which was most closely involved. An unknown number of people are feared missing.

Appeal for Identification



General public is hereby informed that one person Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 45 Years, Height: 5'6", Sex: Male, Complexion: Shallow, Built: Medium, Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow Black Linedar T-Shirt, Black Payjama, Blue shoes in feet, Place of Recovery: Found dead on 19.06.2020 at Patel Park, Patel Nagar, Delhi

78% of voters back extending Putin's rule

Moscow: Almost 78% of voters in Russia have approved amendments to the country's constitution that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power until 2036, Russian election officials said on Thursday after all the votes were counted.

Russia denies supplying weapons to Taliban

Moscow: Russia's Foreign Ministry said Thursday that Moscow has never delivered weapons to the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, countering US allegations.

Lawmakers to get classified briefing on Russia bounty intel

Washington: US officials will provide a classified briefing for congressional leaders Thursday about intelligence assessment that Russia offered bounties for killing US troops in Afghanistan.

New Zealand's Health Minister resigns after virus blunders

Wellington (New Zealand): New Zealand's health minister resigned Thursday following a series of personal blunders during the coronavirus pandemic.

746 held as UK security officials bust top secret crime chatroom in major operation

London: A top secret encrypted communications system used by criminals to trade drugs and guns has been busted in a joint operation carried out by UK security officials, resulting in 746 arrests.

Johnson's father flies to Greece despite ban

London: The father of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is facing criticism for travelling to Greece despite UK government advice against international travel and a Greek ban on flights from Britain.

Ban gives tobacco illegal drug status in South Africa

Cape Town: The message was dropped into a WhatsApp group used by suburban moms in South Africa. Amid the grumblings over homeschooling during lockdown, one mom went off topic: "Does anyone know where to get illegal cigarettes? I just need a few. I'm desperate."

CENTRAL RAILWAY APP BASED ELECTRIC THREE WHEELER SERVICES. No. BB/C/289/P&P/TDR/06 sites/2020. Date: 30.06.2020. Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mumbai Division, CSMT Mumbai.

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to bring to the notice of the general public notice that two ID card Mr. Denesh Kumar and Mr. Vaswanand issue by ICICI Bank Ltd. having ID card no. 20751 and 16282.

WESTERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM. Tender No.: 29204990D, Dated: 02.06.2020. Description: PPE-Innerwear. Qty: 30,000. Revised Due date: 10.07.2020. EMD: ₹ 8,06,400/-

EASTERN RAILWAY Bidding Tender Notice No.: 01HWHCONIL of 2020-21 for e-tendering. Date: 29.06.2020. Open Tender Notice for e-tendering is invited by Dy. Chief Engineer / Con/II/Eastern Railway, Howrah, 371 No. New Railway Office, Telkolghat, Howrah-711101 from reputed contractors with sufficient experience, financial capability and having proper and requisite resources and experience for the following work.

World Bank grants \$750 mn support to small biz

Lauds Govt's MSME package

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The World Bank has said it will provide a USD 750 million budget support to 15 lakh MSMEs to increase liquidity access for viable small businesses impacted by Covid-19.

Lauding the government's ₹3.7 lakh crore MSME support package under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', World Bank Country Director in India Junaid Ahmad on Wednesday said the RBI also has used different instruments to infuse liquidity in the market either through banks or SIDBI.

The USD 750 million support is in addition to the USD 2 billion funding the World

Bank has already announced for the social and health sector. This takes the total lending to India due to Covid-19 to USD 2.75 billion within three months.

"The World Bank's MSME Emergency Response program will address the immediate liquidity and credit needs of some 1.5 million viable MSMEs to help them withstand the impact of the current shock and protect millions of jobs," the World Bank said in a statement.

The MSME funding is under the multilateral lender's Development Policy Loan, which is a direct budget support.

"In development policy loans, we do not fund a specific expenditure... We give direct budget support when the Government puts together policy framework that we believe

deserve support," Ahmad said.

He said the Government steps would help unlock liquidity for MSMEs, strengthen NBFCs and small finance banks and enable inclusive access to financing.

"The Government has piggybacked on guaranteed systems... To de-risk lending to MSMEs. By de-risking, the government is taking on a bit of risk themselves and in time of crisis, this is exactly what you want the government to do," Ahmad told reporters.

During the 2020 fiscal (July 2019-June 2020), World Bank has extended USD 5.13 billion loans to India -- which is the highest in a decade.

This includes USD 2.75 billion given in three months in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Government had in May announced a support

package of ₹ 3.70 lakh crore for the MSME sector, which included Rs 3 lakh crore collateral-free loans for small businesses.

Ahmad said the government has infused 1.5 per cent of GDP into the MSME sector between monetary and fiscal policies and the World Bank funding would support the operation.

"Our money is not a line of credit... It is a budget injection to say that this story line, this whole package is something that the World Bank is supporting, signalling to the market that this is the one which really strengthens economic stabilisation..."

"This is about supporting and signalling a framework of liquidity de-risked into the hands of MSMEs at a time when you need to ensure that viable MSMEs survive and do

not fall victim to the downturn," he said.

Ahmad said in the next stage of the World Bank's assistance programme for micro, small and medium businesses, the multilateral lender would engage with the MSME Ministry and states to ensure capacity development at cluster level.

"World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved a USD 750 million MSME Emergency Response program to support increased flow of finance into the hands of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis," the World Bank said.

Earlier, the lender had approved a funding of USD 1 billion each for the social and health sector for support during the pandemic.

Markets sustain momentum amid global rally; IT, auto stocks spurt

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices defied gravity for the second straight day on Thursday, largely in tandem with global markets which ticked higher following positive results from a coronavirus vaccine trial.

A sharp recovery in the rupee added to the momentum, traders said.

After soaring 600 points during the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 429.25 points, or 1.21 per cent, higher at 35,843.70.

The NSE Nifty surged 121.65 points, or 1.17 per cent, to close at 10,551.70.

M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, jumping 6.05 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Steel, HCL Tech, Infosys and TCS.

On the other hand, Axis Bank, HUL, Kotak Bank, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel tumbled up to 2.24 per cent.

Global equities marched higher after Germany's BioNTech and US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer reported positive preliminary results from a joint project for a potential Covid-19 vaccine.

"The Indian indices traded in sync with global cues and ended the day with gains. The gains were supported by IT and Auto indices.

Global indices were positive following news of encour-



India needs ₹50-60 lakh cr foreign investments to bolster coronavirus-hit economy: Gadkari

New Delhi: India needs foreign direct investments worth ₹50 to 60 lakh crore and the money can be tapped mainly through infrastructure projects as well as MSME sector to accelerate the wheels of coronavirus-hit economy, according to Union minister Nitin Gadkari.

Emphasising that at this juncture Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is the need of the hour, the senior minister said such funds would benefit the country as there is a need for pumping in liquidity into the market. Economic activities have been significantly disrupted in the wake of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns that were in place to curb spreading of infections.

"Country at this juncture needs liquidity. Without liquidity our economy's wheel will not accelerate... ₹50-60 lakh crore foreign investment is needed in the country under present circumstances to boost the economy," the Road Transport, Highways and MSME Minister told PTI in an interview.

Infrastructure sector including highways, airports, inland waterways, railways, logistic parks, broad gauge and metro, apart from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

(MSMEs) can attract large scale foreign investment, he noted.

"FDI in MSME, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and banks are needed... In the highways sector, we are trying to bring foreign investment," he said.

Gadkari further said that talks are on with investors from Dubai and the US for various sectors, including MSMEs.

"Some MSMEs are already listed on the BSE. I have talked to investors in Dubai and the US to come and invest in such MSMEs based on their three-year turnover, GST track record, IT record and good rating.

Investing in these can result in rich dividends as these do exports also," he said.

"We need to boost our technology for increasing growth and need to focus on enhancing exports. The Prime Minister's thrust is also on reducing dependence on imports and boosting exports. In this infrastructure can play a crucial role," he said.

While noting that the present situation is very serious as the entire world is facing problems, Gadkari stressed on the need to work on a war-footing basis on infrastructure front.

Further, the minister noted that public private partnerships can help harness huge

funds and would have a cascading impact by generating more employment and boosting the economy.

Besides, the minister said that 22 green highways were being built, including the Rs 1 lakh crore Delhi-Mumbai Expressway on a new alignment. Citing the example of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, he said talks were on with the Maharashtra government to shift about 1.5 lakh leather workers to Thane in a proposed leather cluster along the highway which will have the most modern facilities including schools and hospitals besides affordable housing under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

"The development of backward area will alleviate poverty and accelerate development. Socio-economic thought is behind this," he said.

The Centre has announced Rs 20 lakh crore economic stimulus package, including Rs 8.01 lakh crore of liquidity measures announced by the Reserve Bank since March.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY), a free ration scheme, would be extended for 80 crore people till the November end. PTI

RBI asks banks to reclassify MSMEs as per revised criteria

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI has asked banks, financial institutions and NBFCs to reclassify micro, small and medium enterprises on the basis of the new criteria.

Last month, the government notified new criteria for classification of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) on the basis of turnover and investment in plant and machinery.

"We advise you to initiate necessary action for reclassification of enterprises as per the new definition w.e.f July 1, 2020 and issue necessary instructions to your branches/controlling offices in this regard, at the earliest," RBI said in a communication to banks, financial institutions and non banking financial companies (NBFCs).

After 14 years since the MSME Development Act came into existence in 2006, a revision in MSME definition was announced in the Atmanirbhar Bharat package on May 13.

The Reserve Bank further said in case of an upward change in terms of investment

in plant and machinery or equipment or turnover or both, and consequent re-classification, an enterprise will maintain its prevailing status till expiry of one year from the close of the year of registration.

As per the revised definition, an enterprise is micro where the investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹1 crore and turnover does not cross ₹5 crore.

An enterprise is now classified as small enterprise, where the investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹10 crore and turnover is not over ₹50 crore.

For medium enterprise, as per the new classification, the investment in plant and machinery or equipment should not exceed ₹50 crore and turnover should be below ₹250 crore.

US adds 4.8 million jobs as unemployment falls to 11.1%

AP ■ WASHINGTON

U.S. employers added a substantial 4.8 million jobs in June, and the unemployment rate fell to 11.1%, as the job market improved for a second straight month yet still remained far short of regaining the colossal losses it suffered this spring.

The nation has now recovered roughly one-third of the 22 million jobs it lost to the pandemic recession. And with confirmed coronavirus cases spiking across the Sun Belt states, a range of evidence suggests that a job market recovery may be stalling. In those states and elsewhere, some restaurants, bars and other retailers that had re-opened are being forced to close again.

The re-closings are keeping layoffs elevated: The number of Americans who sought unemployment benefits barely fell last week to 1.47 million. Though that weekly figure has declined steadily since peaking in late March, it's still more than double the pre-pandemic peak set in 1982. And the total number of people receiving jobless aid remains at a sizeable 19 million.

California has re-closed bars, theaters and indoor restaurant dining across most of the state. Florida has also re-closed bars and beaches. Texas has reversed some of its efforts to reopen its economy. New York has paused its plans to allow indoor dining.

Credit and debit card data tracked by JPMorgan Chase show that consumers reduced their spending last week after having increased it steadily in late April and May. The reversal has occurred both in states that have reported surges in Covid-19 and in less affected states, said Jesse Edgerton, an economist at J.P. Morgan.

Global stocks rise on vaccine hopes, ahead of US jobs data

Beijing: Global stock markets and Wall Street futures rose Thursday on hopes for the development of a coronavirus vaccine and ahead of the release of monthly US jobs data. Investors were encouraged after Pfizer and BioNTech announced preliminary data from a vaccine test, one of a series being carried out by global developers.

At the same time, the populous American states of California and Texas reported daily record highs in new cases.

"Vaccine hopes, while welcome, fall short of guaranteeing a V-shaped recovery," Mizuho Bank said in a report. In Europe, the FTSE 100 in London rose 1% to 6,219 and Frankfurt's DAX gained 2% to 12,504. The CAC 40 in Paris advanced 1.7% to 5,011.

On Wall Street, the future for the benchmark Standard &

Poor's 500 index was up 0.8% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 1%.

The US labour market report is expected to show a gain of about 3 million jobs in June — a record high — and a drop in the unemployment rate of a full percentage point to 12.3%. Even so, the combined job growth for May and June would recover only a fraction of the 22 million jobs that were lost in March and April, when the virus forced business shutdowns and layoffs across the country.

Thursday's figure will likely set the tone in financial markets ahead of a long holiday weekend in the United States. In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index rose 2.1% to 3,090.57 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo added 0.1% to 22,145.96. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong gained 2.8% to 25,124.19. AP

UPI hits all-time high with 1.34 bn transactions in June

New Delhi: Payments on Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in June hit an all-time high of 1.34 billion in terms of volume with transactions worth nearly ₹ 2.62 lakh crore, as per National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) data.

On a month-on-month basis it registered a 8.94 per cent growth from 1.23 billion in May.

UPI payments had fell to 999.57 million in terms of volume with transactions worth ₹ 1.51 lakh crore in April, following the coronavirus-induced lockdown that halted almost all services, except essentials.

Online payments slowly gathered pace from May, with staggered opening of the economy. In May, the number of UPI transactions stood at 1.23 billion valued at ₹ 2.18 lakh crore, showed the NPCI data. PTI

Bank credit grows 6.18 %, deposits 11 %: RBI data

Mumbai: Bank credit and deposits grew 6.18 per cent and 11 per cent to ₹102.45 lakh crore and ₹138.67 lakh crore, respectively, in the fortnight ended June 19, according to the RBI.

In the fortnight ended June 21, 2019, bank credit had stood at ₹96.48 lakh crore and deposits at ₹124.92 lakh crore. In the previous fortnight that ended on June 5 this year, advances had grown 6.24 per cent and deposits by 11.28 per cent. Rating agency Crisil in a recent report said bank credit growth is likely to nosedive to a multi-decadal low of 0-1 per cent in 2020-21 as economic activity is sharply impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. PTI

Rupee spurts to 3-month high amid optimism over Covid vaccine

Mumbai: The rupee surged by 56 paise to close at more than three-month high of 75.04 against the US dollar on Thursday tracking weakness in the greenback and gains in domestic equities amid optimism over potential Covid-19 vaccine. Forex traders said investors turned to riskier currencies and assets after Pfizer reported encouraging vaccine test results.

The rupee opened at 75.51 against the US dollar and gained further ground to touch a day's high of 74.99. The local unit settled at 75.04 against the US dollar, up 56 paise over its previous close. This is the highest closing level since March 27 when the rupee had settled at 74.89.

It had settled at 75.60 against the greenback on Wednesday. The rupee logged its "biggest single-day gain since April 23, boosted by gains in the domestic equity market amid weakness in the greenback," Devarsh Vakil, Deputy Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities said.

"Market participants also expected dollar inflows while state-run banks remained on the sideline. Moreover, investor sentiment strengthened further after Pfizer reported encouraging vaccine test results," he said.

The first of four experimental Covid-19 vaccines being tested by Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech showed encouraging results in very early testing of 45 people, the companies said on Wednesday. PTI

Coal India arm BCCL says no impact of strike; union leaders claim otherwise

D h a n b a d / R a m g a r h (Jharkhand): Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL), a subsidiary of Coal India, on Thursday said there was no impact of the three-day strike called by different trade unions to protest against the Government's decision to allow commercial mining of coal.

Another Coal India arm, Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) said mining through outsourcing companies remained unaffected.

However, the striking trade union leaders claimed that the strike impacted coal mining in the two subsidiaries of Coal India Ltd. Trade unions went ahead with their three-day strike against commercial mining in the coal sector after talks with Coal and Mining Minister Pralhad Joshi had failed on Wednesday.

A notice issued by the public relations department of BCCL said there was no impact of the strike in the first shift as all miners marked their attendance and resumed work as scheduled.

For the protection of miners, the colliery management

has deployed CISF personnel in large numbers and intensified patrolling in the area to foil any attempt of trade union leaders to stop miners from joining duty, sources in the BCCL said.

The General Manager of CCL's Barka-Sayal and officiating GM of Argada command area, Amresh Singh, said "disruption of coal has been affected due to the strike, but coal mining via outsourcing private companies remained unaffected".

Rashtriya Colliery Mazdoor Sangh (RCMS) General Secretary AK Jha said that in the first shift, which began at 6 am, the miners reached the colliery but did not join the work.

"Production has been hampered in all the collieries of the BCCL and the Eastern Coalfields Limited," he claimed.

Rajendra Singh Chandel, the Rashtriya Pragatishil Workers Union (RPWU), affiliated to CITU, which is leading the strike in Ramgarh district, claimed that coal production and dispatch have been affected as the coal workers extended support to the strike. PTI

ES Ranganathan takes charge as GAIL Director (Marketing)

New Delhi: ES Ranganathan on Thursday assumed charge as Director (Marketing) of GAIL (India) Limited.

An Instrumentation & Control Engineer from NSS College of Engineering, Palghat in Kerala, Ranganathan is an MBA with specialization in Marketing. He has close to 35 years of rich and diverse experience in Oil & Gas sector, particularly in Project Execution along with Operation & Maintenance of Natural Gas pipelines, Gas Marketing, Business Development and Business Information Systems entailing engineering and planning, process management, scope management, resource management, schedule management, Enterprise Resource

leveraging technology for business solutions, Ranganathan played a pioneering role in using technology towards SMART working in the field of O&M and project Management.

As Managing Director, IGL, Ranganathan spearheaded the expansion of operations into Haryana, UP and Rajasthan and also entered in an international foray into New Yangon Project in Myanmar. He is actively involved in various industry forums in India and overseas, including Member Technical of Fluid Control and Research Institute, Member of Coordination Team of Indian Standards for Metering Design and Construction of Bureau of Indian Standards.



Planning, Technology Upgradation, Vendor Management and Quality Assurance.

Prior to his appointment as Director (Marketing), Ranganathan served as Managing Director, Indraprastha Gas Limited and Executive Director (Corporate O&M), GAIL and was instrumental in commissioning Dahej-Vijaipur, Vijaipur-Dadri and Bawana Nangal Pipeline Projects. A firm believer in

Information Technology Development Agency (I.T.D.A.) (Department of IT, Government of Uttarakhand)
 H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
 Telephones : 0135-2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763508
 CIN No. UJ40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

Ref: 7517DAD/Office/2020 Date: 02/07/2020
 Tender Notice No. 02/ITDA-PRJ/DEPT/2020-Project dated 02/07/2020
 Notice of Invitation for e-Tender

Selection of Service Provider for Procurement of Smart Phones & Tablet
 RFP (Request for Proposal) is being issued by ITDA, Department of IT, Uttarakhand to the reputed IT companies meeting the qualification criteria, for Selection of Service Provider (SP) for Procurement of Smart Phones & Tablet. The RFP document can be downloaded from www.ujvn.gov.in from 02/07/2020 (16:00 Hrs). The tender document fee of Rs 10000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only) through demand draft (non-refundable) favouring 'Director, ITDA' payable at Dehradun should be submitted along with the Bid. The parties willing to participate in the bidding will have to apply through the Electronic Tendering Procedure (e-Tendering) as per the guidelines issued by Government of Uttarakhand available on the above mentioned website under the link "Bidders Manual Kit".
 Director/ITDA reserves the right to cancel the tender at any point of time, without assigning any reason therefor.
 DIRECTOR

UJVN LTD.
 H.O.: 'UJJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
 Telephones : 0135-2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763508
 CIN No. UJ40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

Letter No. 416 e-Tender Notice Dated 02.07.2020
 Office of Executive Engineer (Maint.), Khodri Power Station, Dakpathar (Dehradun), invites online tenders for following work:
Tender No: 5/EE(Maint.)/Khodri/2020-21- Automation of pumps for Dewatering & Drainage, gland and drinking water system at Khodri Powerhouse
 Estimated cost : Rs. 19,52,000/-
 Earnest money deposit : Rs. 60,000/-
 Tender Fee : Rs. 1180/-
 Date of availability of tender on website : 02.07.2020 from 18:00 hrs.
 Last date for submission of bid on website : 23.07.2020 up to 16:00 hrs.
 Last date of submission of hard copy of bid : 24.07.2020 up to 16:00 hrs.
 Date of opening of bid : 25.07.2020 at 11:00 hrs.
 For downloading tender documents and other details, please visit e-procurement portal "https://uktenders.gov.in"
 Executive Engineer(Maint), Khodri
 "Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one male was found dead on 29.06.2020 at Angoori Bagh Cut Footpath, Near Market, Delhi in the area of PS Kotwali, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 56A u/s 174 CrPC, Dated 29.06.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi. The description of the dead body is given as under:
Name: Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** about 55-60 years, **Height:** 5' **Feet, Face:** Flat, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Build:** Medium, **White Beard** Black and **White Hair, Wearing:** White Colour Shirt and White Colour Pajama.
 Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the information about the dead male but no clue has come to light so far. If any one is having any information about this dead male please inform the undersigned.
 S.H.O
 P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.
 DP/325/N/2020 Ph. No. 011-23977100, 23953442, 8750870121

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

General Public is hereby informed that an Unknown male person was found dead at footpath near toilet Jama Masjid Metro Gate No. 4, Red Fort, Delhi on dated 26.06.2020. In this regard a DD No. 40A dated 26.06.2020 has been registered at PS Kotwali, Delhi.
 The description of the dead body is given as under **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** 35-40 years Approx, **Height:** 5'5", **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Sallow, **Wearing:** Grey Colour Underwear and bare foot.
 Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned.
 SHO, PS Kotwali, Delhi
 Ph.: 011-23797100, 23953442, 8750870121
 DP/322/N/2020

Trend Glazer

Saif trolled for claim on nepotism

SAIF ALI KHAN declared in an interview that he has been a victim of nepotism, but he only ended up being a target of trolls on social media.

“Nepotism in its purest form is something that even I have been a victim of. I am not going to take names but somebody’s dad has rung up and said don’t cast him in the film. It has happened to me,” Saif said.

However, the comment did not go down well with netizens. Trolls and memes started targeting the actor, who is the son of renowned actress Sharmila Tagore and late cricketer Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi.



‘Remember that photo of yourself from five years ago that makes you feel bad about your current weight? Well, that same person five years ago had something else making her feel bad about her weight. We’re programmed to feel unworthy. Be kind to yourself and your body. Your weighing scale doesn’t define you, you do!’
—Neha Dhupia



KANGANA RANAUT’s social media team has denied reports that the actress will be questioned by Mumbai Police as a part of the investigation of actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s death.

Reacting to the news piece on Twitter, Kangana’s team shared, “#KanganaRanaut hasn’t received any such request from @MumbaiPolice yet, but as and when she does, she is more than willing to co-operate.”

Recently, her team shared a video of the actress where she spoke about Sushant Singh Rajput.



Never Have I Ever renewed

MINDY KALINGS coming-of-age comedy series *Never Have I Ever*, about an Indian teenager growing up in the US, will be getting a second season.

With the show, she has used her “relationship with being Hindu” and the experience of “straddling the lines of two cultures” to narrate story of a 15-year-old Devi, first-generation Indian American, and her desperation to feel that she belongs in the society. “The scene where Devi prays to her household shrine of Gods, it’s a lot similar to my upbringing. And when I was a teenager, I resisted wearing Indian clothes because while beautiful, I found them itchy and hard to wear,” she said.



Do you know what happens to your body when you lose sleep and don’t log enough hours under the covers? Even missing as little as one hour can have an impact on how you feel, affect your ability to think, remember and process information, weaken your immune system, increase the risk of certain cancers, lead to weight gain and the list might just keep going on... Hence, it has been rightly said that getting enough sleep is important to help a person maintain optimal health and well-being.

Since the lockdown-induced anxieties have highly compromised our sleeping patterns, experts suggest a few ways to make sure you have a good night’s sleep.

Usually, we drift off to sleep when our body has used up most of its energy. With stay-at-home orders, we are not using all our energy levels and to top it off, most of us end up binge-watching, chit-chatting with friends till late night or maybe even work for prolonged hours. Kabir Siddiq, founder and CEO of SleepyCat, a mattress company, explains that this flips our body-clock to a whole 180 degree. “In order to get back that sound sleep, you should try and adhere to some rules such as shutting the digital screens at least three hours before bedtime and rather picking up reading. Avoid working till late hours. By spending even 20 minutes a day exercising, we are able to put all the built energy to good use and it allows our body to feel tired, which eventually leads to a good night’s sleep. Try tuning into calming music at night. It has a direct effect on the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps your body relax and prepare for a healthier sleep,” says he.

Recently, a survey, conducted at the University of Basel, Switzerland, and the University’s Psychiatric Hospital, reported that sleep quality has badly deteriorated during the lockdown. Our cycle of work and leisure is often mismatched with our internal biological clock. If the differences in sleep timing and duration between work days and days off become too large, this can lead to ‘social jetlag’. The survey found that a relaxation of social rhythms — for example, through more flexible working hours — led to a reduction in ‘social jetlagging’.

Mudit Dandwate, co-founder of Dozee, a sleep monitoring device company, shares that one good practice to induce a sound sleep is to consume some soothing green tea as it helps boost digestion and reduce core body temperature. “Also, taking a hot water shower before going to bed does the exact same thing, which initiates deep sleep. One should also cut down on the caffeine intake at least six hours before sleeping to build a proper sleeping schedule. As we know that certain yoga exercises have been useful in stimulating good sleep and relaxation. Try practising yoga on a daily basis, even if it is for 15 minutes. *Yoga nidra*, an ancient technique, has been proved to be very useful. Approximately, 20 minutes of *yoga nidra* is equivalent to two hours of sound sleep,” he says.

A study suggests that it is not right to exercise post 8 pm. Mudit explains the reason, saying, “An intense exercise routine releases a lot of adrenaline, which keeps one awake until late. However, a quick brisk walk is a good stress buster for the mind. Although, it’s great to do it in the morning.”

A restless night has become a routine for almost all of us. Stress and anxiety cause major sleeping problems or worsen existing issues. Following healthy sleep habits — also known as sleep hygiene — helps in



Sleep well

Having issues in getting a good night’s sleep due to the anxiety spurred on by the pandemic? Experts suggest that minimising screen time, taking a hot water shower before going to bed and choosing the right mattress can help maintain a healthy routine.

By AYUSHI SHARMA

reducing anxiety, depressive symptoms and allows one to feel more energetic and positive, believes Dr Anuneet Sabharwal, MBBS MD, Psychiatrist. He suggests a few other methods, which have proven to be useful:

- Stick to a sleep schedule of the same time. Sleeping and waking up daily at the same time helps regulate the body-clock, which helps us fall asleep much faster.
- Have a relaxing environment. Mindful meditation or deep breathing exercises right before going to bed has proved to be effective. It also reduces stress.
- Avoid consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and heavy meals, especially during the evening. Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort from indigestion that can make it hard to fall asleep.
- Try to avoid eating large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Rich foods, fatty-fried meals, spicy dishes, citrus fruits and carbonated drinks can trigger indigestion in some people. When this occurs close to bedtime, it can lead to painful heartburn that disrupts sleep.
- Limiting daytime naps to 30 minutes. Sleeping in the daytime can confuse your internal clock, which means that you may struggle to sleep at night. Don’t underestimate the power of a short nap. Just 20 to

30 minutes can help to improve mood, alertness and performance.

□ Ensuring adequate exposure to natural light. This is particularly important for individuals, who mostly stay indoors. Exposure to sunlight during the day as well as darkness at night helps to maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

□ Let the sleep environment seduce you. Mattress and pillows should be comfortable. The bedroom should be cool between 24 and 30 degrees for optimal sleep. Turn off all lights. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, “white noise” machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices that can make the bedroom more relaxing and you’ll fall asleep in no time.

Experts feel that a right mattress can also make all the difference between a sound sleep and a sleepless night. A good mattress offers a perfect balance of required comfort and support, keeping the natural spinal alignment and body posture in place, thus significantly enhancing the quality of sleep.

Kabir tells us that our mind and body are connected by a neural pathway. It is when the body feels comfortable that we slowly start to drift off into deep sleep. Thus, making sure you sleep on a comfortable surface is very important. An old



and uncomfortable mattress can lead to stress buildup. He adds, “A quality mattress provides support to the body and ensures that you don’t end up with a sore in the morning. The type of surface may differ from person to person. Some may prefer a more supportive mattress, while others would want a more hotel-like softness. Either way, it’s about what suits your

body the best.” When it comes to the right sleeping position, try lying on your back or to the side as they are usually considered to be good positions, suggest experts. “Different sleep positions have different benefits. If you have pain or other issues, you might need to switch your sleep position to help manage it better,” adds Kabir.

Worthy successor

No other vehicle brand in India has been around for as long and as many generations as the Honda City. So how does the latest fifth-generation Honda City fare?



control. The instrument cluster has a physical speedometer but that is coupled with a seven-inch TFT screen which displays not just the tachometer but can also the trip information, mileage and interesting features such as a ‘G-Meter’ to measure the physical gravity loads on the car.

On a Mercedes-AMG, a G-Meter is useful to see how crazy you are, on the City it is more a guide at how comfortable your driving style is for your passengers. A bit gimmicky, but as you will see this isn’t the only gimmick on this car.

So how does the car drive? Over here, I have to admit that I only drove the 1.5-litre iVTEC petrol version, which has an output of 121PS coupled with Honda’s CVT gearbox with seven forward speeds set. There are two reasons I did that, although I do hope to drive the other two options — the manual petrol and the manual diesel — soon, but I do feel that

diesel vehicle sales are going to drop off a cliff, particularly in the NCR. The second is that if you buy a car to drive yourself for commuting, particularly in the ₹12 to 15 lakh range, you will want an automatic.

I have written earlier about the CVT — Continuously Variable Transmission — which isn’t in my opinion the best sort of automatic transmission, particularly if you wish to have a good time. The thing is that this car is that it is called the ‘City’ and inside an urban environment, this CVT works very well. That said, the City is also equipped with paddle shifters and while they might not be all that useful, if you find yourself on the highway and want to have a good time, it does allow you to do that, albeit you really can’t red-line a CVT car.

But again, in daily commuter traffic, the CVT works excellently and even allows the car to deliver a decent

fuel economy. Again, I have to state that the day I was driving this car, I got stuck in a fantastic traffic jam under Moti Bagh flyover, but even then I got around 13.1 kilometers per litre, but that included driving down the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway. The City has definitely grown up when it comes to ride and handling, the car is a comfortable place to be inside but at high-speed and at urban speeds, the steering is sharp and the car does not feel anything but assured when sharp steering movements are given.

But I guess this car has grown up a bit too much, it looks sharp with its shoulder line and the headlights and taillights, the latter even having a touch of BMW. It is nice to be inside and it gets the job done. But at a level, would the 22-year-old me approve of this car? I don’t think so, sure it has a great audio system and it is comfortable but it does feel a bit too sedate. In a market, where Hyundai has equipped the Verna with the 1.0-litre GDi Turbo, the City is the safe choice. Not the fun choice.

Before I finish the column, a word about the Alexa integration that you will be hearing a lot about in the coming weeks. I even did a short YouTube video on this. Frankly, this is nothing more than a voice layer on top of the Honda Connect application. After saying ‘Open Honda’ on the Alexa app, you could check your fuel levels, start the air-conditioner and even set the temperature but you cannot control your Amazon Prime account or use any of Alexa’s other myriad skills in the car, which in my opinion makes it slightly pointless, although this is something I would guess that can be added with a software upgrade later. You could however do the same thing from your Amazon Alexa devices such as the Echo that might be in your bedroom or living room. The City, like all its rivals, has Apple CarPlay and Android Auto (both of which also have Amazon Prime Music, if you subscribe to the service). So it does feel a bit gimmicky, but then again back in the late-1990s power windows were a gimmick. I will not therefore judge the Alexa system just yet and see how it evolves in the coming 12 to 18 months.

‘People have seen enough of formula’

Anushka Sharma and her brother Karnesh A’s love for cutting edge visual effects (VFX) in their production ventures *Phillauri*, *Pari* and now, *Bulbbul* is clearly visible. Much to their credit, they have been pushing the envelope in creating unique visual experiences for the audience. Incidentally, all three films are supernatural-feminist films, a sub-genre that their production house Clean Slate Filmz have created.

Anushka says, “For us, how uniquely we tell a story is extremely important. We have always tried to tell our stories as differently as possible because we feel people have seen enough of the formula and are done with them. I have always felt that a visual trigger to storytelling is key to hold attention of the audience today and it also allows us an unexpectedly new route to present an idea that has never been seen before.”

She adds, “People are always looking to immerse themselves into something new. That’s been our biggest strength. From *Phillauri*, *Pari* and now *Bulbbul*, while we have accidentally

created a sub-genre of supernatural feminism films, we have consciously told the story through the lens of clutter-breaking visual effects.” Karnesh is delighted that *Bulbbul*’s VFX has been hailed unanimously. The use of symbolism like the red moon to evoke elements of rebellion, passion and revolution has been lapped up by the audience and critics alike.

“Our focus towards visual effects to enhance storytelling is one of the reasons why these films have stood out. The strong visual effects in our projects have added to the surrealism of the stories that we intended to tell and heightened its impact,” he says.



THAT RIGHT INGREDIENT

Old traditions don't die easy. Author SRISHTI CHAUDHARY's new book, *Lallan Sweets*, presents this very idea through food, humour, family strife and a new take on Indian history. An extract:

It is 1995. Tara Taneja lives in the small town of Siyaka, running Ultimate Mathematics Tuition Centre and working for Lalaji, her grandfather, at Lallan Sweets, his famous sweet shop. The laddoos sold at the shop are made using a secret family recipe that contains a magic ingredient known only to Lalaji.

When Lalaji chooses to retire, he decides that Lallan Sweets will not be inherited but earned. He devises a quest for his three grandchildren — Tara, Rohit and Mohit — to discover the magic ingredient. Whoever finds it first will get to run the shop.

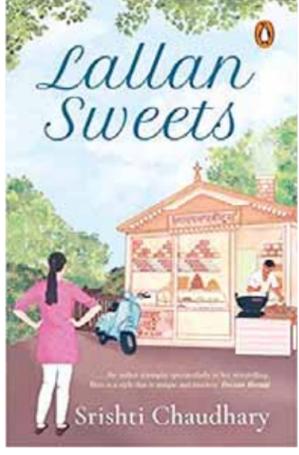
HERE ARE TWO EXTRACTS:

Chapter 2:
It was in 1947 when we undertook that perilous journey, the nightmares of which haunt us to this day, he began. I was surprised to see that he had a whole talk prepared. What was going on in his mind?

'We had a thriving business in Lahore, doing very well, in Anarkali Bazaar. Children, do you even know of Anarkali Bazaar?' We nodded. Lalaji often spoke about his life on the other side of the border, still affronted that his family had to pack their bags and leave from what was always their home. 'How Anarkali Bazaar would come alive during the day, especially when it was festival time. Rows and rows of shops and vendors selling everything,

and amongst those were we too. My father worked very hard to buy one of those shops, and we finally managed to do so. We owned a small shop and the future never looked better. Two years later, however, we had to leave it all. It was the most devastating moment of our lives. We made that journey in complete shock, not knowing what would happen, not knowing what we would do, camping at one place, then another. We finally reached Ludhiana and stayed there for some time, until we were finally allotted this place in Siyaka. 'It was not too bad, mind you,' he continued, 'We got enough land for a house and a shop. It was quite enough. But a small shop in Anarkali Bazaar was still worth ten shops in Siyaka — this town was nothing! There were hardly a few families living here, most of it was farmland. What would I do selling our famous Lahori sweets here? It seemed like we had lost everything for some time. 'But with my father urging us on, asking us not to lose hope, we began again. We built it all up, brick by brick, even our house, we have made it on our own. Siyaka too became a thriving town — we got lucky there — and after a few years Lallan Sweets was running.'

I glanced at Pappu Uncle. While he might have known more of this than us, we still didn't know why Lalaji had decided to bring it up now. 'Some things helped us,



'I MIXED THE BESAN AND KESAR, ADDING WATER IN MEASURED POURS, PUTTING IN THAT PINCH OF SALT THAT LALAJI LOVED SO MUCH, MIXING IT ALL INTO THE BATTER. THE SUGAR BOILED ON THE STOVE, AND I KEPT AN EYE ON IT, MY MIND FOCUSED'

of course. Our magic ingredient being one! Our location, the fact that people here were much more supportive, the local government not so corrupt; we did well. The pinch of salt we always add to our laddoos, not everyone thinks of doing that you know, is always appreciated. Lallan Sweets is the labour of love of not one generation but two, an effort at trying to rebuild all that we had lost due to the cruelties of fate. I don't want to see it crumble again.' Pappu Uncle put his hands on the table and pushed his chair back. 'I see what this is about. About our talk yesterday, isn't it? You don't trust my sons to handle it, do you? What? You want Taru to take it on — or perhaps her mother?' Aunty looked at Pappu Uncle in horror. We too were shocked at this sudden hostility. There was always some jealousy and rivalry between us but it was always concealed beneath a veneer of friendliness. Nothing was spelt out in this manner. 'What about us then?' Pappu Uncle continued. 'My two sons? They will have wives too, children to feed, families to take care of — you want to give Lallan Sweets to Taru who has no credibility at all, who might run off with the next DJ she finds, dishonouring the family name!' 'Pappuji!' my mother stood up, indignant. 'Please mind what you are saying, I will not hear my child being spoken

ill of like this!' 'Pappu, enough!' Lalaji said, putting his hand up. 'I'm not finished yet and you're not so wise yet to be able to interrupt your father.'

Pappu Uncle went as red as it was possible to, his bald head looking like it would explode. 'The time has come to settle the matter,' Lalaji went on. I bent forward. 'I will not bear to see any injustice happening to my grandchildren, be it my grandsons or granddaughter. There might have been a time when girls were not considered important-enough members of the family, but, Pappu, I am not barbaric, and I hope to God you are the same. Now I will tell you how it will work, something that my own father did for me: Lallan Sweets will not be inherited at all.'

'Not inherited?' Pappu Uncle asked blankly.

'It will not be inherited. It will be earned.' Silence followed: not because it was a shocking statement, but because it was incomprehensible in this scenario. How do you earn your inheritance?

'And what,' I asked, clearing my throat, 'exactly will we have to do to earn it?' Lalaji looked at me, a wide smile on his face. 'You'll have to find out the magic ingredient, of course.'

Chapter 19:

I mixed the besan and kesar, adding water in measured pours, putting in that pinch of salt that Lalaji loved so much, mixing it all into the batter. The sugar boiled in the water on the stove, and I kept an eye on it, heating up the ghee in the kadai, my mind focussed. I put my finger in the batter to feel the consistency. Satisfied, I took out the perforated boondi ladle. It was like everything was clear now. My answer started to make sense. I spread the batter over the ladle as it fell into the kadai in drops, frying up to be little boondis: the pride of Lallan Sweets. The boondis, meanwhile, sizzled and glistened in the oil, frying to a warm and delicious yellowish-orange.

I removed them from the kadai in bunches and placed them in the sugar syrup. For two hours I was busy preparing the laddoos, putting everything together with care and detail. This was it—the final competition. Everything that we had been working on for the past few weeks, even our lives, came down to this. Rohit and Mohit were in their own kitchen across the verandah, making laddoos. I had told my mother not to help me. This was my job. At the core of it all, of Lallan Sweets and our traditional business, it was all about making laddoos, wasn't it? And if I couldn't do this on my own, who was I and what was I even fighting for?

I was bathed in sweat when I left the laddoos to set. I crossed the verandah and went to Lalaji's room. I waved away the hookah smoke. 'I'm ready Lalaji,' I told him. He nodded.

R E C I P E S



CALIFORNIA WALNUTS KULIYE KI CHAAT

WHAT YOU NEED
● Seasonal fruits, cut into squares: 1 cup
● Seasonal vegetables cut into squares: 1 cup

● Black eyed peas (boiled): 1/4 cup
● California walnuts, (chopped roughly): 1/2 cup
● Fresh pomegranate seeds: 2 tbsp
● Salt to taste
● Chaat masala: 1 tsp
● Red chilli powder: 1/2 tsp
● Lemon juice: 1/2 tsp
METHOD
● Place all the fruits and vegetables in serving plate. Squeeze the lemon juice and sprinkle salt, red chilli powder and chaat masala.
● Add black eyed peas, pomegranate seeds, chopped California walnuts and mix.
● Serve immediately.

Courtesy: Celebrity Chef Varun Inamdar, California Walnuts.

BETROOT KACHORI

WHAT YOU NEED
● Refined flour: 1 cup
● Semolina: 1/4 cup
● Ghee: 3 tbsp
● Beetroot puree: 1/2 cup
● Honey: 1 tsp
● Gulab Jamun: 4
● Oil
● Cardamom powder: 1 tsp
METHOD
● In mixing bowl, add refined flour, semolina, ghee and mix well.
● Add beetroot puree, honey and start kneading into dough.



● Divide the dough into equal portions and make smooth round ball.
● Crumble the gulab jamun in medium large chunks.
● Stuff gulab jamun in the prepared dough balls and smooth it out.
● Deep fry the kachories in oil, on medium heat till nice and crisp.
● Remove on kitchen towel and drain the excess oil.
● Sprinkle cardamom powder over the kachories and serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Manish Mehrotra, Corporate Chef, Indian Accent.

TOASTED ALMONDS AND TOMATO UTTAPAM PIZZA

WHAT YOU NEED
● Uttapam batter: 75 ml
● Almonds cut into half (unpeeled): 15 gm
● Tomato (deseeded and chopped): 10 gm
● Onion (chopped): 10 gm
● Ginger (chopped): 2 gm
● Coriander (chopped): 2 gm
● Pizza sauce: 5 gm
● Parmesan cheese (grated): 3 gm
● Salt to taste
● Refined oil: 5 ml



METHOD
● Pour the uttapam batter in the centre of a heated non-stick pan.
● Sprinkle chopped tomato, onion, ginger and coriander, evenly on top.
● Turn the uttapam upside down to cook it from top for about a minute. Then, turn it back and spread the pizza sauce. Add almond halves and turn it over, once again.
● Then, remove from the pan and sprinkle grated parmesan on it. Cut it into four pieces like a pizza. Serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Manish Mehrotra, Corporate Chef, Indian Accent.

NILGIRI TURKEY KORMA

WHAT YOU NEED
● Turkey meat: 750 gm
● Spinach: 100 gm
● Mint leaves: 1 bunch
● Coriander leaves: 2 bunches
● Green chilli: 10
● Onion: 150 gm
● Ginger garlic paste: 25 gm
● Turmeric powder: 1/2 tsp
● Shahi jeera: 10 gm
● Curd: 100 gm
● Coconut paste: 100 gm
● Coriander powder: 1

tbsp
● Garam masala powder: 10 gm
● Oil: 100 ml
● Salt to taste
● Water for use
METHOD
● In a cooker, add turkey meat, salt, turmeric powder and water.
● Cover with lid and boil it. Put it aside when the turkey is boiled.
● In a mixer jar, add spinach leaves, mint leaves, coriander leaves, green chilli, water and grind it into a fine paste.



VIRGINIA PEANUT SOUP

WHAT YOU NEED
● Butter: 2 tbsp
● Onion (chopped): 1
● Chicken stock: 6 cups
● All-purpose flour: 2 tbsps
● Heavy cream: 1 cup
● Natural peanut butter: 1 1/2 cups
● Hot sauce: 2 tsp
● Limes (juiced): 2
● Peanuts (chopped): 2 tbsps
● Scallions (chopped): 2
METHOD
● Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed pot over medium heat.

● Add the onion and cook until translucent for about 10 minutes. Bring the chicken stock to a boil in a medium saucepan.
● Whisk in the flour all at once and cook until the mixture has a toasty aroma. Whisk the stock into the flour mixture in a slow, steady stream until smooth.
● Add the heavy cream and peanut butter to the soup and stir to combine. Stir in the hot sauce and lime juice and season, to taste.
● Garnish with the chopped peanuts and scallions.

Courtesy: Chef Chris Carey, Ashby Inn.

● In a pan, add oil, then add shahi jeera, chopped onions, ginger garlic paste, and fry for five minutes.
● Add boiled turkey meat pieces and mix well. Then add fresh curry leaves and mix well. Cook for 10 minutes.
● After that add coconut paste and mix well until the oil oozes out.
● Add curd, salt to taste, ground spinach paste and mix well for five minutes. Fry until aromatic.
● Add one glass of water and mix well, then add coriander powder and mix again.
● Cover with lid to boil the turkey meat for 10 minutes.
● After 10 minutes, open the lid and stir well.
● When curry is almost done, add garam masala powder and stir. Add fresh coriander leaves, put in a serving bowl, and serve hot.

Courtesy: Chef Shadab Ahmed Quershi, Chef-de cuisine Sofitel.

HAMMERS BLOW

Yarmolenko's last minute counter strike dashes Chelsea's top-four hopes; Aubameyang makes Gunners history



Andriy Yarmolenko, center celebrates with West Ham teammates after scoring his side's third goal

AFP ■ LONDON

West Ham rocked Chelsea's top-four hopes and boosted their survival bid with a dramatic 3-2 win, while Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang struck twice as Arsenal climbed back into European contention with a 4-0 thrashing of Norwich on Wednesday.

Chelsea were hoping to take advantage of third-placed Leicester's 2-1 defeat at Everton earlier in the day, but instead the Blues were beaten for the first time since the Premier League restart.

West Ham were denied the opening goal at the London Stadium when VAR ruled Michail Antonio was offside as he lay on the ground while Tomas Soucek

to qualify for the Champions League hot up with six games left.

"It's the story of our season. It's been a good season but there have been so many of these moments," Chelsea boss Frank Lampard said.

"I'm not happy with any of the goals. There were details in the game which we knew but we lost because we didn't get them right. It's why we are fighting for the top four and not first or second. We don't get things right as much as the big boys do."

West Ham's crucial first win since the restart moved them three points clear of the relegation zone.

Willian fired Chelsea ahead from the penalty spot five minutes before half-time after Issa Diop tripped Christian Pulisic.



Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scores Arsenal's opening goal against Norwich City at Emirates stadium

to reach that landmark.

"A player that is able to score as many goals as he has done in that short space of time tells you everything about the importance that he has for us," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta.

Aubameyang turned provider for Granit Xhaka to make it 2-0 before half-time and was then handed another gift when Norwich striker Josip Drmic teed him up to make it 3-0.

Cedric Soares, signed from Southampton in January, made his debut one to remember with a long-range strike nine minutes from time to round off the scoring.

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51 & COUNTING

At the Emirates Stadium, Aubameyang moved alongside Jamie Vardy as the Premier League's top scorer on 19 goals on a night of contrasting fortunes for the Golden Boot contenders.

Arsenal registered a third straight win to move up to seventh against a Norwich side ever more resigned to relegation.

Canaries keeper Tim Krul did his side no favours by gifting the opener to Aubameyang when he was caught trying to dribble past the Gabon international.

Aubameyang's first saw him reach 50 Premier League goals in 79 appearances — making him the fastest Arsenal play-

FOXES OUTFOXED

Leicester are headed in the opposite direction as their winless run since English football's restart from the coronavirus pandemic stretched to four games.

Richardson and Gylfi Sigurdsson's penalty gave Everton the perfect start at Goodison Park.

Kelechi Iheanacho's fortunate goal as the ball ricocheted in off his face reduced Leicester's arrears and they pressed hard for an equaliser in the closing stages.

"Our form hasn't been the best for a period now but we still have it in our

NUMBER GAME

10 Chelsea lost their 10th league game of the season on Wednesday; only in 2015-16, when they finished 10th, have they suffered more defeats in a single campaign in Roman Abramovich era (12)

18 Only West Ham (22) & Aston Villa (19) have dropped more points from leading positions in this season than Chelsea (18)

1 Willian is the first player to score a penalty and a direct free-kick goal in the same PL game since Cesc Fabregas did so for Chelsea against West Ham in March 2016

2 Tomas Soucek is the 12th Czech player to score a Premier League goal and the second to do so for West Ham after Radoslav Kovac

12 Willian is the first player to score a Premier League goal in every month of the year

2 Following their 1-0 win at Stamford Bridge in November, West Ham complete their first league double over Chelsea since 2002-03 — a campaign in which the Hammers were relegated from the Premier League

9 Everton are unbeaten in their last nine PL games at Goodison Park (W5 D4); their longest run without a league defeat there since between April and December 2016 (11 games)

1 Everton were awarded their first penalty of the season in the PL on Wednesday, having been the only side yet to win one. They had gone 38 league games without taking a spot-kick

50 Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has scored his 50th PL goal in fewer appearances (79) than any other Arsenal player, and is the 6th fastest to this total among all PL players

3 Allan Saint-Maximin has become just the third Newcastle player to assist three goals in a single PL game, after Moussa Sissoko v Norwich in Oct 2015 and Andy Cole v West Ham in March 1994

SINGLES

WI LEGEND EVERTON WEEKES DIES AGED 95

BRIDGETOWN: Legendary batsman Everton Weekes, the last of the famed Windies 'Three Ws', died on Wednesday at the age of 95 and was hailed as "a founding father" of the sport in the Caribbean. "Our hearts are heavy as we mourn the loss of an icon. A legend, our hero, Sir Everton Weekes," tweeted Cricket West Indies. "Our condolences go out to his family, friends and many fans around the world. May he rest in peace." Barbadian Weekes was part of a feared post-World War II West Indies team which also featured Clyde Walcott and Frank Worrell.

FULTON QUILTS AS BLACKCAPS BATTING COACH

AUCKLAND: Peter Fulton has quit as New Zealand's batting coach to take up the job of head coach of the Canterbury men's team. Fulton, a former int'l player who featured in 23 Tests and 49 ODIs for Kiwis, took up the position with the national team in August 2019 and travelled to Sri Lanka and Australia besides being part of the home tours against England and India. Fulton said he had enjoyed his time with the national team but the Canterbury offer was hard to ignore.

CA TO NOT USE DUKES BALL IN FC CRICKET

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia has decided to not use the Dukes ball from this summer's Sheffield Shield, having used it alongside Kookaburra for four seasons. Australia has been using Dukes ball since the 2016-17 season in Shield matches with an aim to help its cricketers prepare for the hostile English conditions. CA's Head of Cricket Operations, Peter Roach, said the ineffectiveness of spinners in first-class cricket in recent times played a role in CA's decision to do away with the Dukes. The CA official, however, didn't rule out the possibility of re-introducing it later.

PAULINHO OUT OF GERMAN CUP FINAL

LEVERKUSEN: Bayer Leverkusen will be without forward Paulinho for the German Cup final against Bayern Munich on Saturday and the Europa League mini-tournament after he tore an anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, the club said on Thursday. According to club the 19-year-old Brazilian injured his knee in a training session on Tuesday. He has been scheduled for an operation in Austria on Friday and will be out for several months.

SL CRICKET KEEN TO HOST IPL IN AUGUST

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka Cricket is optimistic of conducting its inaugural T20 league from August 8 to 22 despite the Govt's decision to postpone the reopening of the country's Int'l airport till August 1. SLC has got the green signal from the sports ministry, but the Lanka Premier League's fate depends on the Govt's decision to open the country's borders for foreign arrivals.

PUNJAB FC HANDED 3-WINDOW TRANSFER BAN

KOLKATA: Punjab FC, formerly known as Minerva Punjab FC, has been handed a three-window transfer ban by FIFA's Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC) for failing to pay the dues of North Macedonian footballer Hristijan Denkovski. The fiasco took place in August last year when Ranjit Bajaj was still an active decision-maker at the club and the ban was handed on Tuesday. The ban on signing any player, nationally or internationally, is from the upcoming summer transfer window. The ban will be lifted once the payment is made and the proof of payment is sent to FIFA.

Inter hits 6

Sanchez takes centre stage in Nerazzurri's rout of Brescia

AFP ■ MILAN

Alexis Sanchez scored a penalty and set up two goals as Inter thrashed relegation candidates Brescia 6-0 in Serie A on Wednesday, while city rivals AC Milan snatched a last-gasp draw away to lowly SPAL.

Sanchez teed up Ashley Young to volley Inter ahead at San Siro after just five minutes and the Chile forward dispatched a spot-kick to double the lead following a foul on Victor Moses.

Daniilo D'Ambrosio powered in a third just before half-time from a looping cross by



Alexis Sanchez celebrates after scoring Inter's second goal against Brescia

Young, with Roberto Gagliardini rising to head home a Sanchez free-kick as Inter grabbed a fourth on 53 minutes.

Christian Eriksen bagged his first Serie A goal since his January move from Tottenham, forcing in from point-blank range after an excellent Jesse Joronen save denied Romelu Lukaku.

Antonio Candreva completed the romp two minutes from time with a crisp low drive into the corner as Inter clawed back to within eight

points of leaders Juventus with nine games still to play.

"We kept our foot on the gas and the fact that we didn't concede is a big positive," Inter coach Antonio Conte told broadcaster DAZN.

Sanchez, who made just his fourth league start this term, had his loan deal from Manchester

United extended earlier in the day until the end of the Italian season.

Brescia, who were again without Mario Balotelli due to

an ongoing contract dispute, dropped to the foot of the table. They remain eight points from safety and are winless in 14 games.

ZLATAN RETURNS

SPAL surrendered a two-goal lead and squandered two precious points in their fight against relegation as a 94th-minute own goal by Francesco Vicari gifted Milan a late equaliser in a 2-2 draw.

First-half goals from Mattia Valoti and Sergio Floccari, the second a magnificent dipping 30-yard strike, put SPAL on top but the home side lost Marco D'Alessandro to a red card before half-time for a poor challenge on Theo Hernandez.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic returned to action for the first time since Italian football's restart following a calf injury, replacing the in-form Ante Rebic on the hour, but it was another substitute Rafael Leao who gave Milan hope with a calm finish on 79 minutes.

SPAL coach Luigi Di Biagio was sent to the stands after two yellow cards in quick succession and could only watch in despair as a lunging Vicari diverted a cross into his own net right at the death.

Milan stayed seventh despite the late fightback.

Promising victory against Qatar will be suicidal: Stimac

NEW DELHI: India's draw against Asian champions Qatar in a World Cup qualifier last year was one of their best results but coach Igor Stimac does not want to put pressure on his players by promising a victory in the return leg.

India play Qatar in Bhubaneswar on October 8 before taking on Bangladesh (away match) on November 12 and Afghanistan in Kolkata on November 17.

India are already out of contention for a berth in the 2022 World Cup but they are early in the reckoning for the 2023 Asian Cup as it is a joint qualification campaign.

The 52-year-old Stimac said promising victory against Qatar will be suicidal but his side will play not to lose the match.

"With strong belief in what we do and a clear mindset, everything is possible. We are certainly not going to come out on the pitch to lose the game.

But to promise victory against Asian champions and such a great team as Qatar would be suicidal," Stimac said from his home in Croatia.

"We are in the process of building up a new respectable team and I am trying to avoid putting our youngsters under extra pressure so they can enjoy their football and gain experience for the future." PTI

IPL 13 likely overseas, toss-up b/w UAE & Lanka

NEW DELHI: The 13th edition of the Indian Premier League is in all probability headed to foreign shores with UAE and Sri Lanka in the race to host the 2020 edition of the cash-rich league. The final announcement is expected soon as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is still awaiting an official decision on the fate of the T20 World Cup which was to be held in Australia in October-November.

A BCCI official in the know of developments told IANS that while the idea was to play the league in the country, the situation with regards to the coronavirus pandemic might force the board to ultimately take the tournament to either UAE or Sri Lanka.

"We are yet to decide on the venue but in all probability it is going outside this year. The condition in India doesn't look suited to have so many teams come in at one or two venues and then create an atmosphere which will be safe for the players as well as the general public even though the games may be played behind closed doors.

"The race is between UAE and Sri Lanka and we will need to decide on where we host the league depending on the situation there with regards to the coronavirus pandemic. Logistics also need to be looked into, so we will decide soon," the official said.

It was earlier reported that the decision-makers in the BCCI were divided in



3:2 ratio with regards to deciding on the venue of the league. "See, it is a case of the decision makers being divided 3-2 if that is how you wish to understand the current scenario.

"There are a couple of voices who feel that having the tournament should be the priority and if that means taking it out of the country, so be it. So, while we are working on the overall plan, the venue is an area which will need further deliberation. Also, at the end of the day safety of the players and everyone involved is priority," the official had explained. IANS

SIMMONS REJOINS WINDIES TEAM

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

West Indies head coach Phil Simmons has rejoined his team ahead of the opening Test against England after being in mandatory quarantine and clearing the Covid-19 tests following his decision to attend a family funeral.

"Phil Simmons is back on the job. The West Indies head coach returned to the field with his players on Thursday after his mandatory quarantine

and Covid-19 tests," Cricket West Indies said on Thursday.

"He was part of the warm-up and pre-match preparations as West Indies continued their four-day warm-up match at the Old Trafford," it further stated.

Simmons had found himself in a soup after board member Conde Riley had sought his "immediate removal" for moving out of the team's bio-secure location in the UK to attend his father-in-law's funeral.

However, the 57-year-old Simmons received the backing of Board president Ricky Skerritt, who insisted that he had taken permission before venturing out and made it

clear that Simmons job is "not in any way threatened".

"I want to assure West Indies cricket fans that Phil Simmons still has the full backing of Cricket West Indies no matter what has been said. When all is said and done, Phil's job is not in any way

threatened by that letter," Skerritt said during a conference call.

"He went through a very vigorous recruitment process nine months ago and was the best man we could have found for the job. He's still the best man."

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KHARIAR

NOTICE

In response to this Office Tender Call Notice No. 2045/NACKHR. Dated 26.06.2020 for "supply & installation of 24 nos. of LED street light with octagonal pole from Ambedkar Chowk to Boden Chowk in Khariar NAC" is hereby cancelled due to unavoidable circumstances.

Executive Officer
Notified Area Council, Khariar

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, KENDRAPARA.

At : Ichhapur, Post : Shree Baladevjeev, Email: eerwsskendrapara@gmail.com

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB) [e-Procurement]
Bid Identification No. RWS/14/2020-2021

Letter No. 2066 Dated 30.06.2020

- The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites lump sums bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for execution of Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes in Kendrapara District.
- Name of the work : Execution of RPWS Schemes in the district of Kendrapara.
- No. of Work : 3 (Three Nos)
- Value of the Work : 59.58 Lakhs to 97.19.00 Lakhs
- Concerned tender inviting authority : Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Kendrapara
- Security amount (Rs.) (Online) : 60000/- to 98000/-
- Cost of Bid documents (Rs.) (Online) : 10000.00
- Class of Bidder : "B" & "A"
- Period of Completion : 8 Months
- Availability of bid documents in : From date. 14.07.2020 at 10.00 A.M to the website date. 28.07.2020 5.30 P.M
- Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification : Up to 23.07.2020 at 5.30 P.M
- Date of Opening of Bid : On date. 29.07.2020 at 10.30 A.M onwards.

The bidders have to participate in the tender through ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be had from the website i.e. <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

Subsequent corrigendum / addendum if required shall only be appeared in the above website.

Executive Engineer,
RWS&S Division, Kendrapara

OIPR-25004/11/0004/2021

COLLECTORATE : RAYAGADA (NIZARAT SECTION)

TENDER/QUOTATION CALL NOTICE.

Sealed Tenders are invited by the Collector, Rayagada in prescribed format from the Authorized Dealers/Reputed Firms/Establishment for supply of furniture and LED TV for Circuit House, Rayagada. The details of Tender Call Notice containing specifications with terms and condition and application forms can be downloaded from the official website of Rayagada District (www.rayagada.nic.in)

Sd/-
COLLECTOR : RAYAGADA

OIPR-24169/11/0001/2021

OFFICE OF THE CDM & PHO & DISTRICT MISSION DIRECTOR, BHADRAK

DISTRICT HEALTH MISSION (Department of Health & FW, Govt. of Orissa)

Advt no: 06/2020 Date: 02/07/2020

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) FOR HIRING OF VEHICLES FOR DPMU UNDER NHM

Sealed proposals as per the Prescribed RFP document are invited from interested eligible bidders (Individuals /Tour operators/ Travel agencies/ Firm) for Hiring of 2 nos. of vehicles for District Programme Management Unit on **Monthly Basis** and **Daily Basis** for the year 2020-21. The eligibility criteria, terms of reference and the formats for submission of Bid are set forth in the RFP document which can be downloaded from the website www.bhadrak.nic.in. Interested bidders fulfilling the eligibility criteria may submit their proposal(s) (with EMD and documents as per RFP. The bidders have to submit their proposal(s) to the office of the CDM & PHO, BHADRAK. The details of proposal(s) complete in all respect superscribing "Tender for hiring of vehicles on rental basis Monthly & Daily Basis for DPMU & the advertisement reference no. _____" on the envelope and should reach to the office of the CDM & PHO, Bhadrak on or before 16-07-2020 (Till 4 PM.) by Speed Post or Registered Posts Only. The technical and financial bids shall be opened at the office of the CDM & PHO, Bhadrak on 17.07.2020 date at 12.00 Noon. The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the proposals without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-10123/11/0001/2021

CDM & PHO, Bhadrak