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10 VIVACITY



Now India 3rd worst Covid-hit nation

With 23,932 fresh cases, 420 deaths in a day, India replaces Russia with only US and Brazil ahead of it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With 23,932 fresh cases and 420 deaths in the last 24 hours, India on Sunday occupied the third spot in the list of nations worst hit by coronavirus after surpassing Russia.

India's total tally stood at 6,97,836 lakh positive cases and 19,700 deaths. This is the fourth consecutive day when coronavirus cases have increased by more than 20,000.

Only Brazil and the United States are ahead of India in the maximum number of coronavirus cases so far. The USA has over 29.64 lakh cases, followed by Brazil with over 15.79 lakh cases and Russia's 6.81 lakh so far.

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), over 1.11 crore cases of coronavirus and 5.33 lakh deaths has been reported across the world so far.

Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Karnataka continued to be the worst affected State. Maharashtra recorded 6,555 fresh cases and 151 deaths, the highest in the last 24 hours so far.

Close to four and a half battalions (4,500 personnel) of the five Central paramilitary forces have been infected so far by Covid-19 with the CRPF alone reporting over 1,500 cases followed by about 1,400 cases in BSF, a little over 1,000



Delhi Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, along with ITBP DG SS Deswal, visits the 10,000-bed Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre at Radha Soami Beas, Chhatarpur in New Delhi on Sunday

in CISE, over 400 in ITBP and about 200 in SSB. Nearly two battalion strength of personnel continue to be active cases.

According to the Maharashtra Health Department, the State reported its second-highest single-day surge till date on Sunday, adding 6,555 new Covid-19 cases as the State's total case tally reached 2,06,619. As many as 151 new deaths pushed the total death toll to 8,822. As many as 3,658 patients were discharged on Sunday, taking the total number of recoveries till date to 1,11,470.

With 1,287 new cases reported on Sunday, Mumbai's total case tally has reached 84,524. The city's death toll has risen to 4,899.

Tamil Nadu reported 4,150 persons turning coronavirus positive taking the total number of such persons till date to 111,151 in the last 24 hours. The total number of corona patients who died over the past 24-hours was 60 taking the death toll to 1,510.

Delhi's coronavirus tally inched closer to one lakh-mark on Sunday after 2,244 cases were reported in the last

24 hours. The cumulative tally for national Capital reached 99,444, while 63 deaths were recorded, pushing the total death toll to 3,067. As of Sunday, there are over 25,000 active cases in Delhi.

Marking a positive trend, Delhi's recovery rate has gone above 70 per cent as out of the total cases, 71,339 people have recovered from the virus. Along with the increase in testing and reduced positivity rate, Delhi's recovery rate has also increased — a positive indicator keeping the city's total number of active cases or

those living with the infection a constant between 25 and 26 thousand.

Karnataka reported 1,925 cases and 37 deaths, highest in a single day, pushing the infection tally to 23,474 and death toll to 372. The number of active cases now stands at 13,251.

Uttar Pradesh reported 1,155 new cases and 12 deaths in the last 24 hours, pushing the infection tally to 27,707 and death toll to 785. A total of 18,761 corona patients have recovered and discharged from hospitals.

According to the data of novel coronavirus infection in Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) ranks available till Saturday, as many as 1,510 personnel have contracted the disease out of which 755 continue to be active cases and 746 persons have recovered. The casualty figure in the CRPF stands at nine. The CRPF tops the list in terms of the total number of infected personnel, active cases, and deaths. As many as 1,348 Border Security Force (BSF) personnel have contracted the disease till Sunday. Of 1,348 infected personnel in the BSF ranks, 526 are active cases and 817 have recovered besides five persons have succumbed due to the disease.

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Covid-19 IN INDIA

TOTAL CASES: 6,97,836
DEATHS: 19,700
RECOVERED: 4,24,891
ACTIVE: 2,53,162



STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	2,06,619	8,822	1,11,740
Tamil Nadu	1,11,151	1,510	62,778
Delhi	99,444	3,067	71,339
Gujarat	36,123	1,944	25,900
Uttar Pradesh	27,707	785	18,761
Telangana	23,902	295	12,703
Karnataka	23,474	372	9,849
West Bengal	22,126	757	14,711
Rajasthan	20,164	456	15,928
Andhra Pradesh	18,697	232	8,422
Haryana	17,005	265	12,944
Madhya Pradesh	14,930	608	11,411
Bihar	11,860	90	8,765
Assam	11,737	14	7,434
Odisha	9,070	46	6,224
Jammu & Kashmir	8,429	132	5,255

Ex-MLA serving jail sentence for anti-Sikh riots dies of Covid in hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 70-year-old former MLA serving jail sentence in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots case died due to Covid-19 at a hospital in national Capital. This is the second inmate of Mandoli prison to have succumbed to the infection.

Mahender Yadav was a former MLA from Palam constituency. Prison authorities said he was lodged in Jail number 14 of Mandoli prison for many years.

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Social distancing must in Kerala for year, Ordinance brought in

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

If you are in Kerala, you will have to wear face masks, maintain social distancing and avoid large gatherings till July 2021. The Kerala Government has issued an Ordinance to this effect. The District Collectors have been instructed to ensure due compliance of the regulations.

The Kerala Epidemic Diseases Ordinance 2020 also makes it compulsory for those who want to stage demonstrations and protest marches should seek prior permission from the police. Only ten persons would be

allowed per protest march and sit-in in front of the Secretariat, a round-the-year venue for demonstrations.

As per the ordinance, only 50 people will be allowed to attend a marriage and a maximum of 20 people can take part in death related rituals. Any violation of the amendments will result in a fine of up to ₹10,000 and a jail term of two year. While only 25 people at a time will be allowed in shops and other business establishments, only a maximum of 50 people will be allowed at a time for marriages.

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Schools may not open before Nov, HRD in a fix on academic calendar

UGC may issue a fresh set of norms for rescheduling higher, technical edu institutions

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is in a fix about re-opening the educational institutions shut from mid-March. Discussions are on in the HRD Ministry to re-start the new academic session of primary and secondary school education from November only.

At the same time, university regulator UGC is about to issue a fresh set of guidelines for rescheduling the higher and technical education institutions. The earlier schedule for July reopening remains non-starter since the universities have cancelled semester exams awaiting further guidelines from the HRD Ministry.

However, as far as the top technical institutions such as IITs, AIIMS, NIT etc, are concerned the new session will start only from mid-November. Ministry sources confirmed this after the new schedule of the JEE and NEET entrances to



be held till September-end was announced last week.

The results to these entrances will be declared around mid-October. The follow-up e-counselling and admission procedures take almost a month.

The major problem for the educational stakeholders is reopening of schools. A senior HRD Ministry official in Secondary School Education said ideally the academic calendar for school education is 280 days and had it been July re-opening of the schools it would have been possible to stretch the calendar without reducing the syllabus.

"But now, given the situation of Covid we will have to reconsider and rework the academic calendar which may begin only by

October/November. We have to keep in mind the SOP issued by the Centre which also mentions children are a vulnerable community for the global pandemic. However, most of the school boards have been taking the advantage of technology and enabling study continues," said an official.

While CBSE is working on the new academic formula including syllabus through NCERT, the ICSE has reduced syllabi for all major subjects at the ICSE and ISC levels for the academic year 2020-2021. "Syllabus reduction are being done keeping in mind the linear progression across classes while ensuring that the connection related to the subject are retained," said a HRD Ministry official.

Continued on Page 2

August 15 deadline for desi vaccine in doubt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The possible timeframe for the launch of Covaxin, being jointly developed by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Bharat Biotech, got all the more confusing after the Ministry of Science and Technology deleted a sentence "a vaccine is unlikely to be ready for mass use before 2021" from a Press release put out on the Press Information Bureau (PIB) site on Sunday morning.

The Ministry published a Press release titled "Indigenous Indian Covid-19 vaccines in the global race to end the pan-

demic" on the PIB website. Pointing out that 11 out of 140 vaccine candidates, including the two Indian vaccines — Covaxin and ZyCov — have entered the human trial stage across the globe and added that neither of these is likely to be ready for mass use before 2021.

But soon afterwards, the release was edited, and the line stating "vaccines are unlikely to be ready before 2021," was removed. The fresh release has no mention of the timeframe.

The Government and ICMR are facing a lot of criticism for trying to push through the vaccine launch by



Independence Day. Health experts from across the globe have expressed concern over this "rush" and said no vaccine could be ready for mass use in such short time.

The PIB release said in past years India has emerged as one of the significant vaccine manufacturing hubs and Indian manufacturers account for 60 per cent of vaccine supplies made to UNICEF.

The vaccine for coronavirus may be developed anywhere in the world, but without Indian manufacturers involved the production of required quantity is not going to be feasible, it said.

The release said more than 140 candidate vaccines are under various stages of development. One of the leading candidates is AZD1222 being developed by Jenner Institute of

University of Oxford and licensed to AstraZeneca British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical company headquartered in Cambridge, England, it said.

The MRNA-1273 vaccine developed by Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute, Washington and taken up for production by the US-based Moderna pharmaceutical is just a step behind. Both these firms have already inked an agreement with Indian manufacturers for production of the Covid vaccines, it said.

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WHO ends HCQ trial for coronavirus

AP ■ BERLIN

The World Health Organization (WHO) says it is ending a trial into whether anti-malaria drug hydroxychloroquine helps patients hospitalised with Covid-19. WHO said on Saturday it has "accepted the recommendation" from the committee overseeing the trial to discontinue testing of hydroxychloroquine and lopinavir/ritonavir, a drug combination used to treat HIV/AIDS.

The drugs were being compared with standard care for

hospitalised patients.

WHO says a review of the interim results showed hydroxychloroquine and lopinavir/ritonavir "produce little or no reduction in the mortality of hospitalised Covid-19 patients when compared to standard of care."

The agency adds that while there was no "solid evidence" of increased mortality for hospitalised patients given the drugs, there were "some associated safety signals in the clinical laboratory findings" of an associated trial.

WHO says the decision



won't affect possible trials on patients who aren't hospitalised, or on those receiving the

drugs before potential exposure to the coronavirus or shortly afterward.

CAPSULE

2 PAK SOLDIERS KILLED IN CROSS-FIRING

Jammu: At least two Pakistani soldiers were killed in a strong retaliatory firing by the Indian army in Balakote sector of Mendhar on Sunday.

NEPAL POWER-SHARING TALKS FAIL; MEET TODAY

Kathmandu: The crucial talks between embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and the ruling Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on the issue of power-sharing failed on Sunday, but they agreed to meet again on Monday to sort out their differences ahead of the party's powerful meeting. **P8**

Fugitive Vikas stored explosives in house bunker



Debris lies on the ground after demolition of the residence of main accused in the Kanpur encounter case, Vikas Dubey, in Kanpur on Sunday

21 accomplices of Dubey involved in the killing 8 cops identified

PNS ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Police has revealed that history-sheets Vikas Dubey had a bunker in his house which he used to store weapons and explosives.

Meanwhile, the police have so far identified 21 accomplices of fugitive Dubey who were involved in the killing of eight police personnel in an ambush in Bikru village under Chaubepur police station of Kanpur on Friday.

One of them, identified as Daya Shanker Agnihotri alias Kalloo, was arrested by the

Kalyanpur police in an encounter late Saturday night. During the exchange of fire, Kalloo sustained bullet injury and was admitted to hospital in police custody. After the Bikru village ambush, he was absconding and was present in Kalyanpur police area.

Kalloo is a close aide of Dubey, who now has been included in the list of most wanted criminals of the state. Kalloo reportedly helped Dubey in matters of disputed lands. He is involved in three criminal cases registered against him at Kalyanpur police station, two

for attempts to murder, and one under the Arms Act.

On a tip-off, the Kalyanpur police raided a place near Jawaharpuram Pulia late Saturday night and cornered Kalloo. After an exchange of fire, he was arrested. Senior Superintendent of Police Dinesh Kumar P said Kalloo was being quizzed to gather information about Dubey.

During interrogation by STF sleuths, Kalloo disclosed that as Dubey had information about police raid in advance, he had called armed shooters from other places. He said Dubey had snatched his licensed gun to fire on the police party. Kalloo is reported to be the husband of Dubey's maid Rekha.

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Candle-making factory blaze kills 8 in Gzb

STAFF REPORTER ■ GHAZIABAD

Eight people, including six women, were killed Sunday when a fire ripped through a candle-manufacturing factory in Ghaziabad where they worked, officials said.

One of the dead worker was a 16-year-old boy. At least three other workers were injured in the blaze at the Modi Nagar unit which stocked highly inflammable material. They have been hospitalised. The police said more than a dozen workers were inside the factory in Ghaziabad in National Capital Region when an explosion brought down the roof and gutted the building.

The police did not rule out the possibility of some people still being trapped under the debris. The death toll now stands at eight, a senior police officer said. Officials said the exact counts of the injured and the dead would be known after the removal of debris.

Two fire tenders and policemen rushed to Bakhrwa village in Modi Nagar when the fire was reported around 4 pm. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed condolences on the deaths and sought a report from Ghaziabad District Magistrate Ajay Shankar Pandey and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP). **Continued on Page 2**

Two Pak soldiers killed in retaliatory firing by Indian Army

PNS ■ JAMMU

At least two Pakistani soldiers were killed in a strong retaliatory firing by the Indian army in Balakote sector of Mendhar in the wee hours of Sunday.

Three other Pakistani soldiers received injuries in different sectors along the line of control in Poonch and Rajouri in recurring incidents of ceasefire violations, aimed at escalating tensions in the region.

According to ground reports, intense shelling was reported past midnight in Balakote sector of Mendhar. In response, Indian army retaliated strongly to silence the roaring Pakistani guns. It is learnt, as Pakistan army resorted to use of heavy calibre weapons and started targeting

some of the civilian areas in the region, Indian army responded appropriately using similar calibre of weapons. According to local reports, at least two Pakistani soldiers were killed in Nikial sector opposite Mendhar sector while one soldier each received injuries in Rakh Chikri, Deva and Bagsar areas along the line of control.

Meanwhile, fresh firing was reported in the Balakote sector after a gap of more than 12 hours late evening around 7.45 p.m. Defence PRO in Jammu, Lt Col Devender Anand said, Pakistan army resorted to unprovoked firing in the area and also targeted the forward areas using intense mortar shelling. He said, the Indian army was retaliating befittingly in response to the firing in the forward areas.

Senior BJP leader shot dead in Latehar

PNS ■ RANCHI

A senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, said to be a contender for parliamentary elections, was shot dead at point-blank range in Latehar's Barwadih block on Sunday evening triggering uproar in the opposition cadre over the deteriorating law and order situation in UPA-led Jharkhand.

Two armed assailants shot dead Jaivardhan Singh, a district general secretary of BJP in Latehar, near a Pragma Kendra in Barwadih at around 7.30pm on Sunday, police said. "Prima facie, it looks like a criminal incident. He sustained one bullet shot in the neck and died on the spot," Latehar Superintendent of Police (SP) Prashant Anand said. "We are investigating the case. It would be too early to

The head of the Pragma Kendra, one of the eyewitnesses in the case, told the police that the perpetrators casually walked up to Singh minutes after he came to the locality, shot him dead and fired in the air as they fled

comment on the motive behind the murder," he added. A highly placed source in Latehar police said that Singh was a contractor and he may have developed rivalry with local gangs in the course of his work.

The head of the Pragma Kendra, one of the eyewitnesses in the case, told the

police that the perpetrators casually walked up to Singh minutes after he came to the locality, shot him dead and fired in the air as they fled.

The incident has triggered hue and cry in the BJP fold with senior leaders questioning the Hemant Soren-led government's efforts to keep such crimes at bay.

A delegation of BJP, headed by the party's state general secretary Pradeep Verma, will seek an appointment with Director General of Police (DGP) MV Rao on Monday to voice their growing concerns. BJP spokesperson Pratul Shahdeo on Sunday said that Left Wing Extremism incidents and crime incidents were on the rise in Jharkhand in the past six months. "The Government has been reduced to being a mere spectator to such incidents lately," he said.

Arrangements made for virtual darshan from Deoghar's Baidhyanath temple

PTI ■ DEOGHAR (JHARKHAND)

All arrangements have been made to live-stream pujas and rituals from the Baidhyanath temple in Deoghar during the holy month of Shrawan from Monday, as the annual Shrawani Mela will not be held this year in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, an official said on Sunday.

Lakhs of people from across the country visit the temple every year during the Shrawani Mela, which commences a day after the Guru Purnima.

However, the Jharkhand High Court on Friday denied permission to hold the annual event this year as coconavirus cases are rising in the state, and directed the authorities to make arrangements for virtual darshan of the devotees.

"Following the direction of the high court, this year



Shrawani Mela has been cancelled due to COVID-19 outbreak and arrangements for online darshan from tomorrow have been made," Deoghar Deputy Commissioner Nancy Sahay said.

The morning and evening rituals conducted by priests will be telecast live on the Facebook page and website of the Deoghar district administration, Doordarshan and private news channels for the devotees to watch, Sahay said.

The month-long 'Kanwar yatra', in which Shiva devotees

fetch sacred water from the river Ganga in Sultanganj in Bihar's Bhagalpur district and offer it at the Baidyanath temple, has also been cancelled to check the spread of the virus.

'Kanwar yatra' used to begin a day after the Guru Purnima, which was observed in the temple on Sunday.

Officials said barricades have been erected near the temple to prevent the entry of devotees.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren greeted the people on the occasion of Guru Purnima.

IAF deploys 2 Mi-17 choppers to contain locusts invasion near Jodhpur

PTI ■ JODHPUR

The IAF on Sunday deployed two Mi-17 helicopters for the first time in an anti-locust operation on Sunday and eliminated swarms of insects settled over a four-square-km area in Osian sub-division of Jodhpur by spraying pesticides

The Indian Air Force deployed its helicopters laden with pesticides early on Sunday on a request by the Jodhpur district administration and sprayed the chemical over a huge swarm of locusts which had landed in Bheekamkor village in the sub-division on Saturday.

"We informed the IAF in the night and two choppers reached the area in the morning to eliminate the locust swarm," said Locust Warning Organisation's Deputy Director K L Gurjar.

Before the IAF helicopters took the anti-locust sorties, the officials had marked the affect-



ed area on the ground with red flags to help chopper pilots identify the exact location, he said.

"The chopper sprayed the pesticide on the marked area in an operation that lasted about an hour," said Gurjar.

"About 50 percent of the swarm was eliminated by the end of the operation and remaining 50 percent was not in a position to move due to the impact of chemical," he said.

The remaining insects

Yatri Niwas to be used as base camp in Jammu for upcoming Amarnath pilgrimage

PTI ■ JAMMU

The Yatri Niwas at Bhagwati Nagar here would be used as the base camp for the upcoming pilgrimage to the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir Himalayas, an official said.

"The yatri Niwas is being prepared as the base camp for the Amarnath yatra with all necessary security arrangements," he said.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had decided to allow only 500 pilgrims per day by road from Jammu to the 3,880-metre high holy cave shrine of Amarnath during the yatra, which is likely to start from the Baltal track for two weeks later this month.

Earlier, the yatra was scheduled to commence from the twin tracks of Pahalgam in Anantnag and Baltal in Ganderbal on June 23 but was delayed due to the out-

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had decided to allow only 500 pilgrims per day by road from Jammu

break of coronavirus pandemic.

The Yatri Niwas, which served as the base camp for the annual pilgrimage in Jammu, was initially turned into administrative quarantine in March and later upgraded to a 500-bedded COVID care centre with all the required facilities to lower the pressure on the hospitals.

The official said the sprawling complex would be utilised as the base camp during the yatra period and later turned back into the COVID care centre.

Separatists' recommendations for J&K students highlighted their role in stirs against forces: NIA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has accessed various recommendation letters by separatists for Pakistani visas for students from Jammu and Kashmir whereby their contributions in the stir against the security forces were highlighted, officials have said.

The NIA had earlier red flagged admissions to medical institutions in Pakistan on the recommendations of separatists in Jammu and Kashmir and termed them as an "alternative mechanism" for funding of terror groups.

In 2017, the NIA had registered a case to probe the terror funding and arrested over a dozen people in this connection including Altaf Ahmad Shah alias 'Fantoosh', son-in-law of pro-Pakistan separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani who last week disassociated himself from politics.

The successor of 90-year-old Geelani in Pakistan's chapter of Hurriyat

Conference had alleged that the rival faction of the outfit was selling seats to professional courses. Following

the NIA probe in the cases, no names were recommended for admissions by the separatist groups from Kashmir last year.

For many years, more than 100 students were being annually sent from Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan for higher studies especially MBBS and the NIA has unearthed the nexus between students, Pakistan High Commission officials and separatists in the Valley, the officials said.

They said the separatist leaders used to charge money which was for spreading terror and separatist activities in the Kashmir valley after the NIA crackdown on all non-banking channel including 'hawala'.

In its chargesheet filed in 2018, the NIA said that during the course of its probe, it was found that students who were proceeding to Pakistan on student visas were either relatives of ex-militants or relatives of families of active militants who had indulged in various anti-national activities and had migrated to Pakistan or they were known to Hurriyat leaders.

Further in its probe, the NIA seized recommendation letters from separatists in

which links to social media showed the prospective students' participation in international activities, the officials said.

The admissions of students became an "alternative mechanism" for funding of terror groups in the Valley, a senior official said.

The official, referring to the NIA chargesheet, said the agency had red flagged the admission schemes offered by Pakistan as there was a nexus wherein the terrorists, the Hurriyat and the Pakistan establishment were "the three vertices and they are ostensibly patronising the Kashmir students in order to prepare a generation of doctors and technocrats in Kashmir who will have leanings towards Pakistan".

Besides a host of separatists, the NIA had arrested noted businessman

Zahoor Ahmed Watali in connection with the case. All of them have been behind bars for over two years now and have failed in securing bail. Watali had secured bail from the Delhi High Court but the same was reversed by the Supreme Court in 2019.

Ex-MLA jail ...

From Page 1

It was here where he was undergoing a sentence of 10 years, and had been hospitalised on June 26.

Another convict Kanwar Singh, who died last month and had tested positive for coronavirus, was also lodged in Jail no. 14.

According to Sandeep Goel, the Director General, prisons, Yadav complained of uneasiness and some heart related problems on June 26.

"He was taken to DDU hospital, from where he was referred to LNJP hospital the same day and admitted there. Later, on his family's request, he was allowed to be shifted under police guard to a private hospital in Dwarka on June 30.

August 15 deadline...

From Page 1

"Indian institutions have also engaged in R&D for the development of vaccines in India. With the primary scientific inputs coming from institutions like Pune-based ICMR institution National Institute of Virology and Hyderabad based CSIR institution Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology, six Indian companies are working on a vaccine for COVID-19. Along with the two Indian vaccines, COVAXIN and ZyCoV-D, the world over, 11 out of 140 vaccine candidates have entered the human trials," it said.

Now India 3rd worst-Covid hit nation

From Page 1

West Bengal reported 895 new cases and 21 deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 22,126 and death toll to 757.

Gujarat reported 725 new infections and 18 deaths in a single day, increasing the fatality count to 1945 and infections to 36,123.

As 225 persons were diagnosed with COVID-19 on Sunday, the situation in Kerala has turned serious and grave according to the State unit of the Indian Medical Association.

Fugitive ...

From Page 1

ADG Zone JN Singh said the amount of cash reward on Dubey had been increased to Rs 1 lakh.

IG Range Mohit Agarwal said after the mass killing of police personnel, police had lodged named FIR against Dubey and his 10 accomplices and 60-70 unidentified persons under different sections of the Indian Penal Code.

After the killing of the police personnel in Bikru village, the police had gunned down two of the assailants named in the FIR — Atul Dubey and Prem Kumar Pandey — in an encounter with them.

Social distancing must in Kerala for year, Ordinance brought in...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, an unprecedented "Triple Lock Down" has been declared in capital city of Thiruvananthapuram with effect from Monday morning, according to the Government of Kerala. This comes as a fall out of the hike in the number of covid cases diagnosed in the district on Sunday which

Schools may not...

From Page 1

CISCE Chief Executive and Secretary Gerry Arathoon told The Pioneer that there might be a 50 per cent reduction in syllabus too if the conditions did not improve in the coming months. "Given the academic

showed that 22 out of the 27 persons could not disclose how and where they got infected with the pandemic.

The State secretariat is being shut down for the next one week. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will attend to his official work from Cliff House, the official bungalow. Public transport has been suspended for the next one week.

loss till July, which is around 45 days we have reduced the syllabus for the students appearing for Class 10 and 12 Boards up to 25 per cent," Gerry Arathoon said.

In order to engage students meaningfully during their stay at home due to COVID-19 through educational activities at home with the help of their parents and teachers, the alternative academic calendars for students, parents and teachers at primary and upper primary

stage have been developed by the NCERT under the guidance of the MHRD. The Ministry has released Alternative Academic Calendar for 8 weeks for primary stage which will go until September first week.

Earlier four weeks Alternative Academic Calendar for Primary Classes was released in April, 2020 when it was believed that schools would resume in July even if the lockdown ended by May-end.

ing and a magisterial inquiry ordered, officials said. The factory owner is on the run and efforts are being made to nab him, they added.

The administration has announced a compensation of Rs 4 lakh each for the families of the dead workers. The injured will be given Rs 50,000 each and free treatment.

Candle-making...

From Page 1

The factory was being run in a rented house. The SSP said the factory was operating illegally. "Candles generally used

in birthday cakes were being manufactured at the factory. These candles generally have very small amount of explosives in them since they are to be used at homes and functions," he added. The in-charge of police post in the area was suspended for alleged dereliction of duty.

An FIR has been registered against the owner of the build-

4 cattle-lifters arrested, 29 bovine rescued in UP's Greater Noida

PTI ■ NOIDA

Four suspected cattle-lifters were arrested in Uttar Pradesh's border district of Gautam Buddh Nagar and 29 bovines rescued from their possession, police said on Sunday.

The accused were intercepted by the police on Eastern Peripheral Expressway in Dadri area of the district's Greater Noida late on Saturday, the officials said.

A truck, which is registered in Rajasthan, was being used for the illegal transportation and it has been impounded, a police spokesperson said.

"The accused were intercepted by local police officials near the over bridge of Maicha village in Dadri. Four cattle lifters were arrested and 29 young buffaloes were rescued in the event," the spokesperson said.

Those held have been identified as Zubair, Shokeen, Saif

Ali and Sabir.

Zubair hails from Mewat in Haryana, while the other three are from different places in Rajasthan, the police said.

An FIR has been registered under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act at the Dadri Police Station and further proceedings were underway, the police added.

Gautam Buddh Nagar in western Uttar Pradesh shares border with the national capital Delhi as well as Haryana.

Jamaatis responsible for coronavirus infection in MP: Min

PTI ■ SHIVPURI (MP)

Madhya Pradesh Health Minister Narottam Mishra on Sunday alleged that (Tablighi) Jamaatis and the inaction on the part of the erstwhile Congress Government was responsible for the spread of coronavirus infection in the State.

Addressing a function at Bairad town in Shivpuri district, Mishra said then chief minister Kamal Nath did nothing to stop the spread of the infection.

"People who arrived in flights from Dubai and (Tablighi) Jamaatis are responsible for bringing coronavirus to Indore. The infection further spread in other parts of the state from Indore," he said.



Nath, however, remained busy with Bollywood actors Jacqueline (Fernandez) and Salman Khan, and didn't hold a single meeting to chalk out a strategy to tackle the spread, alleged Mishra.

The health minister was apparently referring to the press conference held by Fernandez, Khan and Nath in

Bhopal for announcing IIFA events in Indore and Bhopal.

The event was eventually cancelled in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. Madhya Pradesh on Sunday recorded its highest single-day spike in COVID-19 cases as 326 people tested positive for novel coronavirus, taking the state's count to 14,930.

ICU bed numbers go up in Covid hospitals: Govt

2,244 new cases reported, total tally 99,444

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to ramp up the medical infrastructure in Delhi's fight against Covid-19, Delhi Government has ensured a steady increase in the number of ICU (Intensive Care Unit) beds in its Covid hospitals.

The number of beds have been increased three fold from 60 to 180 in Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital, from 45 to 120 in Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital, and from 31 to 66 in GTB Hospital by July 5 after a sustained push by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and under the daily supervision of Health Minister, the number of ICU beds has increased three fold from 60 to 180 in Lok, a government official said.

Kejriwal had recently said



that additional ICU beds would come up at Lok Nayak, Guru Teg Bahadur, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty hospitals. Delhi has reported around 97000 cases so far; of them, 68256 patients have recovered. The recovery rate of Delhi has crossed 70 per cent on July 4,

and the number of hospitalized patients has gone down from 6200 to 5300. The number of vacant Covid beds is around 9900, which is nearly 65 per cent of total bed capacity in Covid hospitals.

At the same time, the three fold increase in ICU beds in Delhi's three largest state-run Covid hospitals is a timely addition that will further strengthen the city's fight against Covid-19, he added.

The official said that as result of a continued push from the top, the number of beds in LNJP has increased from 60 at the beginning of lockdown to 180 today. The number of ICU beds in Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital has increased from 45 to 120 and the number of beds in Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital

has increased from 31 to 66.

With an increase in the ICU beds, the fatality rate in Delhi is expected to further reduce due to enhanced capacity to take care of critical patients. Over the last few weeks, the daily number of fatalities due to Covid-19 has gone down substantially from over 120 a day to 55 on July 4.

With the surge in cases in early June, the Kejriwal government left no stone unturned in rapidly enhancing Covid beds as well as ICU beds in Delhi's hospitals. Daily meetings held by the Health Minister and Weekly meetings by the CM with hospitals to review progress and ensure all necessary support was provided played a major role in the timely enhancement of ICU beds in Delhi.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With over 2,244 fresh coronavirus cases reported on Sunday, the total number of people infected with Covid-19 reached 99,444 till now in Delhi.

As per the Sunday health bulletin released by the Delhi Government, "71,339 patients have recovered, been discharged or migrated so far, while number of active cases stood at 25,038".

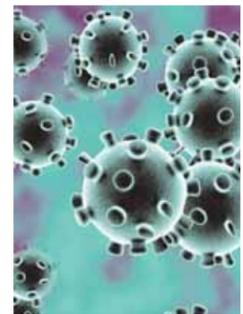
The Delhi Government has also issued an order for engagement of manpower up to 25 per cent in addition to existing sanctioned strength in outsourced services by individual hospitals or institutions under health and family welfare of the Delhi government.

As per the bulletin, Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare took a meeting with Secretary (Health), Special Secretaries and DGHS regarding strengthening COVID-19 surveillance response in the National capital Territory of Delhi.

Rapid-antigen tests started in the city on June 18. Since then a total of 643504 tests through the RT-PCR (reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction) and rapid-antigen methods have been conducted in Delhi with around 9873 (RT-PCR) tests conducted on Sunday.

Of this, around 13263 people have been tested through rapid-antigen kits, according to the Delhi government's health bulletins.

The number of tests per day has also seen an around four-fold increase from 4,190 tests per day in the first week of June to 15,863 tests per day in the last week of the month. According to health



authorities, rapid-antigen testing is an easy and cheaper method as compared to the RT-PCR test.

Each testing kit costs Rs 450 and can provide results within 30 minutes as compared to RT-PCR test that takes three to four hours.

The kits, called Standard Q COVID-19 Ag detection, have been developed by South Korean company S D Biosensor. The testing method involves looking for antibodies which are produced when the body is exposed to a pathogen.

If a person has antibodies associated with novel coronavirus, it means the person is either COVID-19 positive or has recovered.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, suspected individuals who test negative for COVID-19 in rapid-antigen test should undergo RT-PCR to rule out the infection.

While positive test results should be considered as true positive and do not need reconfirmation by RT-PCR test, it said. Rapid-antigen testing requires a prescription and an ICMR form filled by a registered doctor, and a government identity proof, same as that for RT-PCR test.

DSGMC requests Shah to provide representation of Sikhs in JKPCS

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) president Manjinder Singh Sirsa has requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah to provide representation of Sikh Community in Public Service Commission of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sirsa said that while one member from Sikh Community has always been nominated in the J&K Public Service Commission in the past many years as part of the practice to provide due representation to the Sikh community but now in the recent notification issued by Lieutenant Governor of J&K Union Territory vide dated June 24, the representation of Sikh Community has been completely ignored.

He conveyed to Home Minister Amit Shah that Sikhs has always been discriminated in the Union Territory of J&K in the matter of employment, granting of minority status, grant of reservations and all other avenues needed for the advancement and upliftment of the Sikh masses.

Sirsa said that while all other minorities' communities were forced to migrate from J&K and sought refuge at safer places fearing threat to their lives but Sikh community never migrated from Kashmir valley and fought the enemies of the country valiantly with courage and determinations.

He requested the union Home Minister to intervene in this case and ensure proper representation of Sikh Community in Public Service Commission and all other constitutional, statutory bodies of UT of Jammu and Kashmir

IIT Delhi start-up develops mask 'Kawach'

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

ETEX, a start-up from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT-D) and National Educational Enrichment in Villages (NEEV) has jointly collaborated for the distribution of face mask 'Kawach' for the underprivileged section of the society to protect them against Covid-19 in Gurugram.

During the event around 900 Kawach masks were distributed among the employees of the irrigation department and their families, police personnel, journalists and social workers.

Highlighting the speciality of these masks Dr Shiv Singh Rawat, IIT Delhi alumni and Superintending Engineer Irrigation Department Haryana Government said that the mask conforms to the standards prescribed by WHO and GOI Labs SITRA and are also compliant with ASTM Standards as per the experts

from Dept of Textile Engineering and Fiber Engineering IIT Delhi.

"There are multilayered masks with N95 knit adjustable with ear loop filtration efficiency made with ultra soft fibrous material and are washable too," he said.

"Kawach mask is a multi-layer textile innovation for optimum protection at an affordable rate Rs 45 only and it is washable and reusable for at least 10 times. This could be a game changing solution for COVID-19 crisis for protecting a massive population of our country in the most economical and effective way," Rawat added.

Rawat also shared his future strategy and said it is a proud movement for the Irrigation department along with IIT Delhi which is helping people during this epidemic with these self made masks which will help people to fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

"We have just started such activities and getting inputs



from different sections of the society and such distribution events will be conducted in near further as well," he added.

Meanwhile, the death toll due to COVID-19 in Gurugram has reached 100

with one more death, health officials said on Sunday.

Gurugram, which has the highest number of coronavirus deaths among other districts in Haryana, also reported 120 fresh cases. The district has

5,949 patients and 4,828 of them have recuperated from their illness.

Gurugram now has 1,021 active cases and 814 of them are in home isolation, officials added.

10,000-bedded Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre unveiled

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajaj inaugurated the 10,000-bedded Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre and Hospital (SPCCCH) at Radha Soami Satsang Beas on Sunday.

The facility is created on an emergent basis by the South Delhi District Administration with full support of the ministry of home affairs in record time of 10 days.

This the world's largest Covid care facility which will function as an isolation centre for mild and asymptomatic Covid-19 positive patients. At least 10% of the beds have oxygen facility in case the patient develops severe breathlessness and requires tertiary hospital

care.

Operationally, the Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre and Hospital has been linked to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital and Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital. The referral tertiary care hospitals are Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital and Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital.

ITBP will be running the first 2,000 beds at present with their 170 doctors/specialists and more than 700 nurses and paramedics.

This facility, having large number of beds, to the tune of 10,000 in one single campus, requires speed of management as well as analysis and operations that makes it imperative to explore extensive use of IT. Therefore, the e-Hospital software of NIC is being used to manage all

medical operations, right from admission to treatment, investigation, progress, referral and discharge through software. The patients will be admitted from all over Delhi through respective District Surveillance Officers.

Most of the basic infrastructure such as beds, mattresses, linens, etc. has been donated by various civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations.

This facility has been created to provide a stress-free and mindful isolation to the patients. A recreational centre has been made available to the patients along with a library, board games, skipping ropes, etc. They will be provided 5 healthy meals a day along with immunity boosting chawanprash, juices, hot kadha etc.



Ranjana Dimri | Pioneer

G'gram Police starts departmental enquiries via video-conferencing

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In view of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Gurugram police has started the ongoing departmental enquiries against its employees through video-conferencing for the speedy disposal of such pending cases.

As policing is evolving by the day, the city police have already installed cameras in its all 40 police stations and traffic police stations in Gurugram to use video conferencing live streaming and avoid personal meetings for public redressal.

Station house officers (SHO) have been directed to receive online complaints to minimize crowd at the police station.

Sources claim that scores of departmental enquiries have been deferred since March 24, when the nationwide lockdown was imposed, as policemen are unable to attend the inquiry committee proceedings physically due to the Covid threat.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (headquarters) Nitika Gahlaut said that all the 40 police stations and traffic branches in the district have been connected via video-conferencing.

The aim behind the move, she said, is to minimise or avoid personal contact. "Though we are trying to digitise everything, like routine meetings with SHOs and other officials are also conducted via video-conferencing, replies of the RTI applications are also given through digital medium," she said.

She further said it will save the time of the concerned policemen in every manner. "We have noticed that for minor work our policemen travel from Manesar, Pataudi, Farrukh nagar and Sohna area now with this facility they can directly be attached with the police headquarters and work will be done without hassle," Gahlaut said.

The police department will make more suitable arrangements for conducting the inquiry



proceedings through video-conferencing in consultation with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the officer said.

The police officials also added that soon the accused will be produced before the concerned magistrate court via video-conferencing from the police stations a meeting in this regard was recently held at the police commissioner office.

Moreover, the Gurugram police have already started e-court services to redress cases under sections 107, 150, 151 of the Criminal Procedure code (CrPc) through video conferencing keeping in view the rising figures of Corona infection.

The proceedings, hearing and appearance of such cases was commenced before the court of Deputy Commissioner of Police (headquarters) and Executive Magistrate will now be conducted via video-conferencing.

A data revealed by the city police of the DCP court in 2020 till June 26, a total of 136 cases have been registered against 290 people under Section 107, 150, 151 of the CrPc, out of which action have taken against 34 people and 10 cases have been solved while 126 cases (Kalandare) against 256 people are still pending.

In 2019, a total of 324 cases (Kalandare) were registered against 837 people under Section 107, 150, 151 of the CrPc out of which 832 cases have been solved and 4 cases against 05 people are still pending.

Bike-borne men fire at 2 transgenders, arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police constable came to the rescue of two transgenders after bike-borne assailants opened fire at them in South Delhi area on Saturday. Police said that they have arrested the accused after a brief chase.

The two accused, Mukesh (24) and Kapil (21), both residents of Madangir in south Delhi. Police said that duo was arrested from Ambedkar Nagar on Saturday.

According to Atul Kumar Thakur, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, the accused were hired to kill the transgender women and were offered Rs 5 lakh for the job.

"Another transgender woman had given the contract to take revenge for



the murder of her friend last year. The incident took place on Saturday when constable Kamal Prakash was conducting an enquiry into the murder

case," said the DCP.

"He noticed two men opening fire at the transgenders near Bhatia Kalan village on Chhatarpur Road here. The policeman immediately rushed to control the situation," said the DCP.

"The accused also targeted the accused following which they fell on the road.

assailants then jumped into an auto and fled from the spot," said the DCP.

"The constable immediately alerted his team and they chased the assailants following which the two were arrested. Police recovered a county-made pistol and another pistol with live cartridges from the possession of the accused," said the DCP.

"A bike used in the commission of crime has been seized, while one used

cartridge and a fired bullet was recovered from the spot," the DCP said.

"During interrogation, the accused said that they were hired by Pinky to eliminate the victims--Shalu and Aaliya. They were offered Rs 5 lakh to kill the transgender women and had received advance payment of Rs 20,000 for the job," said the DCP.

"Shalu was arrested last year for allegedly killing Pinky's friend, Ganesh. Shalu was released from jail on April 30 on interim bail for 30 days. The bail got extended for 45 more days owing to coronavirus-induced lockdown," said the DCP.

"On April 20 last year, Ganesh was killed near the Maulana Azad Medical College, while Pinky and her driver Deepak sustained bullet injuries in the incident," the DCP added.

Rain, high velocity winds lash Capital

NEW DELHI: A fresh bout of rain and high-velocity winds lashed the national capital overnight, bringing the mercury down by several notches on Sunday morning.

Light rain and generally cloudy weather is expected during the day.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative figures for Delhi, recorded 33.6 mm rainfall till 5:30 am.

The Palam station gauged 43.4 mm precipitation, the weatherman said.

Rainfall recorded below 15mm is considered light,

between 15 and 64.5 mm is moderate, and above 64.5mm is heavy, according to the India Meteorological Department.

Humidity levels also shot up to 100 per cent. More rain is expected over the next three to four days, Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of IMD's regional forecasting centre, said.

The maximum temperature is expected to drop to 34 degrees Celsius by Wednesday. The monsoon reached Delhi on June 25. Normal rainfall is predicted in the national capital during the season.

PTI



Over 4,500 paramilitary personnel infected

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Over four and a half battalions (4,500 personnel) of the five Central paramilitary forces have been infected so far by Covid-19 with the CRPF alone reporting over 1,500 cases followed by about 1,400 cases in BSF, a little over 1,000 in CISF, over 400 in ITBP and about 200 in SSB. Nearly two battalion strength of personnel continue to be active.

According to the data of novel coronavirus infection in Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) ranks available till Sunday, as many as 1,564 personnel have contracted the disease out of which 808 continue to be active cases and 747 persons have recovered. The casualty figure in the CRPF stands at nine. The CRPF tops the list in terms of total number of infected personnel, active cases and deaths.

As many as 1,348 Border Security Force (BSF) personnel have contracted the disease till Sunday. Of 1,348 infected personnel in the BSF ranks, 526 are active cases and 817



have recovered besides five persons have succumbed due to the disease.

Likewise, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has till now reported 1,021 infected personnel and 387 patients continue to be active cases. A total of 626 patients have recovered from the pandemic and eight persons have died due to the infection.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has reported 421 personnel contracting

Covid-19. There are 151 active cases and 270 patients have recovered. The ITBP has reported three deaths till now due to Covid-19.

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has the lowest number of infected personnel in its ranks with a total of 160 persons getting infected due to the virus that originated first in Wuhan, China. Out of the 160 infected personnel, only 30 are active at present and 128 patients have recovered from the disease.

○ The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has till now reported 1,021 infected personnel and 387 patients continue to be active cases. A total of 626 patients have recovered from the pandemic and eight persons have died due to the infection.

○ The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) has reported 421 personnel contracting Covid-19. There are 151 active cases and 270 patients have recovered. The ITBP has reported three deaths till now due to Covid-19. The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has the lowest number of infected personnel in its ranks with a total of 160 persons getting infected due to the virus that originated first in Wuhan, China. Out of the 160 infected personnel, only 30 are active at present and 128 patients have recovered from the disease.

A total of 4,514 personnel of the five paramilitary have been infected by Covid-19 till so far.

Of the 4,514 infected personnel, 2,588 patients have recovered and 1,902 infected persons continue to be active or Covid-19 positive. A total of 27 infected persons have died from the ranks of CRPF, BSF, CISF, ITBP and SSB.

The CRPF is engaged in a variety of internal security roles including anti-terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir, counter-insurgency operations in the Northeast and anti-Naxal action in the

affected States besides and order duties in aid of the civil police across the country.

The CISF is tasked to secure the airports, seaports, landports and various vital installations and government buildings besides the metro train networks like the Delhi Metro.

The border guarding forces like the BSF secure the Ino-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders, the ITBP patrols the frontiers with China and the SSB is the border patrol organisation for the frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan.

Sitharaman a venomous snake: TMC MP stirs row

PNS ■ KOLKATA/NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee has stirred a controversy with his disparaging remarks against Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, whom he equated with a "venomous snake". The BJP reacted sharply saying TMC chief Mamata Banerjee has lost control over her party leaders who are "uttering nonsense" out of frustration. The BJP said it will lodge an FIR against the TMC MP for his "misogynistic" remark.

Addressing a protest rally at Bankura against rising fuel prices and the proposed privatisation of trains on Saturday, Kalyan Banerjee demanded Sitharaman's resignation.

"Just like a 'kal nagini' (killer venomous snake) bites and kills people, her economic policies are killing the country's economy," he

said.

The TMC Lok Sabha member also called her "the worst finance minister" in the world. Kalyan Banerjee was even critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He had promised a new India and has done it by bringing down the GDP growth rate to "abysmal" levels, the TMC lawmaker alleged.

While BJP's national secretary Rahul Sinha said the party will lodge an FIR against the TMC MP for his comments that disparaged women, State party president Dilip Ghosh claimed West Bengal chief minister and TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee has lost grip over her party leaders.

"Corruption has spread in the TMC from top to bottom; they have become puzzled by internal feud and many of them are making senseless comments to divert the

attention from the situation prevailing in the ruling party. "We don't give much importance to such comments... they are uttering such nonsense out of frustration," he said.

"Mamata Banerjee recently sermonised people to maintain dignity of language in political discourse. Is this the kind of language that should be used against a lady? He is an advocate. Is this the language of an advocate? He has disparaged all women with his remarks," Sinha said.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra called Kalyan Banerjee's remarks "misogynistic". "He comes from a state where Goddess Durga and Goddess Kali are venerated. Mamata Banerjee is a woman and she should take action against her MP for his misogynistic comments. But I don't think she will," Patra told India Today news channel.

Air India to operate 36 flights between US and India from July 11 to July 19



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India on Sunday announced that it will be conducting 36 flights between the United States and India from July 11 to July 19, 2020 under the Vande Bharat Mission.

"Tickets may be booked through Air India website only effective 20:00 hours (IST) on 6 July, equivalent to New York (EDT 1030 hrs of 6 July 2020), Chicago (CDT 0930 hrs of 6 July 2020) & San Francisco (PDT 0730 hrs of 6 July 2020)," it said.

Earlier on June 22, the US Department of Transportation had announced that it had

barred Air India from operating chartered flights between India and the United States from July 22 without its prior approval, in an apparent retaliation for the Indian government not allowing American carriers to operate between the two countries.

Therefore, on 23 June, the Ministry of Civil Aviation had said that India is considering establishing "individual bilateral bubbles" with US, UK, Germany, and France which will allow airlines of each country in the pact to operate international flights.

On June 28, the Ministry announced that Air India will be conducting 114 flights to

and from 17 countries between July 3 and 15 under the fourth phase of the Vande Bharat Mission to bring back stranded Indian abroad.

Under the fourth phase of the mission, Air India will be conducting 114 flights connecting India with Canada, the US, the UK, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Thailand, South Africa, Russia, Australia, Myanmar, Japan, Ukraine and Vietnam.

The mission involved 860 Air India flights, 1256 charter flights and 8 Naval Ships. The stranded Indians returned by Air India flights were 1,64,121; Indian Navy helped return 3,987 people in 8 ships from Maldives, Iran and Colombo; chartered flights - 2,30,832 and foreign carriers - 3,969; about 60 air ambulances were operated and 95,220 people have returned through land border check-posts from neighboring countries.

Priyanka's bungalow at 35 Lodhi Estate allotted to BJP RS member Anil Baluni



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadr's bungalow at 35 Lodhi Estate has been allotted to BJP Rajya Sabha MP Anil Baluni by the Directorate of Estates, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Sources said that Baluni had sought to exchange his 20, Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Road bungalow sometime back. "The Ministry had ordered Priyanka Gandhi to vacate her bungalow earlier this week, as she no longer has Special Protection

Group security. After that, it was allotted to Baluni in exchange of his Gurudwara Rakab Ganj bungalow," sources said. Both the bungalow is at type 6 B category.

According to sources, Priyanka has not vacated the bungalow so far. She has been given time till 1 August to vacate the bungalow. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has cancelled the allotment of Priyanka's bungalow on Wednesday after her Special Protection Group (SPG) cover

was withdrawn by the government in 2019.

"Consequent upon withdrawal of SPG protection and grant of Z+ security cover by Ministry of Home Affairs, which does not have provision for allotment/retention of government accommodation on security ground to you, the allotment of Type 6B house number 35, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi is hereby cancelled with effect from 01/07/2020," said the ministry's notice.

According to the current norms, there are no provisions for allotment or retention of government accommodation to those with Z+ security unless exceptions are made based on recommendations given by the home ministry.

The bungalow was allotted to her despite being a private citizen on the account of Priyanka Gandhi having been a Special Protection Group (SPG) protectee.

The SPG rules allow all the protectees to get Government accommodation.

Modi calls on Prez Kovind amid rising tension with China



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of the ongoing face-off between India and China in eastern Ladakh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called on President Ram Nath Kovind and discussed issues of national and international importance.

The meeting comes just a couple of days after the Prime Minister visited Leh and addressed soldiers following the June 15 Galwan Valley clashes in the higher reaches of that region with Chinese troops that left 20 Indian army personnel dead.

After the meeting, the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted, "Prime Minister @narendramodi called on President

Kovind and briefed him on the issues of national and international importance."

The Prime Minister had addressed the troops of the Army, CRPF and Air Force and taken a jibe at China, saying the "era of expansionism" is over. Praising the troops of the Armed Forces, PM Modi said that the enemies of the country have seen the "fire and fury" of its Armed Forces.

"The era of expansionism has ended. This is the age of development. If someone becomes stubborn for expansionism, then it creates danger for world peace. History is witness that such forces have either been eliminated or forced to turn back. The entire world has made up its mind against expansionism."

Variation in Covid genome helped virus infect human cells: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A variation in the viral genome of Covid-19 has helped the virus to infect human cells and become the dominant strain circulating around the world, according to a study published in the journal Cell.

The researchers showed the variation named D614G is more infectious in cell cultures under laboratory conditions. The variant makes a small but effective change in the 'spike' glycoprotein that protrudes from the surface of the virus, which it uses to enter and infect human cells.

"We could see at the time of our initial preprint submission that the G614 variant was becoming the predominant form globally, but we could not differentiate between three broad possibilities that might explain a fitness advantage," says lead author Bette Korber,

a laboratory fellow at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

"The added experiments in the published study point to enhanced infectivity due to the spike protein change as the favored hypothesis. But infectiousness and transmissibility are not always synonymous, and we hope others will study these viruses in greater detail with wild-type virus in natural infection settings and varied target cells."

While coronaviruses generally have low rates of mutation, Korber and her colleagues were concerned that even small mutations to SARS-CoV-2 could hinder efforts to understand and fight the virus.

"We knew from our direct experience in the HIV field that in some cases, a single amino acid change can have a major phenotypic impact," she said.

To that end, the team worked to develop a publicly available data-analysis pipeline

that could mine SARS-CoV-2 sequences made available on the Global Initiative for Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) database to help scientists explore potentially interesting mutations.

They quickly identified the D614G variant as something to pay attention to: its key amino acid change from aspartic acid (D) to glycine (G) occurred on a protein that's crucial to how the virus infects human cells—and it was rapidly becoming the dominant version of the virus around the world.

"Although coronaviruses have some proofreading capacity, mutations can emerge, and vigilance, surveillance, and continued study of the virus will be key to ensuring that the drugs, antibodies, and other interventions under development remain effective," said Erica Ollmann Saphire at La Jolla Institute for Immunology at Duke University.

Locust strike: FAO warns India to be on high alert in next four weeks



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has warned that India, which is tackling the worst locust attack in 26 years for the last three months, should remain on "high alert" during the next four weeks even as the Ministry of Agriculture has stepped up efforts and is using the latest technology and equipment like drones and Bell helicopters for control of the menace.

In its latest update, the FAO said that spring-bred locust swarms that migrated to Indo-Pakistan border and travelled east to northern states, are expected to return back to Rajasthan with the start of monsoon in coming days. These swarms will return to Rajasthan to join other swarms still arriving from Iran and Pakistan, which is expected to be supplemented by swarms from the Horn of Africa in about mid-July, it added.

"Early breeding has already occurred along the Indo-Pakistan border where substantial hatching and band formation will take place in July

that will cause the first-generation summer swarms to form in mid-August," FAO said. India and Pakistan as well as Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Dausa, and Bharatpur of Rajasthan, and Jhansi and Mahoba districts of Uttar Pradesh by the Locust Circle Offices (LCOs), it said.

Besides this, State Agriculture Departments also carried out control operations at four places in Jhansi and Mahoba districts of Uttar Pradesh and at two places in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan against small groups and scattered population of locusts. So far, locust control operations have been done in a total 1,35,207 hectares area in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by the Locust Circle Offices (LCOs).

The State Governments have also taken control measures in 1,13,215.5 hectares area in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by the Locust Circle Offices (LCOs). The State Governments have also taken control measures in 1,13,215.5 hectares area in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by the Locust Circle Offices (LCOs).

On July 4, a Bell Helicopter took its first sortie in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan and completed its mission of chemical spraying in targeted areas, thereby augmenting the locust control efforts. In the intervening night of July 3-4, control operations were carried out at 25 places in six districts (Jaisalmer,

Barmer, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Nagaur, and Dausa) of Rajasthan and two places in Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh by the Locust Circle Offices (LCOs), it said.

Besides this, State Agriculture Departments also carried out control operations at four places in Jhansi and Mahoba districts of Uttar Pradesh and at two places in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan against small groups and scattered population of locusts. So far, locust control operations have been done in a total 1,35,207 hectares area in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana by the Locust Circle Offices (LCOs).

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CPM urges Govt to break patent monopoly over Remdesivir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) polit bureau on Sunday urged the Government to break the patent monopoly and issue licence to counter the high pricing by the US company-owned Remdesivir, the antiviral drug for Covid-19.

In a statement, the CPI(M) said the Government must invoke Clause 92 of India's Patent Act and issue licenses to Indian firms to produce the generic version of this drug at affordable prices.

"The price of Remdesivir in the US is \$3,000 or ₹2.25

lakhs, for a 5-day course. Five Indian companies are in negotiations for manufacturing Remdesivir under Gilead's license.

After manufacturing in India, Remdesivir will be sold at a 'concessional' price of \$400 or ₹30,000-35,000 for the same 5-day course.

The cost of manufacturing Remdesivir for a full course - as worked out by experts—is less than \$10 or Rs 750 in the US. And about Rs. 100 in India. Gilead, by virtue of its patent monopoly, is holding the world to ransom by asking a price that is hundreds of times

its cost.

"The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has accelerated the approval for the use of Remdesivir in India for Covid-19 patients. But with the US buying up the entire stock of Gilead and the high cost due to its patent monopoly, Indian patients will either not get the drug, or if it is available, find the cost prohibitive," said the CPI(M).

The polit bureau pointed out that as per Clause 92 of Patent Act, India has every right to issue a compulsory licence to manufacture the drug.

TACKLING CORONAVIRUS

Sena, BJP spar over delay in 12 MLC nominations by Guv

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI
 A war of nerves broke out between the ruling Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday over the likely delay in the nomination of 12 members to the Maharashtra Legislative Council by Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari.

politics every during the Covid-19 and trying to influence the "Union Home Ministry-nominated" Governor to delay the process of nominating 12 new members to the Upper House of State Legislature in place of equal number of outgoing legislators whose terms ended on June 15.

tion of 12 legislators by the Governor. "I feel that Sanjay Raut should not bother about the nomination of 12 persons to the State Legislature. Instead, he and the Shiv Sena should concentrate on Maharashtra and Coronavirus. The state government should think as to why Covid-19 patients were not being treated and what will happen to these patients. If the Sena was thinking about those issues, I would have been happy," Fadnavis said.

in a mood to nominate the 12 persons recommended by the Maharashtra Cabinet headed by chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Raut wrote in his column: "The nomination of 12 members to the Council has become a topic for a hot debate in the state. Normally the Governor appoints experts from various fields as members of the Council based on the recommendation of the State Cabinet. If the nomination does not happen on time, such a thing would tantamount to trampling upon the Constitution and gagging of the

State Council. This thing had happened during the Emergency". "Even today the BJP targets the Congress repeatedly by saying that by imposing Emergency in the country in the seventies, late Mrs Indira Gandhi took away the freedom of people and trampled upon the human rights of the citizens. "Even now the BJP observes June 25, 1975 (the day Mrs Gandhi imposed Emergency) as a black day.

had greed for power. That's why she trampled upon the Constitution and took away the rights of the people by imposing Emergency. Amit Shah is the country's Home Minister. He says the Constitution is not trampled upon, rights of Parliament and Legislatures are not taken. We congratulate him for that. Hence any delay in the nomination of 12 legislators would tantamount to scuttling freedom and gagging of the State Council like it happened during the Emergency," the Sena spokesperson wrote in his capacity as Executive Editor of

"Saamana". Raut said that Governor Koshiyari had given clear indications that because of the Coronavirus crisis, he was not in favour of completing the nomination process immediately. "In effect, the nomination of 12 legislations will have to wait till October. The Opposition BJP does not want the Governor to nominate the 12 persons recommended by the Uddhav Thackeray Cabinet to the Council as members. That's why the Opposition is trying to stretch the nomination process till

October using the Governor's office," Raut said. Raut said that in a public interview, Fadnavis had recently gone on record saying that the BJP was not interested in toppling the Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government and that it would fall on its own due to "internal contradictions". "Now that the BJP has realised it can not topple the government, it is creating all sorts of hurdles to the government; the latest hurdle being the nomination of 12 persons to the Council through the office of the Governor," Raut added.

Tamil Nadu: 60 dead, 4,150 test +ve on Sunday

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI
 Sixty persons succumbed to Covid-19 while 4,150 persons were tested positive for the pandemic on Sunday in Tamil Nadu. This took the total number of persons diagnosed with Covid-19 in the State till date to 1.11 million.

TN is on an aggressive testing mode as part of the administration's efforts to identify and isolate corona cases
 Tamil Nadu is on an aggressive testing mode as part of the administration's efforts to identify and isolate the coronavirus cases. On Sunday, four more laboratories were pressed into service which took the total number of laboratories in the State to 95.

and Thiruvallur (209) did not show any abatement in the number of covid cases despite the lock down. Madurai (308) and the industrial hub Vellore (179) continued to be districts of concern as the numbers kept increasing during the last 24 hours.

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI
 Six Sri Lankan fishermen were saved by the timely intervention and coordination by the Indian Coast Guard on Sunday morning from high seas 170 nautical miles off Chennai coast amidst inclement weather, said a release by the Defence Ministry.

with the vessel for safe rescue of the survivors, said the release. The six survivors were identified as natives of Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. They were reportedly stranded and adrift at sea, braving the vagaries of rough weather for four days. MRCC, Chennai further, coordinated with the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission, Chennai and MRCC Colombo to verify the credentials and arranging for their safe return to home.

Palk Strait region, which they claim as the traditional fishing zone of the fishermen from the State. There were instances when the Sri Lanka Coast Guard and Navy rescuing Tamil Nadu fishermen who were caught up in similar situations.



Covid vaccine faces stiff opposition from whistleblowers

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI
 Though the vaccine for Covid-19 is still weeks away from hitting the shelves in hospitals and pharmacy stores, a campaign against coronavirus vaccine is brewing up all over the western world, especially in the United States of America which could have ramifications in India also.

It may be noted that the announcement by Adams comes weeks before the Indian Council of Medical Research is to launch an indigenously developed corona vaccine in India. The concerns expressed by Adams have found support among Indian physicians of global repute, Prof B M Hegde, described as India's medical warrior and Dr C V Krishnaswamy, physician and diabetologist who strongly believes that a holistic approach incorporating various Indian system of medicine is the only way to take on the pandemic.

rious or even deadly substance, and given that today's coronavirus vaccines are skipping most of the normal protocols of safety and testing, the coming forced vaccinations with the coronavirus vaccine are mandatory medical experiments being conducted in violation of the Geneva Convention which forbids such actions on a global scale.

cine instead of turning towards the Indian tradition of treatment to take the coronavirus by its horns. "Vaccines and vaccinations have never worked anywhere. We have scientific evidence which proves that smallpox was not eradicated with vaccines. It is pathetic and ludicrous to say we ever vanquished smallpox with vaccines, when only 10 per cent of the population was ever vaccinated," said Prof Hegde quoting from the book "Confessions of a Medical Heretic" authored by Dr Robert Mendelsohn, US pediatrician and medical scientist.

are yet to see any kind of vaccine to checkmate the pandemic. Then how can we believe the vaccine developed for coronavirus in just three months"? asked Prof Hegde. Even as this report is written, there is news coming from various Ayurvedic practitioners how they cured hundreds of covid patients with drugs made of Indian herbs, plants and roots.

225 test +ve in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI
 As 225 persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 on Sunday, situation in Kerala has turned serious and grave according to the State unit of the Indian Medical Association. While 117 diagnosed with Covid-19 on Sunday were expatriates and 57 were from other parts of India, 38 who test-

ed positive were victims of community transmission as they could not disclose how and where they got infected. "This is really serious and we have to understand that Kerala is in the grip of community transmission," Dr Abraham Varghese, State President of Indian Medical Association told The Pioneer.

allowed to attend social gatherings like protest marches, rallies etc and that too with prior permission from authorities. The Government has not banned any sit-ins and demonstrations in front of the Secretariat at Thiruvananthapuram, a permanent venue for agitations, but restricted the number of participants to ten in view of the pandemic.

Gunned down terrorists turned out to be coronavirus +ve

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU
 Ahead of the reopening of Jammu move offices in Srinagar, one CRPF personnel received injuries in an IED blast in Pulwama area of South Kashmir while police teams detected another IED and defused the same with the help of a Bomb disposal squad (BDS) thereby averting a major tragedy in the same area on Sunday.

mortem, DNA and Covid-19 tests. The dead bodies of the said killed terrorists shall be carried through protective care ambulance and buried strictly as per Covid-19 protocol at Baramulla, police spokesman added.

Soft drink co sealed
Jammu: A bottling plant of a major soft drink company was sealed in Jammu on Sunday soon after the test reports of 18 workers tested positive in the premises. Three days ago, a worker had tested positive in the same premises after which fresh samples were lifted to screen others. Meanwhile, 183 new cases of coronavirus were detected and five more patients died due to Covid-19 in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday.

Bangla smugglers attack, hurt three BSF personnel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA
 Alleged Bangladeshi smugglers attacked and grievously wounded three Border Security Personnel in the North 24 Parganas district, BSF sources said adding the incident took place when the Indian security personnel challenged them in the small hours of Saturday. According to sources a team of 107th battalion of the force had laid an ambush near Bangghata village following reports that the culprits were active in a specific area of the border. After the BSF personnel challenged miscreants, about 10-12 in number, they attacked the men in uniform with hand-combat weapons injuring at least three of them.

defence in which at least one intruder was injured. About eight kilograms of or marijuana was seized from the miscreants, sources said. Elsewhere much to the chagrin of the BJP leadership a state forensic party reached blast site at Malda --- where an e-rickshaw was blown into smithereens following an explosion in his vehicle --- three days after the incident. "The State government's sensitivity towards such acts are understandable from such incidents where the forensic parties reach three days after a blast providing enough time to the miscreants if any to cross the border and flee to Bangladesh," State BJP leader Sayantan Basu said. While the police had earlier said that the blast could be a result of explosion in the battery of the vehicle locals smelt a rat wondering whether the intensity of the blast could be so high in case of a battery blast.

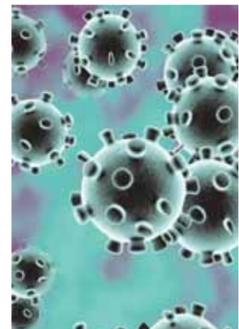
Maha deaths drop to 151, cases come down to 6,555

TOTAL DEATHS MOUNT TO 8,822, INFECTED CASES GO UP TO 2,06,619

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI
 Maharashtra witnessed a drop in the number of Covid-19 fatalities and infections on Sunday, as 151 people succumbed to the pandemic and 6,555 others tested positive for coronavirus in various parts of the state.

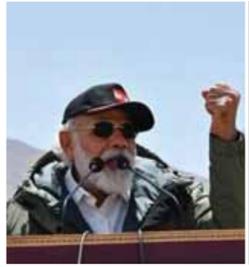
deaths in Thane, 11 in Aurangabad, 10 in Jalgaon, four each in Palghar, Dhule and Solapur, and two in Nashik. In a related development, former chief minister and current leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis --- who has been extremely critical of the Uddhav Thackeray government for its failure to check the spread of the pandemic in the state --- toured some of the worst-hit towns in Thane district and rooted for more Covid-19 tests, ventilators, ICU beds, and other facilities to curb the Covid cases and fatalities in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The situation in the MMR (Thane Division) is bad considering that there have been a total of 145,769 Covid-19 deaths and 6,407 positive cases on Sunday.

the state stood at 54.08 per cent. The mortality rate in the state is 4.27 per cent. The state health authorities pegged the number of "active cases" in the state at 86,040. Out of 11,12,442 samples sent to laboratories, 2,06,619 have tested positive (18.57%) for COVID-19 until Sunday. Currently, 6,04,463 people are in home quarantine while 40,062 people are in institutional quarantine.



Modi's Ladakh move

By touring frontline posts and calling out China's expansionism, PM tries to cover up his early remarks, says India means business



For a man who crafts his moves in such a manner that they appear the only truth that obfuscates others, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did slip up on the narrative that he sought to build on the Chinese ingress in Ladakh. Worse, he completely denied that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had ever entered our territory. A costly error considering he made this claim at an all-party meeting even as contrary versions came from his own office, the MEA and satellite images. So he had to do something dramatic to wrest his credibility, something which had been emaciated badly by the Chinese

with whom he stepped up bilateral engagements only to make the fatal flaw that somebody he likes to disown frequently did — Jawaharlal Nehru. Quitting the Chinese Twitter, Weibo, was hardly resonant. So he surprised everybody and definitely spooked the Chinese, too, by flying into Ladakh, visiting a forward position, encouraging frontier soldiers and significantly calling out Beijing's expansionism. He abandoned the diplomacy of caution and underplaying, one that had so far left quite a bit of legroom for both India and China to negotiate in private, and came much closer to calling a spade a spade. It was also his most reactive gesture to domestic criticism, from opinion makers of all shades wondering whether our nationalism and militarism were good enough against Pakistan, itself a pawn in China's game, while we were pusillanimous about the latter. And, of course, to silence Rahul Gandhi, who has consistently been attacked for the follies of his great grandfather in fostering *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* and who accused Modi of surrendering our territorial integrity to Chinese suzerainty. Internationally, too, he is indicating he is ready to make common cause with other nations against China. As the PM with the most number of visits to Beijing and summitry with Chinese President Xi Jinping, he has only helped China get a deeper access to our markets while fuelling its territorial ambitions and heightening its asymmetrical equation. One that has allowed China to scoff at our boycott of its goods as inconsequential. Modi certainly wouldn't like to be remembered for Doklam and the Ladakh standoffs. No matter what the rhetoric on de-escalation, both episodes have shown that while the PLA retreats a few steps, it fortifies just beyond the lines or asks for territories in return. By choosing to visit Ladakh when the disengagement talks between India and China are still on, Modi has conveyed that he wouldn't yield to territorial pressure or tradeoffs. And our soldiers would not back down from taking on the PLA if provoked. Modi's big signal is that the "face-off vs trade-off" formula is out and no territory will be conceded to buy peace. Or that claimed positions in Aksai Chin and PoK will never be legitimised. Nor will India shift its positions or stop developing its border infrastructure. For some time now, the local Army commands have been insisting that covering down had not given India any advantage and Modi seems to be coming round to the view that it is high time we stand up to the Chinese wherever we can. Particularly in Ladakh, where troop positions and mountain warfare strategies are in our favour. China had not bargained for an upgraded infrastructure on the Indian side and had hoped that its geo-strategic domination in the region could be achieved at a very low cost. But with Modi personally taking stock of frontline positions with the Army chief, he has sent a message that India is willing to bear the costs once and for all to restore status quo. That China wasn't prepared for such an offensive position is clear from its quick reaction to the "expansionism" remark and dire warnings that India can never match its defence budget. But the PM has clearly gone past such warnings. And though we may not be able to boycott all things Chinese, given their intrinsic worth in supply chain management, cost competitiveness and compliance of international standards, the Government is certainly wiring out wherever it can. While the loss of trade volumes may not be a dent to China's export basket, it would definitely be sore about not having a stake in India's infrastructure projects or consumption market.

Modi's assertive stand on the border also means that he has international endorsement of some sort and is clearly veering further to the West. The US, which has been hard-hit by the virus, won't be giving up on China easily in an election year and is deploying strengths in the South China Sea to stare it down. Officially, it said its decision is influenced by the Indo-China tension along the LAC. By referencing India almost as its proxy, there seems to have been some confabulation on the subject. France has offered help too. The UK and Australia are offering citizenship to Hong Kong residents following a new Chinese law usurping their rights. Interestingly, even Myanmar has been calling out China for abetting rebels within its territory and seeking international help. Clearly, there must be some sort of consensus on encircling the dragon. Modi seems to have based his strategies on this post-pandemic understanding between nations. But will he be bolder to talk about Tibet and Xinjiang? Maybe India could begin by supporting resolutions on these. We have to come out of the cocoon syndrome and go for China's Achilles heel.

The vaccine race

Showmanship is for politics, not science, warn researchers on the ICMR's rush to launch Covaxin by August 15



Science cannot be rushed, is a common refrain across our scientific community as the nation's topmost medical research body, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said it was attempting to launch the nation's first COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin, on August 15. The Ministry of Science had to curb such ambition with a statement saying it would not be ready before 2021. In effect, the ICMR is saying that while all the other countries, who are way ahead of us in terms of their research and trials on the vaccine and still would not be able to release it by the year-end, India by some miracle, would be able to do so in less than two months of it being approved for trial. This is a timeline unheard of anywhere in the world and even the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, which is miles ahead of us, is expected to hit the Indian market at the end of this year at the earliest. ICMR may defend itself, saying it is cutting through red tape but vaccine development does take time. Under normal circumstances, clinical trials on volunteers who are inoculated take over 10 years. However, given the pandemic and its effects on the world economy and health, this timeline has been compressed by most scientists around the world. The trials will now combine Phase 1 and Phase 2 to speed up the process. Phase 1, usually small, is used to determine a vaccine's safety profile while Phase 2 employs a bigger sample size and looks at the immune responses. However, a vaccine is deemed safe to be commercially available only after Phase 3, which is a much larger efficacy trial involving thousands of participants. But even with a telescoped timeline, experts don't expect to see a vaccine before 12-18 months. This makes the ICMR's plans scientifically implausible.

Worryingly, for Indians, who will be the final recipient of the shots, the trial document for Covaxin does not mention Phase 3. Even for Phase 1 and Phase 2, there appears to be some confusion over the sequence to be followed. Seven of the 12 participating institutes are yet to receive a green signal from independent ethics committees, a prerequisite for conducting clinical trials. And in one month, it is only possible to determine immediate safety, tolerability and immunogenicity of a candidate vaccine. It is not enough to find out if it is effective in preventing infections. Earlier, Bharat Biotech (BBIL), the Hyderabad-based firm which is developing the vaccine jointly with the ICMR, had itself indicated its availability for mass use by early 2021. Now, it seems to be toeing the Government line. As the country's top research body, ICMR should have the gumption to resist political pressure and explain to its political bosses that human health and lives cannot be put at risk for the sake of showmanship or electoral gains.



JS RAJPUT

The contours of a post-Corona world are emerging fast; so are the new challenges that every sector will have to face. With the novel virus upending nearly every aspect of our lives, an entirely new approach and innovative solutions would be needed to adapt to the "new normal." Changes would take place in every sector but the importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must gather greater human attention. On January 1, 2016, the 17 SDGs of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at the historic UN summit — came into force officially. The SDGs were conceived at the UN conference on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Their objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet urgent environmental, political and economic challenges faced by the world. The SDGs offer a blueprint to the world so as to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They seek to address challenges faced by nations across the world, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change and the ultimate goal of peace and justice. But how and why did we arrive at SDGs?

The 20th century witnessed the end of the colonial era and the initiation of subsequent transition into another era — of progress and development — among the newly-liberated nations. Most of these countries were deficient in human resources, education, experience and expertise at every level. Several nations transplanted education systems that were established over the ruins of indigenous traditions of knowledge quest. The shortage of educated and skilled manpower emerged as a great impediment for internal experts to evolve indigenous ideology of progress and development. In most cases, the ideology of "progress" and "growth" was borrowed from the West and implemented under the active guidance of former rulers. Another contributing factor was the personal fascination of new rulers to all that was foreign, Western and modern. Exploitative, ethically weak and unprofessionally envisioned plans and programmes for development led to serious imbalances in social, economic and man-nature relationship. In India, Gandhi, Gram Swaraj, farmer, vil-

lage, local artisan and production skills all were ignored, leading to serious neglect of the agriculture sector. Consequences are before us.

The World War II and growing public opinion against wars and violence highlighted the need for international cooperation and collaboration among the nations. This led to the establishment of bodies such as the UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNSC and several others. There had to be some sort of partnership among nations on equal and dignified terms. This was the only way to tackle global issues and concerns. SDGs are one of the major outcomes of the global human response to tackle issues that concern everyone. Could a single nation ignore the plundering of natural resources by vested interests, resulting in irreversible damage, creating a dark future for the generations ahead?

Learning to live together in a village, region, nation and the globe is the only alternative. SDGs form a comprehensive global initiative that guarantees victory against all that impedes the human march towards a world full of peace, dignity and mutually respectful harmonious living. But this is possible only when poverty, hunger, ill-health and gender discrimination are discarded; when there is equality of opportunities, justice, work opportunity, decent working conditions for all. Human beings must learn to take due responsibility to protect the natural environment, flora and fauna and sea resources. They must be concerned about climate action.

SDGs can be achieved only

on the sound base of sustainable and responsible consumption. All these — and a lot more — find a place in the list of SDGs. Universal education is the prime mover in each of the 17 goals. SDG 4 relates to educational goals. It aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all." Target 4.7 expects: "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development." It is also clearly mentioned that education will achieve its objectives and goals only when an adequate number of qualified, competent and inspired teachers are available. "By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states." This is the biggest challenge that India's New Education Policy must seriously respond to. No education policy can neglect these aspects.

By 1950-60, experts and scientists began issuing a warning that developmental activities — bereft of ethical, moral and social considerations — and oblivious to the damage they were inflicting on air, water, forests, species and the natural environment,

could lead to irreparable damages to the very existence of human beings. The sensitive link between man and nature was being crushed under ever-increasing human greed, emerging out of materialistic acquisitions at the cost of spiritual pursuits. Gradually, the glitz of globalisation blinded humans to the extent that the very existence of planet earth is at stake. How long could the planet survive?

It became clearer that the only way to avoid destruction was to create global awareness, let people understand that their future was being compromised and that it could be prevented only through an attitudinal transformation. It was realised that the most crucial and urgent step would be to universalise elementary education. It just cannot be routine education and has to be much more than that. It has to be comprehensive education, one that achieves attitudinal transformation, offers the right skills and knowledge and at the same time ensures internalisation of human values that includes man's responsibility to restore and sustain the man-nature mutuality.

For the first time, it was globally acknowledged that the wanton depletion of natural resources without replenishment — as was already evident globally in environmental pollution, deforestation, climate change, depletion of the ozone layer, desertification and so many other visible signs — must be checked and damage repaired. Development is essential but the survival of the planet deserves primacy. Hence, development has to be "sustainable." Its basis would be indige-

nous knowledge, cultural comprehension and skills to utilise new knowledge from every source in the changing context. It has to be "rooted to culture and committed to progress."

Human beings never had problems with nature so long as they respected the "give and take" relationship between man and nature. How this could be achieved was not unknown. Indian scriptures have discussed that in great detail. Nature was equated to gods. This had a scientific basis, articulated in a manner that would be easily comprehended by people at every stage. Unfortunately, various aberrations and disturbances resulted in the snapping of ties between the people and their cultural heritage. Alien rulers left no stone unturned to destroy natural resources of their "colonies" and augment their own coffers.

Global poverty is the creation of the materialistic pursuits and exploitative tendencies bereft of human values, compassion, fellow feeling and lack of respect for nature. As the disastrous consequences became evident, concerns grew and serious international deliberations followed. Take the example of the Stockholm conference on environment in 1972, the UN conferences on water and desertification in 1977, the Rio conference of 2012 and the climate change conference of 2015 among others. Expediting universal education emerged very prominently in each one of these every time. The World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien in March 1990, was a watershed for education. The objective was to universalise education within a decade. Although this could not be achieved, the purpose of expediting educational access to all was significantly achieved.

The World Education Forum of 2000 came out with the Dakar Declaration, where 164 countries resolved to achieve Education For All by 2015. Indian achievements in EFA have been lauded, particularly for the fact that its population has more than trebled after independence. But we are very near the target in access and retention. Our previous efforts and achievements, coupled with determined new initiatives, have made India fully ready to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Our focus in the days to come must be on quality, gender equality, skill acquisition and above all, on "learning to learn." If one has to observe a paradigm shift in one particular sector, it would be education, worldwide. India's New Education Policy can expedite the march towards sustainable development and self-sufficiency.

(The writer works in education and social cohesion)

opinion

A better report card

India's New Education Policy must incorporate a bottom-up approach to achieve the UN's SDGs. Focus must be on quality education, gender equality and skill acquisition



SOUNDBITE

Patriotic Ladakhis are raising their voice against Chinese intrusion. They are screaming a warning. Ignoring their warning will cost India dearly.

Congress leader
—Rahul Gandhi



The refusal of filmmakers to give me a chance to showcase my acting talent pushed me to shift my attention to the other aspects of life.

Actor
—Celina Jaitley



The US stands with India as you fight against the Communist China's aggression and I commend your continued efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution.

Republican Senator
—Rick Scott



Why so hesitant in taking China's name? Today's show in Leh proves *dushman* (China) *ghar mein ghus ke baitha hai* (the enemy has entered).

AIMIM chief
—Asaduddin Owaisi



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stop fake complaints

Sir — It is quite usual that many complainants, while filing charges against Government employees and others, mark copies to dozens of authorities even though the original letter is to be dealt with by a single agency. Many times, anonymous and fake complaints are also filed. Such practice unnecessarily consumes huge man-hours and resources of public authorities. Even though some guidelines exist for filing complaints, the Department of Personnel and Training should issue fresh norms in this regard with due publicity through advertisements in newspapers and TV channels. To stop fake complaints, it should be made compulsory to attach a copy of ID proof of the complainant.

SC Agrawal
Delhi

Queen of dance

Sir — Saroj Khan was arguably one of the most talented choreographers Bollywood ever had. In fact, she is credited with giv-

Police reforms are too important to neglect

The tragic deaths of P Jayaraj and J Benicks have turned the spotlight on the dark underbelly of torture as an instrument of policing. This incident has profoundly affected the collective consciousness of society. It is generally assumed that the State is the protector of the citizenry. As an arm of the State, the police force is bound to act in line with this assumption. It is not just a supposition but a constitutionally-mandated duty for the forces. The police simply cannot presume the guilt and punish those taken into custody on mere suspicion of the commission of a crime. They must be disabused of the notion that *khaki* is a licence for committing brutalities. Those who are tasked to protect the people cannot become perpetrators of crimes. Custodial deaths resulting from police torture are an antithesis to the constitutionally guaranteed right to life; they are extra-judicial and cannot have any place in a country governed by the rule of law. Often custodial deaths are termed and counted as "suicides" or "encounter during escape bids" and go unpunished. One would have thought that the Corona pandemic has had a



civilising influence on the police force. Jayaraj's and Benicks' should be the last custodial deaths.

Humanising the police is long overdue. Police reform has been on paper since the Supreme Court's 2006 order. This must be actualised now so that police excess becomes a thing of the past. The culture of chastising people must be repudiated and replaced with the culture of protecting the people. Citizens can't end up dead in police stations and jails.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Khan have passed away. It seems there has been one blow after another for every Bollywood lover.

In her career spanning four decades, the dance maestro had the credit of choreographing more than 2,000 songs. Most of the songs choreographed by her

had big names as lead actors. Khan had earned the reputation of being a legendary Bollywood choreographer who greatly contributed to the success of many famous Bollywood stars like Madhuri Dixit, who dominated in 90s.

Among her contemporaries

in Bollywood, Khan was the most original and was a hard taskmaster who immortalised the stars and music. She re-defined every era of the industry with her iconic work and took efforts to make dance look easy for artistes, as if anybody could dance. She will be remembered for her grace and simplicity.

Ramesh G Jethwani
Bengaluru

Better late than never

Sir — The ban on Chinese apps should have come much earlier. The Government was forced to undertake the digital strike to give the Chinese a befitting reply when it crossed all limits along the LAC. This is for the first time that India will be using a direct lever in the digital sphere to react to military actions. Most importantly, the ban will hurt China's most ambitious goals, which is to become a digital superpower. This move is also an attempt to show India's intent.

Srinivas
Bhubaneswar

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Picking up the pieces

The writing on the wall is clear. The paradigms of not only growth and welfare but of survival and safety have to be rewritten



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The last 13 weeks or so have been exceptional and unprecedented in experience, reflection and all that goes with it. The dominant theme has been of worry, anxiety and the strange feeling of helplessness, should one be unfortunate enough to be infected with the Coronavirus. The fear of the unknown, coupled with the pressure of several confusing containment operations, cushioned marginally by some precautions, can be a very difficult process to go through. That may be another story for a different day.

The coping experience is yet to be clearly comprehended to be articulated here. A reflection on the time frame mentioned above triggers some thoughts which are a potpourri of notions and emotions, sometimes verging on exasperation. There have been a spate of webinars and obviously this has lubricated the business of communication platforms. They have seldom had it so good. The disinfectant and the medical palliatives industry is booming, the latter particularly on the promises of increasing immunity and giving reserves to combat the dreaded disease. Both the narratives are inductive and in the absence of anything better, rule the roost.

The pharmaceutical industry is much in demand and reportedly the top bosses of the Ministry concerned were working 24x7 to keep the supply chain moving, specially for the export of some formulations. News channels and various media reports have it that the US had mopped up the entire batch of the current global production of Remdesivir. There was a concurrent protest on such matters, because the fear was that other formulations, when perfected for use, may have a similar fate. During this pandemic, one is truly trying to find a response for the unknown and the unpredictable lay of the land. One can only hope for luck.

It is no secret that the global economy has taken one of its worst beatings on all the conventional parameters of economic worth: Output, income and employment. However, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its sister institutions are not yet out of a job. The World Bank still has its pretensions. This is one area where the Chinese are still to catch up. The parallel institutions they tried to set up as alternatives don't seem to be firing even on two cylinders. Perhaps the Chinese obsession with creating its 21st century version of the Silk Route, with the Chinese economy being the hub of world economic operations, seems to be the undermining of their efforts.

The Indian economy still seems to be faithful to the traditional platform of sticking to bailouts, doles and largesse. For the economic strategic thinkers, who control this country's State-oriented growth processes, 2020 could just as well be 2008. The comfort of such thoughts is almost incredibly unreal and yet it can create the happy feeling of "something is being done."

For those who can see, the writing on the wall is clear. The paradigms of not only growth and welfare but of survival and safety have to be rewritten. Doing a cadence count with rising tariffs and surcharges alternately (and sometimes together) on petrol and diesel does seem to have exhausted its potential.

Yet the conventional economist knows that to be in business he must always tell a story of growth. The present one is that the recovery for 2021 will be 5.8 per cent. The repetitive accuracy of decimal precision these calculations always achieve is amazing. The unhappy sequence that some economists talk of, namely the cycle of contraction, recession and depression, is taken up only by the fringe elements. It's not even fashionable to debate it anymore. Confidence is rarely sighted. And not enough thought is being given to structural shifts the firms need to be considering.

For that matter, even household behaviour does not seem to have change enough with the times. Many in the household set-up are practicing decontamination and hope to protect themselves from the virus. It is not quite registering that this may need to become the new algorithm. There is a good case for doing so.

The kind of vegetable shopping which takes place, even in normal times, in the filthy cradles near drains in parts of some cities like Mumbai, needs to be stopped once and for all. Hygiene cannot be only a contagion-specific behaviour. A more hygienic and enduring supply chain of daily goods needs to be put in place for households and this cannot be a COVID-19-based effort alone.

With the disruption of aggregate demands and weaknesses in conventional sources of supply, there was never a better time to recast the survival safety net of human efforts in many parts of India. Deliberately, no claims are being made to an all-India model. That's because the Indian economy is far too variegated for a one-size-fits-all model. If the current health emergency leavened by economic disruption can impact the structure of demand, reform of capital flow would follow. Commodity prices could be redesigned and an overall more stable platform of everyday operations — both corporate and domestic — could follow.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

MANY CHEELS (EAGLES) ARE CIRCLING AROUND ME AND ATTACKING ME. AND I WANT TO REMIND THEM AGAIN, TIGER ZINDA HAI (THE TIGER IS ALIVE)
 —BJP LEADER
 JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA



WHEN HUNTING WAS NOT PROHIBITED, MADHAVRAO SCINDIA AND I USED TO HUNT TIGERS. NOW I ONLY SHOOT THEM WITH MY CAMERA
 —FORMER MADHYA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER
 DIGVIJAYA SINGH

Ball is in China's court

After the June 15 drubbing, if Beijing wants to test the water further and is willing to go to war, New Delhi is prepared and determined not to budge



ANIL GUPTA

The third Corps Commander-level talks held on the Indian side at Chuhsul to resolve the border stand-off with China also ended without yielding any tangible result. Though nothing substantial was expected at the military-level talks, yet the hopes of the "de-escalation" process commencing were being entertained, but to no avail. In fact, rather than de-escalating, the forces of both the nations have begun "posturing." Analysts feel this may result in a long-drawn haul till the winter.

India and China have a lot of history together and signed five agreements between 1993-2013 to maintain peace and tranquility on the borders. The aim was to avoid war between the two nations. No doubt, the agreements have succeeded in their purpose but at what cost? A close scrutiny would reveal that we bought peace at the cost of our national sovereignty. While China continued unabated with its strategy of "walk in at will" to alter status quo and continued its salami-slicing technique to strengthen its territorial claims and expansionist intent, we failed to respond adequately and overlooked it under the notion of a varying perception of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In fact, the first cardinal mistake was done in accepting the unresolved border as a LAC. That, too, without exchange of any marked maps. It obviously suited the evil intentions of China but we failed to read between the lines.

The Chinese on the other hand were creeping forward to the areas they believed to be theirs with no regard to the Indian claims. The Group of Ministers in 2001 had suggested construction of roads in border areas for better connectivity and asserting our claims. Even though road-building work began soon after, the network was not improved significantly till 2014.

While China developed not only the road network but also the allied military infrastructure to abet its war fighting potential all along the LAC, including extension of railway lines, oil pipelines and airfields apart from housing and storage facilities, we totally neglected our borders with China. As a result, China succeeded in creating a huge asymmetry along the entire LAC giving it the advantage of controlling the LAC and ensuring rapid build-up in case of hostilities. China is now exploiting this advantage and preventing us from taking measures to minimise the asymmetry.

China may even be preparing to convert the LAC to the Line of Control (LoC) because of the terrain advantage it enjoys. Though Indian troops are better trained and acclimatised to fight at such altitudes, it would be a logistics nightmare to maintain the troops at those heights if the posturing continues beyond winter. The Indian Army is mentally and physically prepared for this but will the Chinese soldiers be able to withstand the harshness of weather is a question for the Chinese to ponder. Meanwhile, the Indian Army should induct more locals. Ladakhis are not only hardy but also know the terrain well, especially when covered with snow.

Ladakh Scouts should not be viewed merely as an extension of an infantry battalion but be employed as "Alpine" troops, using their advantage of being locals and trained in special skills like skiing, mountaineering and the ability to live off the land. As in the "home and hearth" concept, they should remain permanently deployed in areas close to their homes and not be subjected to usual transfers like infantry battalions.

Over the years, China also built new villages and habitation centres close to the LAC to settle the civil population there. However, it objected vehement-

INDIA WANTS TO RESOLVE ALL DISPUTES THROUGH PEACEFUL BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS BUT WOULD RESIST EVERY ATTEMPT TO CHALLENGE ITS SOVEREIGNTY. IT WOULD PREFER CHINA TO HONOUR VARIOUS BORDER AGREEMENTS SIGNED BY IT TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY AND ALSO REVISIT OR MODIFY THEM IF NEEDED. BUT IF CHINA WANTS WAR, INDIA WON'T RELENT



ly to any construction or development related activities in the villages situated on the LAC on our side. However, in 2016 and 2018, India continued with construction of a lift canal in Demchok and construction of the road north of the Pangong Tso right up to Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO).

While the Chinese continued to defy the provisions of the peace agreements at will, we did not object strongly or seek review of the agreements to prevent repeated Chinese incursions. We remained happy by adding provisions to avoid clashes but ignored the central issue of wilful salami-slicing of our territory, resulting in reduction of grazing grounds and pastures for our inhabitants in the border areas. Every time the Chinese withdrew, they had a demand, to which we submitted meekly. This emboldened the Chinese next time and continued till India established a new normal of challenging the Chinese at Galwan this time.

The Chinese have perfected the art of "grab first and negotiate" but before negotiating create a situation of hopelessness for the adversary so that it is left with no option but to submit to the Chinese terms. However, the Chinese leadership has failed to do it this time and is irked by India's firmness and resolve.

The Chinese plan to "teach India a lesson" also met its Waterloo at the icy heights of Galwan on June 15 night when the Indian Army gave them a major drubbing. As a result the morale of Chinese soldiers is so low that they are being taught Unarmed Combat.

It is this loss of face, both domestically and globally, that is compelling China to delay the de-escalation. Any hurried withdrawal of forces will further sully the Chinese image. Gradual, delayed and unnoticed withdrawal suits the Chinese game plan. If China wants to test the water further and is willing to go to war, India is prepared and is determined not to budge.

In a hard-hitting article titled *New twist in dispute with China. Never ignore India's strategic interests*, General VP Malik, former Chief of Army Staff, states, "It is becoming obvious that on India-China boundary discussions, India seems to have given up its claim to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, Shaksgam and Aksai Chin; China has knocked off almost the whole of the Western sector boundary; and by reducing nearly 1,600 km from its definition of border with India and questioning Indian sovereignty over Jammu & Kashmir, it has added a new twist to the India-China boundary dispute." He further says, "India, on the other hand, is perceived as a soft state. Our leaders and governments, more often than not, have lacked strategic thinking. There is a sense of self-righteousness and singular faith in words without looking for underlying falsehoods and incompetence." The last line is truly prophetic. India somehow had kept quiet for several decades on the Aksai Chin and Shaksgam, which encouraged China to move up.

Now that India has constructed a road up to DBO and operationalised/constructed airfields in the region, China is annoyed. China is surprised as to how India is now demanding Aksai Chin as was clear in the Home Minister's statement in the Parliament. India's new posturing at political and diplomatic levels has rattled China, which, therefore, decided to "teach India a lesson" militarily. What further surprised China was India's response to military aggressiveness. India matched China brick to brick and responded to its military posturing in equal measure.

The recent news of Pakistan moving two divisions worth forces opposite Northern Ladakh in Gilgit-Baltistan is yet another attempt by China to coerce the Indian leadership by posing a threat of a two-front war. The reported resurrection of Al Badr, a defunct terrorist outfit, is also

part of the same ploy. But India is determined and prepared to meet the challenge.

China has to accept the blame for its current misadventure in Ladakh. Instead of doing that, it continues to blame the Indian Army and harp about the growing Indo-American bonhomie for the deterioration in Sino-Indian relations. In a recent article published in its mouthpiece *Global Times*, it says, "The US, in particular, is seducing India to counterbalance China and the concept of Indo-Pacific strategy is turning into a reality. For quite a number of Indian elite, they are more inclined to work with the West strategically. They believe that by joining the US camp to contain China, they are now a world power on equal footing." It's an attempt to warn India to stay away from the US without realising that India reserves the option of maintaining strategic autonomy. But if needed New Delhi would not hesitate to seek assistance, not necessarily military, from other friends as well. The Chinese arrogance is also evident in the same article. "No matter from history or reality, elements of India's politics and society are fertile for growing anti-China sentiments. It is understandable that India views the 1962 Sino-Indian war as a historic humiliation. But it would be dangerous if New Delhi resents Beijing and launches anti-China waves from national education and strategic levels," writes the *Global Times*.

India wants to resolve all disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations but would resist every attempt to challenge its sovereignty. India would prefer China to honour various border agreements signed by it to maintain peace and tranquility and also revisit or modify them if needed. But if China wants war, let it be. India will not relent. The ball is entirely in China's court.

(The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator, columnist, security and strategic analyst.)

The four stages of dealing with the grief of a pandemic

Denial, panic, scapegoating and ultimate sense are the usual way societies have dealt with new diseases throughout history



NADEEM PARACHA

The Pakistani media continues to carry reports about how large sections of society are being careless in their attitude towards the pandemic. It slams the Government for bungling the crisis by being misinformed about the dynamics of COVID-19 and its spread. Many have also criticised the regime for allowing its political biases to impact its contingency policies, which have so far been chaotic and almost entirely unable to stall the virus' rapid spread. Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and many of his Ministers have been censured for "misinforming" the people about the true nature of the disease

while, at the same time, vetoing the idea of strict lockdowns. So, as the outbreak ravages the country with frightening speed, Khan does not have much to say or show other than claim that he knew things were going to get bad.

With examples like China, Italy, Spain, Iran and the US before us, it didn't require a genius to "know" that things would get bad here as well. Even though Khan was hailed by his sycophantic circle of Ministers for being oracular for this insightful prediction, he had also earlier described the disease as, merely, a "flu."

The Government then continued to add unsubstantiated claptrap to its largely convoluted narrative in this regard, until intense media criticism triggered a sudden volte-face and saw the Government resort to accusing the general populace for letting things get out of hand. What's more, the Government also continued to ignore some rational advice from provincial governments and health experts. One such advice was for imposing stricter

lockdowns. But the PM disagreed. Instead, he began to rationalise his disapproval of lockdowns as an egalitarian act, undertaken for the benefit of the poor.

This rationale was almost immediately debunked by some writers on the economy. Business and economic journalist Khurram Hussain pointed out that lockdowns were, in fact, opposed by the business community, and members of this community were influencing Khan's anti-lockdown sentiments. Veteran journalist and political pundit Najam Sethi shared similar views. Martin Gak in a piece for the German news site DW explains the idea of opening up businesses (and thus, allowing the deaths of thousands from COVID-19) as the 21st century equivalent of an ancient past, in which human sacrifice was practised in some cultures, supposedly for the well-being of the larger community.

The outbreak in Pakistan was further compounded by a controversial Supreme Court order in which the

court asked provincial governments to open malls and markets before Eid. Not surprisingly, two weeks after that, Coronavirus cases in Pakistan witnessed an unprecedented spike.

But Pakistan is not the only country where the Government has badly botched the response to the pandemic and where the denial of its dangers or existence can be found in large sections of society. Similar scenarios are being played out in the US, Brazil, Mexico and India. Interestingly, each one of these, like Pakistan, have governments headed by populists.

The Brazilian PM actually took part in an anti-lockdown rally and then issued an order that the number of Corona cases in Brazil should not be reported. US President Donald Trump claimed that the virus threat was insignificant.

In India, it became apparent that the Narendra Modi regime only had the muscle to impose its Hindutva ideology but had no idea how to control the virus. In Pakistan, Khan with nothing

to show in this respect, ended up somewhat absurdly gloating that Pakistan was the only Muslim country where mosques were not closed for prayers. As if this were some colossal achievement in a time of a raging pandemic.

Journalist and novelist Karl Taro Greenfeld writes that historically societies often go through "four stages of grief" during pandemics and plagues. Mount Saint Vincent University's Professor Jonathan Roberts, an expert on the history of plagues, agrees. Roberts says that the historical pattern in which societies behave during pandemics has remained intact and that he is seeing the same pattern being repeated during the current outbreak.

Roberts has been investigating the ancient and modern histories of social and political responses to contagions. The pattern he was talking about starts with outright denial of an outbreak, followed by a panic reaction. This is then followed by scapegoating, which is tied to the emergence of conspiracy theo-

ries. On a more hopeful note, Robert suggests that in the fourth stage, those in power finally allow the proliferation of correct information to get out. But by then, thousands of lives have been lost and economies devastated. What's more, a community of people who are blamed for the outbreak during the scapegoating stage, would have suffered severe ostracism and harassment. This is related to what the World Health Organisation (WHO) calls an "infodemic", when madcap theories, once relegated to the lunatic fringes of society, suddenly emerge on the mainstream during the fear triggered by an outbreak.

Author and medical sociologist Dr Robert Bartholomew says that Jews were blamed for the 14th Century Bubonic Plague in Europe and the 1918 flu pandemic — which killed millions — was dubbed the Spanish Flu, not because Spain was the outbreak's epicentre but because the Spanish Government was the first to identify the problem. During the same pan-

demic, many in Britain believed that the virus was a germ created by the German military, even though an equal number of Germans were dying from it. With the proliferation of social media sites, unsubstantiated claims, denials and scapegoating have increased at an alarming rate about the source country of the virus.

But for Robertson and Greenfeld, there is light at the end of this tunnel. Both claim that, historically, the last stage of the aforementioned historical pattern is when societies and rulers come to their senses and work to address and contain the problem.

Rational contingency plans and their implementation, scientifically-sound advice to the public and the debunking of crackpot theories are vital. Unfortunately, many countries like Pakistan still seem to be stuck in the earlier stages of reaction: Denial, confusion and scapegoating. Only a handful of nations have moved into the more hopeful fourth stage.

(Courtesy: Dawn)

COVID SPREAD

Trump blames China's 'secrecy, cover-up'

Washington: China must be held fully accountable for its "secrecy, deception and cover-up" that allowed it to spread the coronavirus all over the world, US President Donald Trump has said, upping the ante on Beijing over its handling of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Addressing the nation for a second time in as many days on the occasion of 244th Independence Day on Saturday, President Trump touted the country's "progress" against the COVID-19 disease despite a nationwide spike in the number of coronavirus cases.

"We have the manufacturing record for ventilators. We have the most and the finest testing anywhere in the world. We are producing gowns, masks, and surgical equipment in our country... It was almost exclusively made in foreign lands, in particular, China, where ironically this virus and others came from," he said in his address from the

lawns of the White House. "China's secrecy, deception, and cover-up allowed it to spread all over the world, 189 countries and China must be held fully accountable," he said, once again accusing Beijing of covering up the outbreak of the pandemic.

In his first address to the nation on Friday from Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, Trump made a direct appeal to disaffected white voters four months before Election Day, accusing protesters who have pushed for racial justice of engaging in a "merciless campaign to wipe out our history."

Praising America's "scientific brilliance," Trump said on Saturday that the US will likely have a therapeutic and/or vaccine solution long before the end of the year. Trump has expressed disappointment over China's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in the past. In May, he claimed that it was the "incompetence" of Beijing that led to the mass killing across

the globe.

China has denied US' claim of "covering up" the extent of its coronavirus outbreak and has accused the US of attempting to divert public attention by insinuating that the virus originated from a virology laboratory in Wuhan. "China was the first country to report the COVID-19 to the World Health Organisation (WHO), (and) that doesn't mean the virus originated from Wuhan... There has never been any concealment, and we'll never allow any concealment," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in April.

The novel coronavirus which first originated in Wuhan in December last year has claimed over 5 lakh lives and infected more than 11 million people globally. The US is the worst affected country with over 1.2 lakh deaths and over 2.8 million infections, according to Johns Hopkins University data. **PTI**

Rocket fired toward US Embassy in Iraq injures child

Baghdad: The Iraqi military said on Sunday that a rocket aimed at Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, home of the U.S. Embassy, struck a residential house and injured a child.

Iraqi officials said the embassy's recently installed C-RAM air defense system may have attempted to intercept the rocket as the system was operational late Saturday. A recent spate of rocket attacks have struck close to the US Embassy and targeted American troops in Iraqi bases. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The rocket was launched from the Ali Al-Saleh area of Baghdad and landed next to a house close to a local TV channel late Saturday, the military statement said. A child suffered head injuries and the house was damaged.

Iraqi security forces say they also thwarted another attack in the Umm al-Azam area aiming to hit Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, a training base used by U.S.-led coalition

forces. In March, two Americans and one British soldier were killed following a barrage of rockets on Camp Taji.

The latest uptick in attacks comes shortly before Iraq embarks on strategic talks with the US in which the presence of American forces in the country is expected to top the agenda.

The US has criticized the federal government for being unable to reign in Iran-backed militia groups it believes are orchestrating the attacks. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi has pledged to protect American installations from attacks, US officials said.

Iraqi security forces last week raided the headquarters of the powerful Iran-backed paramilitary Kataib Hezbollah and detained 14 men suspected of being responsible for rocket attacks targeting the Green Zone. Thirteen detainees were later released and one remains in custody.

The move drew praise from the US but condemnation from Iran-backed political factions in Iraq. **AP**

Oli-Prachanda power-sharing talks fail; both agree to meet again today

Kathmandu: The crucial talks between embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and the ruling Nepal Communist Party's executive chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on the issue of power-sharing failed on Sunday, but they agreed to meet again on Monday to sort out their differences ahead of the party's powerful Standing Committee meeting.

The Prachanda faction, backed by senior leaders including Madhav Nepal and Jhulanath Khanal, has been demanding that Oli step down both as party chair and prime minister.

The two leaders failed to reach any agreement. As both the leaders stick to their respective stands, the talk could not bear any fruit, said a source close to Prime Minister Oli.

However, they have agreed to sit again for dialogue on Monday ahead of the scheduled Standing Committee meeting to sort out differences, a senior minister told PTI.

"The two leaders discussed a wide range of issues but no common ground was reached," he said. **PTI**

The twice postponed powerful Standing Committee meeting of the party on Monday is expected to decide on the political future of 68-year-old prime minister.

On Saturday, a crucial meeting of the 45-member Standing Committee was postponed until Monday to allow more time for the top leadership to iron out their differences over Oli's style of functioning and anti-India statements.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Oli has met with former prime minister and president of the opposition Nepali Congress Sher Bahadur Deuba. Although it is not clear what issues were discussed during their meeting, there is speculation that Oli might have sought Deuba's backing to save his government in case the ruling party splits.

On Saturday, Oli said that the ruling communist party is facing a grave crisis, indicating that it may split soon.

Speaking at an emergency meeting of the Cabinet at his official residence, Oli told the ministers that "some of our party members are also trying to remove President Bidya Devi Bhandari from the

power," My Republica newspaper quoted a senior leader as saying.

"Now, conspiracies are being hatched to remove me from the post of prime minister and party chairman," Oli said, adding that he will not let it happen.

After Oli's remarks about the conspiracy to impeach the president, three former prime ministers -- 'Prachanda', Madhav Nepal and Jhulanath Khanal -- met Bhandari and clarified that the rumour about the NCP leaders trying to remove her from office were untrue.

During the Cabinet meeting, a defiant Oli said that he will not be forced to accept the party's Standing Committee decision. He urged the ministers to make their position clear whether they support him or not.

"I had to make a quick decision to prorogue the budget session of Parliament last week after coming to know that some of our party members were hatching conspiracy to register an impeachment motion against the President at Parliament," Oli told the ministers. **PTI**

Thousands rally at Black Lives Matter protests in Australia

Sydney: Several thousand people rallied in Black Lives Matter protests across Australia over the weekend to call for racial equality and highlight deaths of Indigenous people while in police custody.

About 500 people protested in Newcastle, north of Sydney, after the New South Wales state Supreme Court approved the rally following an attempt by police to have it banned.

A rally in Sydney began with a ceremony at which people mourned the Indigenous Australians who have died in police custody.

There have been more than 400 Indigenous deaths in custody since a royal commission into the issue ended in 1991. No convictions have been recorded in any of the deaths.

"We went through the lawful process, we sat through that process of the coronial inquiry, we listened to that process and we received no justice from that process," Sydney rally organizer Paul Silva told SBS Television. "This is our process to demand justice."



A couple hold a banner as thousands gather at a rally supporting the Black Lives Matter and Black Deaths in Custody movements in Sydney on Sunday **AP**

On Saturday, Australians took part in Black Lives Matter rallies in the cities of Brisbane, Darwin, Perth and Adelaide. Many of the protesters work

masks and attempted to maintain social distancing due to coronavirus concerns.

Australia's Indigenous people are the most disadvantaged ethnic minority in the country.

They have higher-than-average rates of infant mortality and poor health, as well as shorter life expectancy and lower levels of education and employment than other Australians. **AP**

1 of 2 protesters hit by car on closed Seattle highway dies

Seattle (US): One of two people hit by a man who drove his car onto a closed Seattle freeway and into a crowd protesting police brutality has died.

Summer Taylor, 24, of Seattle died Saturday evening at Harborview Medical Center, spokesperson Susan Gregg said.

Taylor and Diaz Love, 32, of Portland, Oregon, were hit by the car that barreled through a panicked crowd of protesters on Interstate 5 early Saturday morning, officials said.

Dawit Kelete of Seattle drove the car around vehicles that were blocking I-5 and sped into the crowd about 1:40 am, according to a police report released by the Washington State Patrol. Video taken at the scene by protesters showed people

shouting "Car! Car!" before fleeing the roadway.

Love is in serious condition in the intensive care unit, Harborview, Gregg said.

Love was filming the protest in a nearly two-hour-long Facebook livestream captioned "Black Femme March takes I-5" when the video ended abruptly; with about 15 seconds left, shouts of "Car!" can be heard as the camera starts to shake before screeching tires and the sound of impact are heard.

A graphic video posted on social media showed the white Jaguar racing toward a group of protesters who are standing behind several parked cars, set up for protection. The car swerves around the other vehicles and slams into the two protesters, sending them flying into the air. **AP**

48 doctors resign over inadequacy of safety gear to protect them from virus in Pak

Lahore: Pakistan on Sunday suffered a setback in the fight against COVID-19 as 48 doctors working in the teaching hospitals of Punjab province resigned, citing non-provision of safety gear to protect them from the virus that has killed more than 4,700 people in the country.

According to a notification of the Punjab health department issued here on Sunday, 48 doctors, mostly young ones, resigned from the posts at the government teaching hospitals. Their resignations have been accepted, it said.

The doctors who resigned were from Lahore's Mayo, Services, Jinnah, General, Lady Aitchison, Children and Sheikh Zayed hospitals, Allied and Civil hospitals in Faisalabad, SZH Rahim Yar Khan and Nishtar Hospital Multan.

"The doctors in question have resigned after the govern-

ment's failure to their repeated requests to provide them protective gear against the deadly coronavirus and other inadequate facilities," a senior doctor of a public hospital Lahore told PTI.

He said the government seems to be least interested about the protection of the

medics. "We are front-line soldiers in war against COVID-19 and see what the Imran Khan government is doing with us. A couple of days ago police baton charged doctors in Muzaffarabad (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir), whose only sin was that they were protesting for not getting protective medical kits and salaries," he lamented.

Following the arrest of 23 young doctors in Muzaffarabad the Young Doctors Association shutdown emergency wards in all hospitals in PoK. **PTI**

Around the Globe

Zagreb: Amid a spike of new coronavirus cases, voters in Croatia cast ballots on Sunday in what is expected to be a close parliamentary race that could push the latest European Union member state further to the right.

Johannesburg: For the first time, South Africa is reporting more than 10,000 new confirmed coronavirus cases in a single day.

Beijing: A wide swath of southern China braced on Sunday for more seasonal rains and flooding that state media said has already left more than 120 people dead or missing this year.

Colombo: Sri Lanka will re-open its schools in a phased manner from Monday after keeping them closed for 115 days due to the lockdown imposed in the country to contain the spread of the coronavirus, the Ministry of Education said on Sunday.

Kanye West says he's running for President in 2020 elections

PTI ■ LOS ANGELES

Rapper Kanye West has announced that he is running for the office of President this year.

The multiple Grammy winner took to social media on country's 244th Independence Day (July 4) to share the news.

"We must now realize the promise of America by trusting God, unifying our vision and building our future. I am running for president of the United States!" West wrote on Twitter using a hashtag #2020VISION.

If he were to launch a campaign for the upcoming elections on November 3, West will go up against President Donald Trump, of whom he has been a vocal supporter, and Democrat presidential candi-

date Joe Biden.

According to NBC, during a speech at the MTV Video Music Awards in 2015, West said he was planning on running for president in 2020.

The recording artiste also opened up about taking a political plunge as recently as November 2019.

"When I run for president in 2024, we would've created so many jobs that I'm not going to run, I'm going to walk," he had said at an event.

The "Power" hitmaker and his wife, reality TV star Kim Kardashian have often visited Trump at the White House in the last few years.

West has also often been spotted wearing the signature Trump campaign 'Make America Great Again' cap.

Chinese city sounds alert for bubonic plague

Beijing: A city in northern China on Sunday sounded an alert after a suspected case of bubonic plague was reported, according to official media here.

Bayannur, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, announced a level III warning of plague prevention and control, state-run People's Daily Online reported.

The suspected bubonic plague case was reported on Saturday by a hospital in Bayannur. The local health authority announced that the warning period will continue until the end of 2020.

"At present, there is a risk of a human plague epidemic

spreading in this city. The public should improve its self-protection awareness and ability, and report abnormal health conditions promptly," the local health authority said.

On July 1, state-run Xinhua news agency said that two suspected cases of bubonic plague reported in Khovd province in western Mongolia have been confirmed by lab test results.

The confirmed cases are a 27-year-old resident and his 17-year-old brother, who are being treated at two separate hospitals in their province, it quoted a health official as saying.

The brothers ate marmot

meat, the health official said, warning people not to eat marmot meat.

A total of 146 people who had contact with them have been isolated and treated at local hospitals, according to Narangerel.

Bubonic plague is a bacterial disease that is spread by fleas living on wild rodents such as marmots. It can kill an adult in less than 24 hours if not treated in time, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

A couple died of bubonic plague in the western Mongolian province of Bayan-Ulgii last year after eating raw marmot meat. **PTI**

2 dead, 8 hurt in South Carolina nightclub shooting

AP ■ GREENVILLE

A shooting at a South Carolina nightclub left two people dead and eight wounded, a sheriff's official said.

Two Greenville County sheriff's deputies noticed a disturbance at Lavish Lounge just before 2 am, and saw a large crowd running out of the building. Sheriff Hobart Lewis said at a press conference. There was "active gunfire from inside the building," Lt. Jimmy Bolt said in an initial statement, and Lewis said all the shots were fired inside.

Both Lewis and Bolt initially said 12 people had been wounded — with at least four in critical condition, Lewis said — but Bolt later told WYFF-TV that the casualty

figure had been revised. A phone call and text message to Lewis and an email to Bolt from The Associated Press seeking clarification weren't immediately returned. No one was immediately taken into custody. The sheriff's office had "some suspect information," Lewis said at the press conference, but wasn't sure if there were multiple shooters.

"We don't really have a person of interest that we can name," Lewis said, later adding that authorities weren't sure what led to the gunfire. The names and precise conditions of the victims weren't immediately released. Lewis said the victims were taken to the Prisma Health hospital in Greenville, some via private vehicle. **AP**

Clothing factory in UK faces modern slavery probe

PTI ■ LONDON

A clothing factory named Jaszal Fashions based in the eastern England city of Leicester faces a modern slavery investigation after an undercover reporter alleged sweatshop-like conditions and below minimum wage payments to its workers, many of them from India.

According to "The Sunday Times", its undercover reporter found that workers were being paid as little as 3.50 pounds an hour as against the UK's legal minimum wage of 8.72 pounds an hour and was also operating last week during the localised coronavirus lockdown imposed on the city.

UK Home Secretary Priti Patel described the allegations as "truly appalling" and commended the undercover inves-

tigation for its role in "uncovering such abhorrent practices".

"I will not tolerate sick criminals forcing innocent people into slave labour and a life of exploitation," said Patel.

"Let this be a warning to those who are exploiting people in sweatshops like these for their own commercial gain. This is just the start. What you are doing is illegal, it will not be tolerated and we are coming after you," she said.

Last week, the senior Cabinet minister had directed the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) to investigate modern slavery allegations in Leicester's clothing factories after alarm was raised that they were a key source of the spike in coronavirus infections in the region, which led to England's first localised COVID-19 lockdown for the city.

Crunch, crunch: Africa's locust outbreak is far from over

Nairobi: The crunch of young locusts comes with nearly every step. The worst outbreak of the voracious insects in Kenya in 70 years is far from over, and their newest generation is now finding its wings for proper flight.

The livelihoods of millions of already vulnerable people in East Africa are at stake, and people like Boris Polo are working to limit the damage.

The logistician with a helicopter firm is on contract with the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation, helping to find and mark locust swarms for the targeted pesticide spraying that has been called the only effective control.

"It sounds grim because there's no way you're gonna kill all of them because the areas are so vast," he told The Associated Press from the field in northwestern Kenya on Thursday. "But the key of the project is to minimize" the

damage, and the work is definitely having an effect, he said.

For months, a large part of East Africa has been caught in a cycle with no end in sight as millions of locusts became billions, nibbling away the leaves of both crops and the brush that sustains the livestock so important to many families.

"The risk of significant impact to both crops and rangelands is very high," the regional IGAD Climate Prediction & Applications Center said Wednesday in a statement.

For now, the young yellow locusts cover the ground and tree trunks like a twitching carpet, sometimes drifting over the dust like giant grains of sand.

In the past week and a half, Polo said, the locusts have transformed from hoppers to more mature flying swarms that in the next couple of weeks will take to long-distance flight, creating the vast swarms



Locusts swarm on a tree south of Lodwar town in Turkana county, northern Kenya. **AP**

that can largely blot out the horizon. A single swarm can be the size of a large city.

Once airborne, the locusts

will be harder to contain, flying up to 200 kilometers a day.

"They follow prevailing winds," Polo said. "So they'll

start entering Sudan, Ethiopia and eventually come around toward Somalia." By then, the winds will have shifted and

whatever swarms are left will come back into Kenya. "By February, March of next year they'll be laying eggs in Kenya again," he said. The next generation could be up to 20 times the size of the previous one.

The trouble is, only Kenya and Ethiopia are doing the pesticide control work. "In places like Sudan, South Sudan, especially Somalia, there's no way, people can't go there because of the issues those countries are having," Polo said.

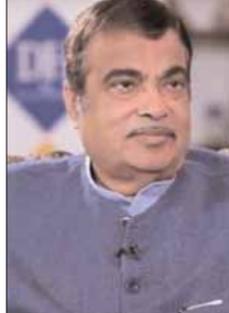
"The limited financial capacity of some of the affected countries and the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic have further hampered control efforts. Additionally, armed conflict in Somalia rendered some of the locust breeding areas inaccessible," ICPAC expert Abubakr Salih Babiker and colleagues wrote in correspondence published in the journal Nature Climate Change this month. **AP**

NITIN GADKARI

Projects on to augment India's border infra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To augment India's border infrastructure, a large number of highway projects are underway including in Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, both by the BRO as well as NHIDCL, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said. Work is also progressing on 17 strategic highway-cum-airstrips, three of which have been completed, he said. Besides, work is on in full swing on the ₹12,000 crore ambitious Chardham project for providing all-weather connectivity to Gangotri, Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Badrinath. The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has achieved a major milestone in the project by successfully digging a 440-metre long tunnel below the busy Chamba town on the Rishikesh-Dharasu national highway, he said. "We have completed three of the 17 strategic projects where highway stretches can double up as airstrips, mostly in border areas. Work on others is progressing fast," the road transport and highways minister told PTI. The projects, in collaboration with the defence ministry, will enable highway stretches to double up as airstrips when needed in border areas where there are no airports in 300-400 km vicinity, he said.

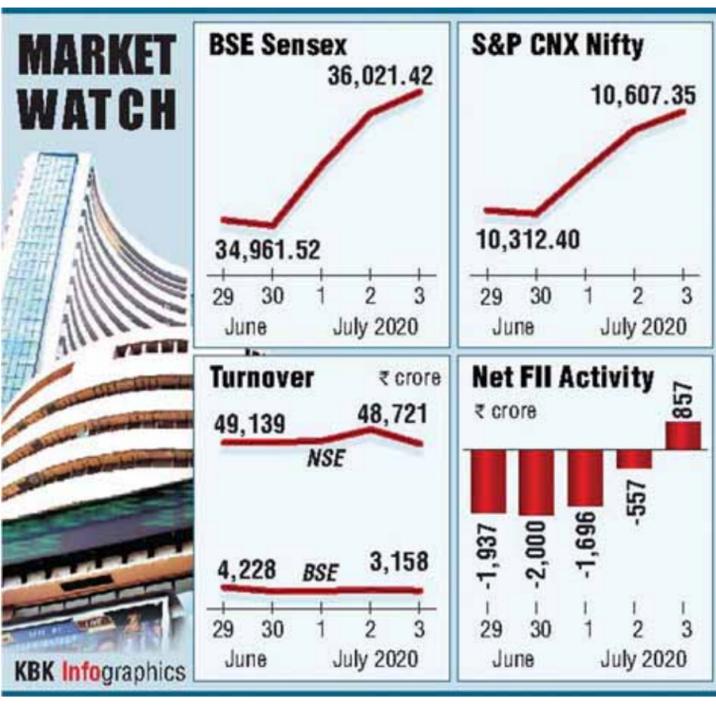


The Minister said traffic operations on such strips, which are already minimal as they are in remote areas, would be controlled via railway type electronic gates in case of need for airplanes to land or take off. Earlier, a committee was constituted comprising officials of both the highways and defence ministries to come out with specifications for such highway stretches. "In addition, we have taken up a large number of projects to boost infrastructure in border areas to develop the same under Bharatmala. These include Rajasthan border, Jammu and Kashmir borders, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the northeast including Arunachal Pradesh. The intention is all round development of such areas, to boost industries there and create employment," the Minister said.



A large number of these projects are being executed by BRO and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL), he said. A total of about 34,800 kms are being considered in Phase I of the Bharatmala Pariyojna at an estimated cost of Rs 5.35 lakh crore. "Sound infrastructure brings industries and employment. Simultaneously, it will boost the value of the agriculture and other produce in the border areas," Gadkari said. Much work has been done on the ₹12,000 crore Chardham project to ensure all-year connectivity to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Yamunotri. The latest Austrian technology has been used in Chamba tunnel, a major link of Chardham project, he said, adding the tunnel will be opened for traffic by

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and the period of journey will be reduced by many days. At present, the travel to Kailash Mansarovar takes around two to three weeks through Sikkim or Nepal routes. The Darchula - Lipulekh road is an extension of the Pithoragarh - Tawaghat - Ghatiabagarh road. It originates from Ghatiabagarh and terminates at Lipulekh Pass, the gateway to Kailash Mansarovar. In this 80 km road, the altitude rises from 6,000 feet to 17,060 feet. BRO had lost many lives in the construction of this road and 25 equipment were also badly damaged after they fell into Kali Nadi. But despite all odds, in the last two years, BRO could increase its output by 20 times by creating multiple attack points and inducting modern technology equipment. Helicopters were also extensively used to induct hundreds of tonnes of equipment into this sector, the Government had said. The Minister also suggested converting old defence aircraft into cargo carriers to boost cargo transportation from remote areas and thereby spur the economy of these regions. "There is need to explore the possibility of converting old defence and airlines aircraft into cargo carriers," he said, adding that pilots can be employed on contract basis.



IT Department amends TDS form to make it comprehensive

IT Department has amended the TDS form to make it comprehensive, the Income Tax Department has brought about changes to it. The department has made it mandatory for tax deductors to mention the reason for non-deduction of tax. Further, banks will have to report tax deducted at source for cash withdrawals above ₹1 crore. The Central Board of Direct Taxes, through a notification, has amended the IT rules and included TDS on e-commerce operators, dividend distributed by mutual funds and business trusts, cash withdrawals among others. The Centre has revised the format of forms 26Q and 27Q, where details of TDS amount deducted and deposited on various resident and non-resident payments are required to be filled.

Reliance plans to up aviation fuel stations by 50%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) plans to increase its network of aviation fuel stations by 50 per cent as it looks to capture greater market share in the business currently controlled by public sector oil retailing firms. In its latest annual report, RIL said the double-digit growth observed over 52 consecutive months might have been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but India continues to be one of the fastest growing aviation markets in the world for the fifth consecutive year. RIL, which operates the world's largest single location oil refining complex, plans to capture this opportunity through increased presence at airports to refuel airplanes. Air-passenger traffic in India rose 9 per cent even in February after the Indian carriers recouped to full capacity that was lowered following the closure of a major domestic carrier in the first few months of financial year 2019-20 (April 2019 to March 2020) as well as disruptions at Mumbai airport owing to construction and maintenance, it said. Following the COVID-19

pandemic, while travel restrictions were being imposed elsewhere, India was largely unaffected till the end of March 2020, before the sharp escalation in travel bans globally and lockdowns impacted India's aviation sector too. "On account of its network strength, cost competitiveness, industry leading technology and best-in-class service standards, RIL improved its volume share in the domestic market," according to the annual report. Reliance Aviation has the highest market share in 20 per cent of the operating airports. "RIL is looking to increase its network to 45 locations as against 30 at the end of FY 2019-20 and is well geared to benefit with the growth in the Indian aviation market," it said. India currently has 256 aviation fuel stations, with state-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC) owning 119 of them. Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) has 61 and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) the remaining 44. RIL is the largest private aviation fuel retailer with 31 stations, according to the latest data from the oil ministry. In comparison, RIL's auto fuel retailing network is very small.

Coal India suffers avg daily production hit of 56% during three-day strike

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India suffered an average daily production hit of 56 per cent during the three-day strike by workers against the Government's move to open the sector to private players, an official said. A union leader of Coal India had earlier claimed that there was substantial hit in coal output during the strike days. The coal workers were on strike from Thursday to Saturday in protest against the Government's move to open the coal sector for commercial mining. The average daily production by the PSU on the three days was 5,73,000 tonnes, which is 44 per cent of the last 10 days' average production (from June 22 to July 1) of 12,96,900 tonnes, the official said. The coal ministry official said production could take place even on strike days as Coal India employs around one lakh contract workers. On the three days of strike, maximum output was recorded on Saturday, the official said. Coal produced by CIL on Saturday stood at 6,83,000 tonnes, which was 53 per cent of the last 10 days' average production of 12,96,900 tonnes.

New Sebi norms to give more fund-raising flexibility to stressed firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Promoters of stressed companies will get more flexibility in attracting investors and the process of determining the right price for assets would get easier following a new set of amendments introduced by capital market regulator Sebi in its preferential share issuance norms. Market experts said the new guidelines provide flexibility to the promoters and promoter group entities to attract investors for their companies rather than becoming completely dispossessed as under the IBC framework. The amendments can also help promoters get financial investors on board without losing control of the company. Even if they get investors who wish to take control, they could end up with a continuing role in the company which may be diluted but not completely removed. Therefore, due to such flexibility, promoters may prefer restructuring through these guidelines as a better and faster alternative than going through IBC, the experts added. Sebi, on June 22, introduced guidelines relaxing pricing and open offer requirements to enable easier fund raising through preferential allotment by stressed listed companies. In order to ensure that the relaxations can be availed by genuinely stressed companies, clear criteria for a company to qualify as a 'stressed company' have been laid down. Adequate safeguards have also been put in place in terms of restricting persons who are eligible to participate, end-use disclosures, restrictions.

4.27 cr e-way bills valued at ₹12.40 L cr generated in Jun

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Government that investors will not come for the auction of commercial coal mining due to coronavirus pandemic. "We launched commercial coal mining on June 18. Prime Minister has blessed this occasion. And after that there was a technical interaction session. Only interested people come there. 1,140 people joined (the technical session). And out of that (1,140 people) more than 50 to 60 people were international players," Joshi said. Within eight days of the launch of the auction process, there were 329 registrations and 26 tender documents were sold for ₹5 lakh each, the Minister said.

Auction process of coal blocks witnesses good start; 1,140 entities in technical session: Joshi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The auction process of commercial coal mining witnessed a "very good start" and the response has been the best in domestic coal history, Coal Minister Pralhad Joshi has said. A total of 1,140 entities, including international players, participated in the technical session after the launch of sale of blocks, and 26 companies bought tender documents and 10 firms - domestic and foreign - evinced interest in the visit of mines, he added. The statement assumes significance in the wake of apprehensions of the Jharkhand

PER DAY LEVEL TOUCHES 77 PC OF PRE-LOCKDOWN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

An average of 14.26 lakh e-way bills, which are required for transportation of goods valued at over ₹ 50,000, were generated each day in the month of June, which is 77 per cent of the average number of bills generated per day in the pre-lockdown phase, GST Network said on Sunday. In total 4.27 crore e-way bills valued at over ₹12.40 lakh crore were generated by businesses and transporters during June, higher than 4 crore bills worth ₹11.43 lakh crore generated in Mar, reflecting uptick in economic activity with gradual lifting of lockdown, GST Network said in a statement. In Apr and May, 84.53 lakh (₹3.90 lakh crore) and 2.51 lakh (₹8.98 lakh crore) such bills were generated. In comparison, in Feb and Jan 5.63 crore (₹15.39 lakh crore) and 5.61 crore (₹15.71 lakh crore) e-way bills were generated, respectively, on the Govt portal. As per e-way bill generation data, an average of 18.49 lakh e-way bills were generated per day by businesses and transporters between January

25-March 24, 2020. This number came down drastically to 1.72 lakh during Lockdown Phase-1 (March 25-April 14). In Lockdown Phase-2 (April 15-May 3) and Phase-3 (May 4-May 14), it stood at 3.51 lakh and 6.75 lakh, respectively. In Lockdown Phase-4 (May 15-May 31), it was at 9.84 lakh. In Unlock 1.0 in the month of June, the number rose to 14.26 lakh per day. A nationwide lockdown to check the spread of coronavirus was imposed on March 25. GSTN, which manages the IT backbone GST, said it is evident from the month on month comparison of generation of e-ways bills.

GB Nagar holds large tree plantation programme



Greater Noida: In view of the target of planting 25 crore of trees in the year 2020-2021, the Uttar Pradesh Government is organised a large tree plantation programme on Sunday.

Accordingly, the State Government appointed Narendra Bhooshan, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority as Officer-in-Charge

for tree plantation campaign in Gautam Budh Nagar district. The plantation was held in the district was done under the direction of the nodal officer.

FPIs pull out ₹3,741 cr in three trading sessions in July

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pulled out ₹3,741 crore from the Indian markets in just three trading sessions of July, which market analysts attributed to profit booking and appreciation in the rupee over the last few weeks. The depositories data showed that FPIs withdrew a net sum of ₹3,959 crore from the equities but invested a net ₹218 crore in debt segment

between July 1-3. This translated into a total net withdrawal of ₹3,741 crore during the period under review. The latest withdrawal has come after investment of ₹24,053 crore by FPIs in domestic markets in June. FPIs turned net buyers after remaining net sellers for three consecutive months. "Markets performing well in the recent times, and some appreciation in rupee over the last few weeks, have provided a good profit booking opportunity to foreign investors, which they decided to capitalise on," Himanshu Srivastava, associate director-manager research at Morningstar India said. FPIs have been actively trimming their holdings in some stocks and the value of which they find unattractive while they continue to invest in stocks that have reached very attractive valuations in the last 3 months, Harsh Jain, co-founder and COO at Groww, said.

They are also showing a clear inclination towards financial stocks while they're consistently reducing their exposure to the communication sector, Jain added. With respect to investment in debt segment Srivastava said "the scenario is showing signs of normalising". "Decision of US Federal Reserve to initiate a dedicated corporate bond buying programme to lift their local economy could enhance the flow of foreign funds into India, which is expected to perform better in

terms of generating returns as against the comparable markets over the next year or so, he added. The Indian financial markets will continue to witness rotational trend with respect to foreign flows. Bouts of net inflows and outflows are expected by FPIs depending on their changing opinion and global trends, he noted. Globally the scenario is evolving and there are multiple factors which are dictating the direction of foreign flows.

Indian exchanges see just 4 IPOs in Jun quarter: Report

COVID-19 IMPACT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India witnessed four initial public offerings worth \$ 2.08 million in the three months ended June as the coronavirus pandemic impacted economic activities, according to an EY India report. All the IPOs were in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) segment and the medi-

al products were the active sectors in terms of the number of IPOs. Each sector had two IPOs on the SME market and they were worth around \$2.08 million. "Indian stock exchanges (BSE and NSE including SMEs) ranked seventh in the world in terms of number of IPOs in Q2 2020. There were no cross-border deals and there were no IPOs in the main markets," the report said.

HMD Global bets on Finnish roots, focus on security for success in Indian market

New Delhi: HMD Global, which sells Nokia brand of mobile phones, is betting on its Finnish lineage and focus on security to succeed in the Indian market where it competes against rivals like Xiaomi, Samsung and others. The company, whose lineup includes both smartphones and feature phones, also sees resilience in the Indian market and said sales numbers are inching

towards those in pre-COVID time. "We are the only European mobile phone brand. We have a simple idea at the core of our operations that mobile technology can improve the lives of everyone around the world... We believe that every Nokia phone is built upon the foundations of security, reliability, and dependability," HMD Global Vice President Sanmeet Kochhar told PTI.

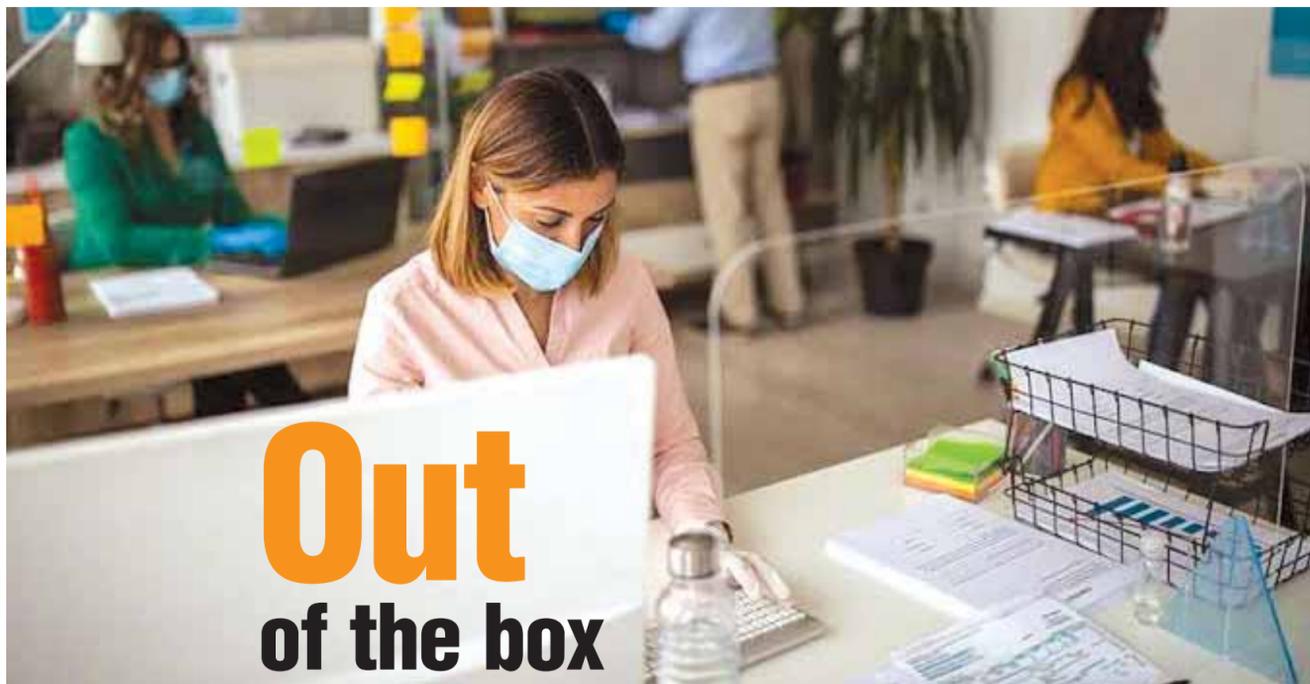
**Trend
Blazer**

Kangana picnics with family in Manali

Actor **KANGANA RANAUT** is enjoying some time in Manali before the onset of monsoons. The actor organised a picnic for her family in the picturesque mountains of the area.

“Even though they are in the green zone, they appreciate all the permissions given by the Himachal Pradesh authorities,” the actress’ team tweeted.

They also shared a video where Kangana can be seen enjoying herself as she rolls on the green grass while laughing her heart out. Clearly, she is spending quality time with her sister Rangoli and nephew Prithvi.



Out of the box

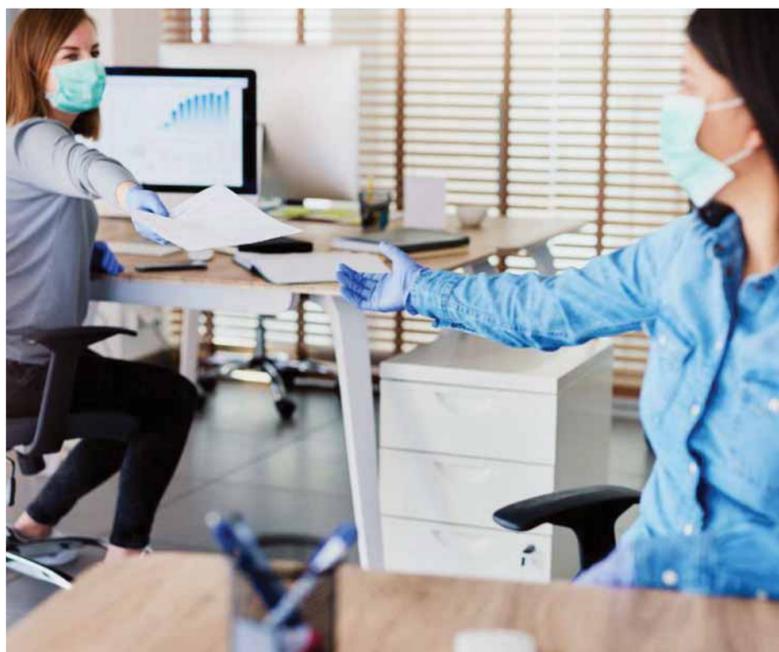
With unlock strategies being put in place, the time isn't too far when corporates reach their office desks again. So how does the future of workplaces look like? Is it time to reimagine spaces? By **TEAM VIVA**

Has work from home really turned out to be as helpful as you had thought it to be? Or has it become even more tiresome? How will the work patterns transform once you reach your office desks again?

A report compiled by a real estate consultancy firm explored how the office, as we know it today, will transform into a greener, healthier and sustainable place to re-welcome its employees post COVID-19. It indicated that around 30 per cent Indian working population feels that the lockdown has given them an enhanced opportunity to balance their work and life. However, while 66 per cent employees immediately shifted to working from home after the outbreak of the pandemic, around 41 per cent employees miss a professional environment while working. And for many, health and wellness are the key motivators to re-enter office spaces.

Also, considering that safety awareness has emerged as top priority in a post-pandemic world, over 76 per cent millennials will be cross-checking a company's social and environmental commitments before deciding to work there, ensuring that workplaces witness new techniques and ways of operations, collaborations and engagements.

Key to transformation: Spacing
As the country unlocks and “working from office” gains back the momentum, many companies are looking forward to making necessary changes for adaptability. New COVID-19 protocols will require greater physical separation in workplaces via spatial,



physical and temporal means. Workstations will be spaced further apart. Experts suggest that conference rooms will be majorly de-populated, space-dividing partitions erected and staff-issued rotating schedules will be religiously followed for some time now. The collaboration seating will have to be spread out so people are further apart from each other.

However, as much as de-densifying workstations are impor-

EXPERTS SUGGEST THAT CONFERENCE ROOMS WILL BE MAJORLY DE-POPULATED. SPACE-DIVIDING PARTITIONS ERECTED AND STAFF-ISSUED ROTATING SCHEDULES WILL BE RELIGIOUSLY FOLLOWED FOR SOME TIME NOW. THE COLLABORATION SEATING WILL HAVE TO BE SPREAD OUT SO THAT PEOPLE ARE FURTHER APART FROM EACH OTHER

tant, this might also be a challenge in areas where desk spacing is tight. In situations where existing desk spacing is less than six feet apart, every other desk can be used as a buffer for each person. This could be achieved by assigning some people to work from home or temporarily locating them in some other areas. Leading companies across the globe are already embracing flexible workplace arrangements and taking preventive measures to ensure

social distancing and good hygiene.

The digital drive: Telecommuting & other advancements

Companies will start investing in contactless technologies to reduce disease transmission. Standalone technology will be replaced by integral solutions that connect building facilities with the occupier's premise. People will have to be encouraged to collaborate virtually whenever possible. And telecommuting will become more mainstream.

Also, to avoid transmission, technological accessories such as a mouse, keyboard, or headset will be provided to each individual. These devices are touched throughout the day and hence, would be best if not shared without disinfecting between users.

Sustainable & hygienic practices

Companies will continue to focus on greener spaces and sustainable building will continue to be in vogue. Use of smarter materials, flexible arrangement of furniture, hub and club model, employee experience, digital ecosystems and a more holistic environment will be the focus of the future workplaces. Health and wellness are going to be key motivation for employees to re-enter the office spaces and organisations. Hence, reinforcing good hygiene practices with well-stocked restrooms that have touchless soap and anti-viral cleaning supplies is crucial. Workplaces will also have to install plenty of hands-free dispensers, disinfectant machines and sanitisers that contain high alcohol content in lobbies, confer-

ence rooms and lounges. New touchless features in interior design elements, including touchless faucets, automated window shades and motion-sensor or voice-activated door hardware, will see a surge. Such features, experts suggest, could also be added to other spaces such as building lobbies, reception desks and common areas. Sustainable practices such as utilising materials which are smooth, easy to wipe down and hold up to frequent deep cleanings, especially in high-traffic areas, will be followed.

Empowering employees
The impact an organisation casts on its people is beyond its tangible domains, as it results in larger face-to-face engagement, professional empowerment and a sense of fulfillment and personal confidence.

“While work from home is an interim solution in the current situation, it has its own drawbacks too, including challenges like the feeling of isolation and lack of personal connectivity with colleagues. It is very difficult to replicate an office environment and the collaboration opportunities in a WFH model. Hence, workplace design will be increasingly gaining importance in the current context and will be influenced by the fact that people shape the spaces they occupy, with focus on human experience, innovation in technology, wellness and sustainability,” says Ramesh Nair, CEO and country head, India, JLL.

It will become important to consider how employees are feeling when they prepare to return to the office. Instead of issuing a mandate for everyone to come back together, offering the option for people to do it alternatively will be a safer option.

“Most space planners, architects and product providers are proactively thinking ahead of time to bring in new concepts and technologies to provide a healthier and more sustainable workplace for the future. Occupiers have embraced the preliminary phase to accelerate the short-term transition and have started partnering with certain organisations to plan a safer and informed re-entry at the workplace to ensure social distancing and workplace wellness,” says MV Harish, managing director, PDS.

What's next?
There will be a new phase of acceptance where employees will be introduced to new norms of work and ethics such as flexible designed spaces, 90-degree rotation of desks and workstations, wide agile practices, health and well-being packages for employees and installation of contact-free spaces.

The post-COVID world is not simply about measures that focus on employee wellness. It is also about efficiency, speed and cost-effectiveness. Organisations need to optimise the existing spaces by making meaningful moves. Ultimately, the time spent optimising space will have the most powerful impact.



‘There’s an added pressure of being a star’s son. People think it’s very easy for us. I won’t lie, in a way to get a little attention it helps. It’s easier for people who are from the film industry but it’s double the effort to make it on our own. I managed to get out of my father’s shadow. He has been in this industry for 30 odd years.’

—Tiger Shroff

While director-producer **ANAND GANDHI** has left the audience spellbound with his films and documentaries, the filmmaker has also been lauded for his work with several awards at various film festivals.



Even though it's been many years for few of his films, people still can't get over the spectacle he brought to them on-screen.

And in order to reciprocate all the love that the audience have been showering, Anand hosted an *Ask Me Anything* session on social media recently and the response he got was overwhelming.

Claire opens up on postpartum anxiety

The *Vampire Diaries* actor **CLAIRE HOLT** has revealed that she suffered with postpartum anxiety after the birth of her son James.

In an Instagram post, Claire opened up about her battle with postpartum anxiety.

“After I had James, I really struggled with postpartum anxiety. Breastfeeding was incredibly difficult, he suffered from a cow's milk protein allergy, his sleep was non-existent, and I felt so overwhelmed,” she said.



WEBBED

Journey beneath the water

Biologist **JEREMY WADE**, in his new series, investigates baffling, unsolved mysteries of remote areas, disappearing fish species, islands lost in time and the sad plight of once-thriving rivers



has been described as a huge humped beast — half snake, half dinosaur. Jeremy travels to Northern Italy to investigate but is faced with more than one possible culprit. It turns out that a colossal fish is intriguing, but according to most people, there shouldn't be any fish of significant size in the area. Chasing a lead, Jeremy travels to eastern Australia to investigate, and discovers that the fish responsible for the attack could be a species back from the brink of extinction.

ALASKA'S LOST RIVER KINGS

Jeremy travels to Alaska to investigate reports of the mysterious disappearance of the majestic King Salmon. His search for answers takes him from the state's most heavily fished rivers to the mighty Yukon River where the King Salmon is the lifeblood of the native communities and out into the ocean, following a trail of evidence that leads him to encounters with some of Alaska's most formidable predators. Who or what is killing the kings?

RETURN OF THE OUTBACK BEAST

A report of an underwater attack in Australia has caught Jeremy's attention. The story of a diver tangling with a colossal fish is intriguing, but according to most people, there shouldn't be any fish of significant size in the area. Chasing a lead, Jeremy travels to eastern Australia to investigate, and discovers that the fish responsible for the attack could be a species back from the brink of extinction.

The series is produced by Icon Films where Laura Marshall and Andie Clare serve as executive producers with Nicholas Head as showrunner. For Animal Planet, Lisa Lucas is executive producer with Patrick Keegan as supervising producer.

(The series premieres on July 6 at 9 pm on Animal Planet, Animal Planet HD and Discovery Plus app.)



Deepika takes yoga classes

With her talent and on screen presence, actor **Deepika Padukone** has proved that she can play any character with utmost passion. Ever since her forthcoming film with Shakun Batra has been announced, fans have been contemplating as to what new does the actor has in store for her fans. We hear that Deepika has recently started engaging in yoga as part of her preparation for her role.

According to a well placed source, “Ahead of commencing the shoot for Shakun Batra's directorial, Deepika has started training for Yoga. It is a part of her preparation for the film. While there is no understanding of how this is going to be of help to her in the film, as not much is known about her character, it is only known that she has recently started training for it.”

There could be some connection of it with her role and the makers are keeping all the details under wraps.

The actor has been reading parts of the script everyday as she doesn't want to lose touch with her character by the time they start shooting for it. Deepika delivers an exemplary performance on the celluloid and the credit goes to her diligence, passion and determination. She thoroughly seeps into the skin of her character, and walks an extra mile to achieve the finesse.

Had it not been for the lockdown, a major chunk of the film's shoot would have been completed in Sri Lanka. However, the actor will soon start shooting for the film.

Ayurveda explores the relationship between the mind, body and soul. It has a holistic approach towards mental health issues and depression, says **GEETA RAMESH**

KEEP CALM



There have been endless debates around mental health and depression. But time and again, we have to be reminded that mental illnesses are a thing and how important it is to start normalising it. Did you know that this psychological disorder is so common that nearly 10 per cent of the population is suffering from a depressive disorder. World Health Organisation (WHO) expects depression to be the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide.

It is a deep, broad, complex subject and a serious medical condition which needs to be supervised by a professional. It is not only a psychological disorder but also a physical distress. Mental disorder is characterised by sadness, loss of interest, pleasure, feeling of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep and poor concentration. Physical distress is mostly due to physical disability and higher mortality. It affects everyone differently, so each person is treated differently too. It is seen that women are more affected by depression than men. The fear of stigma and lack of support for people with mental disorders have known to be the biggest reasons for not being able to avail the right treatment.

Well, Ayurveda seems to have a cure. It helps to bring your body back in balance. So it is very important to find the cause of the disease. According to it, good health is a balance of physical and psychological well-being. It has always had a holistic approach towards this disorder just like another disease we suffer from. The holistic approach is in regard with the treatment of mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression, so Ayurveda explores the relationship between the mind, body, soul and their working.

Our body is made up of three types

of *Doshās* — *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha*. The imbalance of these causes mental and emotional disturbances. Thus, it is important to balance these *doshas* and energise them for which we have to follow the Ayurvedic norms like *Dinacharya* (daily routines) and *Ritucharya* (seasonal health routines).

One has to follow a healthy and pure *sattvic* diet which suits your body type. The food that we consume should have all the six taste in them such as sweet, sour, bitter, astringent, salty and pungent.

Various Ayurvedic therapies are recommended under a doctor's supervision at our centre such as *Shirodhara* with *Thialam* or *Thakrdhara*, *Thalapothital* *Thalam*, *Pichu*, *Abhyangam*, *Nasyam* and many others. Ayurvedic medicines like *Manasmithra* *gulika*, *Brahmi*, *Ashwagandha* are good



promoters of mental and emotional health.

People need to strictly follow some of the basic regimes in life. Following a proper daily routine is essential in Ayurveda for the body and mind. It can help keep a positive attitude, happiness and relaxation. It starts with waking up early in the morning and saying a

prayer before leaving the bed. Once out of the bed, one needs to clean the face, mouth and eyes by splashing some cold water and rinsing your mouth. Another important aspect is to blink your eyes seven times and then rotating it in all directions.

Next step should be *Nasya* (administration of herbs by the route of nasal cavity). This should be performed before having a bath or even your daily exercises on an empty stomach. One should lie down with the head tilted back and then put five drops of *Nasya* in each nostril and ears. Another step would be to apply oil to the head and body.

Performing any exercise or *pranayam* helps in aligning one's body, mind and soul. It is very important for people suffering from anxiety, depression or any other mental health issues since

it calms the nerves and other parts of the body. Exercise, of course, also controls weight, improves the flow of blood in the body as well as loosens stiff joints.

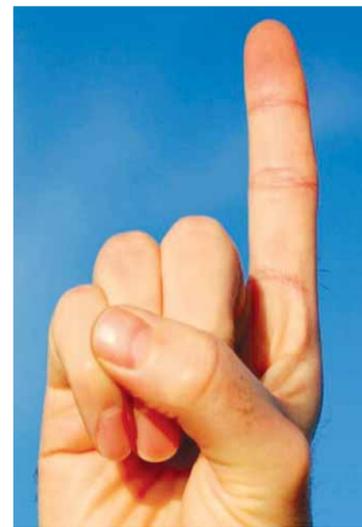
Once the exercise is completed, one should perform meditation for at least thirty minutes. Finally, a heavy and fibrous breakfast with some healthy drink makes for a perfect morning routine. The breakfast should be between 10:30 to 11:30 am so that there is ample time for the body to digest and prepare for the next meal.

This sets the tone and energy for the entire day and keeps the individual in a happier disposition. Classical Ayurveda has the goal of alleviating all diseases, including mental, psychological and emotional sufferings.

(The writer is the Joint Managing Director, Kairali Ayurvedic Group.)

The ultimate truth

No human can ever be above god. Only he can provide us the knowledge about himself, the nature of the soul and creation itself, says **RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI**



In India, the tradition of following a guru dates back to many thousand years. In fact, in the Hindu society, it is often believed that a person who dies without a guru has lived a useless life. That is why devotees flock to gurus and have staunch faith in them. Every word of a guru is considered to be the ultimate truth. For most devotees a guru is a medium, who shows the way to god or truth, someone who inspire people to follow a path of righteousness and high moral integrity. In the present age, gurus have become important due to increased suffering and misery in the lives of people. For a common man, who is tossed around helplessly by the circumstances and pressures of life, a guru is like a pillar of strength, a safe haven, in whom people hope to find peace.



There are many kind of gurus in the world. Some of them are considered to be messiahs sent by god to redeem humans. If we look closely at all these beliefs that surround many gurus, we can see that most of the claims are exaggerated or not true. Some gurus are even seen as avatars of lord Krishna or lord Shiva. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, it is said that god comes to liberate all human beings, even the sages and gurus are uplifted when he comes. So in that sense, no human being can be a guru because he is the one who gives liberation (*mukti*) from all bondages of this world.

No human being can ever be above god. Only god can provide us the knowledge about himself, the nature of the soul and the creation. Only he can open our third eye of wisdom. That is the mere reason why gurus also meditate and remember him to enlighten themselves. No guru can claim to absolve the sins of human beings. We must understand the fact that all souls who take birth in human body get into the bondage of birth and death, action and its fruit. Only god remains beyond this cycle, which is why he alone is capable of giving liberation to all human beings including gurus. Hence, it must be understood that only god is the true satguru.

Guru literally means the one who removes darkness. God is truth — one who removes the darkness of ignorance and brings the dawn of satyuga. He transforms vicious human beings into divine virtuous beings. He makes us soul conscious. He imparts the true wisdom that liberates human souls from the bondage of vices and takes them back to the soul world — the original home of all the souls. Remember that gurus can impart the knowledge of scriptures but god is the satguru, who tells us the essence of all scriptures. He tells us that by remembering him we can claim an inheritance of purity, peace and happiness.

At present, negative vibes and feelings seem to be ruling everyone's mind, as a result of which souls are unable to find a permanent refuge in religion. The learned souls are themselves confessing to the lack of power and are internally looking for a hopeful sign from above. Hence, all these symptoms are pointing towards that auspicious time when he plays the role of a guide and leads all the souls on the true path of liberation in life. So let us all connect with one satguru, who alone can show us the real light, leaving aside all other mediums.

In the sacred forests of Kumaon Region, Uttarakhand, resides a tribal community who is considered to be descendants of one of the aboriginal prince of Kumaon. Famous among the ethnographers, the Ban Raji community flaunts a distinguished culture, language and lifestyle, which is closely entwined with mother nature. Ban Raji, which means 'royal people of the forest', reflects the closeness and dependency of this tribe on the ecosystem. Over the years, however, the population as well as their culture has undergone drastic transformation and they are slowly moving out of their safe haven into the urban life for survival. Included in the list of 18 most threatened human groups and classified by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), the community needs special attention of the policy makers, especially its women members.

My first acquaintance with the members of the Ban Raji community happened in the year 2008 in the dense forests of Pithoragarh Janpad. The presence of an outsider had created a certain discomfort in the air. After a while, a few men came forward to interact but the women observed from a distance. A member of the community, who was well aware of the life outside the forest, helped establish conversations with the rest of the men. Later, from 2011 to 2016, I worked closely with these handful of families and gained insight into their day to day life, customs, rituals and challenges. The most disturbing has been the lives of women, who

Better late than never

Due to lack of awareness, poor state of education and disconnection from the outside world, Ban Raji, a tribal community, needs special attention, especially its women, says **NARENDRA SINGH BISHT**



with almost negligible interaction with the outside world are enduring a life of distress.

POOR STATE OF EDUCATION

Girls are denied the basic right to education and are given the responsibility of household chores from an early age. They are not allowed to step outside the forest. Of the families met at the time of writing this article, 95 per cent women had received absolutely no education in their

entire life. Till date, only four girls from this community have managed to complete their education till class 12 and are currently studying for an undergraduate degree. The status of men's education is also not very hopeful. In 2001, a residential school was established for the children belonging to this primitive tribe by the state government with assistance from the central government. However, due to unfavourable circumstances, it was closed in the year 2017.



MARRYING GIRLS BEFORE THE AGE OF 18

Due to lack of awareness, high percentage of illiteracy and disconnection from the outside world, the community practices the regressive tradition of marrying girls before the permissible age of 18. Most girls are married between the age of 16 to 18 and become mothers to two to three children before the age of 21. With no knowledge of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), these young mothers continue

compromising with their physical and mental health. The non-availability of health centers in close vicinity and due to the lack of monetary assistance, they resort to home-based remedies. Effective for a while, these traditional remedies are unable to save lives and many women die between the age of 35 to 40. Unhealthy mothers and malnourished children receive no attention by the men in the community.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Altering lifestyles and patriarchal mindsets have led to increase in violence against women. Proficient in wooden handicrafts, men work hard to earn meagre amounts only to spend half of it on alcohol. After returning home, they fight with their wives and often indulge into physical violence. Women who are taught to treat their partners like god and never speak against them, they do not even consider such incidences as a violation of their right.

INEFFECTIVE SCHEMES

How these tribal women, who cannot read, write and have absolutely no exposure to the outside world, are expected to benefit from the government

schemes meant for them? The government's claim of reaching out to Ban Raji women doesn't hold water as these women clearly have no access to basic human rights. The schemes announced for the upliftment of women of this tribal community will turn out to be effective only when they will have access and assistance to process such information.

The point being missed here is that this community has spent decades away from the influence of the development process. As the rest of the country moved forward, this community, like many other indigenous groups, chose to stay close to nature. Now, owing to deforestation, urbanisation and migration, these groups are being forced to quit their aboriginal lifestyle and adapt to this new 'modernised' way. Women, who have been suppressed for years, are the worst affected in this process. The policy makers are required to understand the cultural ecology of this tribe before designing programmes and schemes for them. A holistic approach is needed along with assistance from non-government institutions to reach out to these women.

Already working in the field, certain non-government organisations are guiding the community to accept and adapt these changes without compromising their traditional values. Learning from their experience and utilising them to plan and implement better policies will certainly support the upliftment of Ban Raji women.

—Charkha Features

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.
—Martin Luther King

COVID PATIENTS WITH LOW O₂ BREATHE WELL

Researchers have found possible explanations for COVID-19 patients who present with extremely low, otherwise life-threatening levels of oxygen, but no signs of difficulty in breathing.

How the brain responds to the low oxygen level could be one of the factors behind the condition, known as silent hypoxemia or "happy hypoxia," said the study published in the online American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

This new understanding of the condition could prevent unnecessary intubation and ventilation in patients during the current and expected second wave of Coronavirus.

The study found that "several pathophysiological mechanisms" account for most, if not all, cases of silent hypoxemia.

This includes the initial assessment of a patient's oxygen level with a pulse oximeter.

PRENATAL MARIJUANA UPS SLEEP ISSUE IN CHILD

Marijuana use while pregnant increases the chance of developing childhood sleeping problems as much as a decade later, warn researchers.

Published in 'Sleep Health: The Journal of The National Sleep Foundation', the study is the latest to link prenatal cannabis use to developmental problems in children and the first to suggest it may impact sleep cycles long-term.

"Mothers who said they had used cannabis while pregnant were significantly more likely to report their children having clinical sleep problems," said study researcher Evan Winiger from the University of Colorado Boulder in the US.

For the study, the research team analysed baseline data from the landmark Adolescent Brain and Cognitive Development (ABCD) study, which is following 11,875 youth from age 9 or 10 into early adulthood.

NEW WAYS TO DIAGNOSE MALARIA INFECTION

Researchers have developed a new approach to study liver cell infection by a malaria parasite which could lead to better diagnosis and treatment of the disease in India.

A new approach could illuminate a critical stage in the life cycle of one of the most common malaria parasites, the *Plasmodium vivax*, said the study published in the *Malaria Journal*.

"The *Plasmodium vivax* malaria parasite can stay dormant in a person's liver cells up to years following infection, leading to clinical relapses once the parasite is reactivated," said study co-author Kouichi Hasegawa, a stem cell biologist at Kyoto University's Institute for Integrated Cell-Material Sciences (iCeMS) in Japan.

P. vivax is responsible for around 7.5 million malaria cases worldwide, about half of which are in India.

Currently, there is only one licensed drug to treat the liver stage of the parasite's life cycle, but it has many side effects and cannot be used in pregnant women and infants.

BLOOD TESTS CAN PREDICT LIVER DISEASE

Researchers have found that repeated measurements of the biomarker FIB-4 in human blood every few years can predict the risk of developing severe liver disease.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Hepatology*, the risk of liver cirrhosis increases if the levels of this biomarker rise between two testing occasions.

Fat accumulation in the liver is common and is often seen in people with obesity or diabetes. In the worst case, fatty liver can lead to cirrhosis or liver cancer. It is unusual for this to occur but in those affected, symptoms often only occur at a late stage when there is no available treatment.

"It is difficult to predict the risk of cirrhosis, although you can get some guidance in using regular blood tests that measure liver damage," said study lead author Hannes Hagstrom from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden.

EXERCISE MAY HELP PREVENT VISION LOSS

Exercise can slow down or prevent the development of macular degeneration and may also help reduce other common causes of vision loss, such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy, say researchers.

The study, published in the *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*, found that exercise reduced the harmful overgrowth of blood vessels in the eyes of lab mice by up to 45 per cent.

This tangle of blood vessels is a key contributor to macular degeneration and several other eye diseases. "That is basically the most sophisticated study that has been done. This study offers hard evidence from the lab for the very first time," said study researcher Bradley Gelfand from the University of Virginia in the US.

However, the research found that the bar for receiving the benefits from exercise was relatively low — more exercise didn't mean more benefit.



Bayern Munich players celebrate with the DFB-Pokal trophy after they beat Bayer Leverkusen 4-2 in the final on Saturday

AFP ■ BERLIN

Robert Lewandowski passed the 50-goal mark this season as Bayern Munich completed the double with a 4-2 victory over Bayer Leverkusen behind closed doors to win a 20th German Cup on Saturday.

Bundesliga champions Bayern dominated at Berlin's Olympic Stadium as David Alaba smashed home an early free-kick before Serge Gnabry added the second goal in the first half.

Lewandowski has 51 goals in total this season after scoring twice in the second half either side of a Sven Bender header for Leverkusen.

Kai Havertz converted a penalty deep into added time for Leverkusen.

"In the second half we showed that we are the better team and wanted to be cup winners," said man-of-the-match Lewandowski.

20 IN 2020

Lewandowski crosses 50-goal mark as Bayern Munich beat Leverkusen to win DFB-Pokal title

Bayern, crowned Bundesliga champions for the eighth straight year last Saturday, have won all of their 11 games since the season resumed in mid-May after a two-months hiatus due to the coronavirus.

They could finish the season winning the treble as they are among the favourites for the Champions League finals in Lisbon next month.

This was the 13th time in the club's

history they have won the double.

Lewandowski, crowned Bundesliga top-scorer for the fifth time last weekend, netted six times in the cup, has 34 league goals and 11 more in the Champions League this season.

Leverkusen completed a hat-trick of defeats after also losing the 2002 and 2009 cup finals in Berlin.

When Lewandowski was clattered by defender Edmond Tapsoba on



16 minutes, it was Alaba who swung the resulting free-kick inside the post to give Bayern the opening goal.

They doubled their lead after Joshua Kimmich won the ball in midfield eight minutes later.

His pass split the defence, Gnabry sprinted onto the ball and fired past Leverkusen goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky to make it 2-0 at the break.

UNDER CONTROL

"We are so happy that we got the double. In the first half we had the game completely under control," said Gnabry.

With players' calls echoing around the near-empty terraces of the cavernous stadium, where Germany head coach Joachim Low was one of a handful of guests, the game was played in an eerie atmosphere.

"It's a bit of a sad moment," admitted Bayern forward Thomas Mueller, who lamented the lack of fans, after winning the German Cup for the sixth time in his career. "If the fans are missing at such a cup final, it's not the same."

"We've done well this season over long stretches, but it also hurts a bit."

Having skied a shot at goal moments earlier, Lewandowski made it 3-0 when he controlled a clearance kick by goalkeeper Manuel Neuer and tried a long-range speculative shot at Hradecky.

The Leverkusen keeper parried the shot, but watched in horror as it rolled behind him and over the goal line on 59 minutes.

It fired life into Leverkusen, whose centre-back Sven Bender slipped his marker Leon Goretzka and headed home on 64 minutes.

Leverkusen nearly got a second moments later when Kevin Volland and Havertz both failed to connect with a cross.

Lewandowski claimed his second when he fired home Ivan Perisic's pass on 89 minutes.

Bayern defender Alphonso Davies conceded the penalty in the fourth minute of added time which Havertz converted just before the whistle.



Sergio Ramos hugs Real Madrid teammate Karim Benzema after scoring from penalty spot

RMFC/Twitter

Pin-point Ramos holds nerve again

Real opens up 7 point lead over Barca after seventh straight win

AFP ■ BILBAO

Sergio Ramos scored his 22nd consecutive penalty on Sunday as Real Madrid held on for another 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao to inch closer to winning La Liga.

Ramos' fifth goal in seven games since the restart gives Madrid a seven-point lead over Barcelona, who play later at in-form Villarreal.

Anything but a victory for Barca would probably leave them too much to do with four games remaining, especially as Madrid own the superior record head-to-head.

This was Madrid's toughest fixture left and they might have been content even with a point against a robust, well-organised Bilbao side.

But after edging out

Getafe on Thursday, through a Ramos spot-kick, Madrid repeated the trick at San Mames, their captain's nerve from the spot combining with a gutsy display to grind out a pivotal win.

Ramos was perhaps fortunate not to concede a penalty himself when, off the ball, he seemed to slip and tread on the foot of Raul Garcia, but Madrid escaped.

Instead, the defender's 10th goal of the season, the best tally of his career, gave Madrid their third 1-0 win in a row, as well as a fourth consecutive clean sheet.

"It's a massive win," said Ramos. "We knew today was going to be one of the biggest games that we have left. It's always a difficult game away

at Bilbao and we saw it like that. We're happy with another crucial three points that put more pressure on Barcelona."

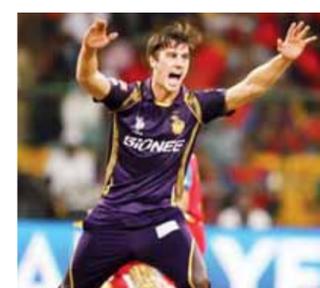
Ramos said he is always confident on penalties.

"In those moments of doubt that's when I feel most comfortable. I wanted to take the responsibility," he said.

"But if I wanted individual recognition I would play tennis."

Bilbao's Iker Munain said Madrid had again been lucky with decisions.

"We're not going to win it thanks to the referees," said Ramos. "People have to look at themselves and be critical of their own performances. Based on the points, it seems we're doing well at the moment."



Cummins remains unaffected by record-breaking IPL bid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

It's been six months since he struck IPL gold with a record-breaking bid but Australian pace spearhead Pat Cummins says his life hasn't changed one bit because he has never been the sort to be too affected by either success or failure.

The world No 1 Test bowler was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for a record ₹ 15.5 crore, making him the highest paid foreign player in the history of the league.

"I would like to think my life doesn't change much at all," Cummins said when asked about the impact of the headline-grabbing event last December.

"I try my best in every game I play but I try to not let any successes or setbacks change my life too much," the 27-year-old added.

Asked whether the high of that day has faded away, he said, "Not really."

"May be, once I get over there to play," added the star bowler.

A lot of cricketers have had changed priorities since the advent of private T20 leagues but Cummins is a chip off the old block who, like India skipper Virat Kohli, values the Test format.

"I grew up watching and loving Test cricket and nothing has changed. I think it is the most challenging format because it tests your skill, stamina, mental strength," he explained.

"Each and every Test win is incredibly satisfying," said Cummins, who has 143 wickets from 30 Tests at an impressive average of 21.82.

With Cricket Australia allowing its players to start outdoor training, the speedster is back sweating it out in the nets but said that it would take some time to reach peak match condition.

"It takes at least a couple of months to build back up to full pace and fitness but luckily we have some time. We started bowling two weeks ago. So, we will be ready for when we start," said Cummins.

Liverpool book Villa at Anfield

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Sadio Mane and Curtis Jones struck in the final 20 minutes to ensure Liverpool marked their first match at Anfield since being crowned Premier League champions with a 2-0 win over struggling Aston Villa on Sunday.

After a 4-0 humbling at the hands of Manchester City in midweek, Jurgen Klopp's men again failed to hit the heights that made them runaway leaders before a three-month hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic.

But Mane's sweet strike off the underside of the bar and Jones's deflected effort kept up a run of 24 consecutive league wins at Anfield for the Reds and left Villa still languishing in the bottom three.

Klopp has insisted he will not dish out appearances "like Christmas presents" in the final month of the campaign as Liverpool eye a record points tally in English top-flight history.

The German made just three alterations from an embarrassing night at the Etihad on Thursday as Roberto Firmino, Jordan Henderson



Curtis Jones, 2nd right, scores Liverpool's second goal against Aston Villa

AP

and Georginio Wijnaldum dropped out, but all three were needed in the second half after a disappointing first hour.

In front of an empty Anfield, Liverpool struggled to summon their best with the big prize already won and just re-writing the record books to play for.

Villa, by contrast, are still desper-

ate for points in their battle to beat the drop and Dean Smith's men were left to rue not taking their chances on the counter-attack early in the second half as their winless streak stretched to 10 games.

Pepe Reina was recalled in the Villa goal on his return to Anfield where he spent nine years as a

Liverpool player.

However, the Spaniard barely had a save of note to make before half-time as Liverpool struggled to break Villa down.

Indeed, it was Alisson Becker who was the busier goalkeeper as the Brazilian was forced to parry shots from Douglas Luiz, Jack Grealish and Anwar El Ghazi.

Klopp was forced into introducing Henderson, Wijnaldum and Firmino to try and summon a response from his side in the final half hour.

The triple substitution quickly made a difference when Naby Keita picked out Mane to sweep home his 20th goal of the season.

Reina was finally forced into a fine save as he dived to his left to deny Firmino his first goal at Anfield this season.

Another substitute made the game safe a minute from time as 19-year-old Jones saw his effort deflect past the helpless Reina before Alisson produced another stunning save at the other end to deny Grealish a consolation.



Zlatan Ibrahimovic celebrates with Giacomo Bonaventura after scoring

AP

Scudetto race all but over

AFP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan blew a goal and a man advantage to lose 2-1 at home to Bologna and saw their title challenge all but ended in dramatic fashion.

Antonio Conte's men needed a win to move back to within eight points of leaders Juventus, and one of second-placed Lazio, but despite leading through Romelu Lukaku's 20th league goal of the campaign and playing against 10 men, contrived to collapse to defeat.

Inter are now 11 points off the pace with only eight matches of the season remaining.

The third-placed hosts forged ahead midway through the first half as Lautaro Martinez headed Ashley Young's left-wing cross against the post, but Lukaku was on hand to tap in.

It was the Belgian's 20th league goal since joining Inter from Manchester United last year and his 26th in all competitions.

Mid-table Bologna always carried a threat, though, and Riccardo Orsolini twice went close to equalising before half-time.

But Inter were gifted a golden opportunity to take total control 12 minutes into the second

half when Bologna midfielder Roberto Soriano was sent off for dissent.

A crucial three points appeared almost certain when Martinez stepped up to take a 61st-minute penalty, but the Argentinian striker saw his effort saved by visiting goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski.

That was the cue for Inter, chasing a first league title since winning the treble under Jose Mourinho in 2010, to collapse in the closing stages.

Musa Juwara, on as a substitute, fired home a 74th-minute leveller through the weak attempted save by Inter stopper Samir Handanovic, before the home side also saw their numerical advantage disappear shortly afterwards as Alessandro Bastoni was dismissed for a second yellow card.

The comeback was completed with 10 minutes left, as Gambian striker Musa Barrow finished off a sweeping Bologna counter-attack with a fine left-footed shot past Handanovic.

Earlier on Saturday, Veteran striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored from the spot on his first match since the season restart as AC Milan beat Lazio 3-0 to dent the latter's chances of winning the Serie A title.



De Kock wins SA Cricketer of the Year award

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

White-ball skipper Quinton de Kock was named the men's cricketer of the year at Cricket South Africa's (CSA) annual awards ceremony, held virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The 27-year-old also bagged the Test cricketer of the year while young opener Laura Wolvaardt took home the women's cricketer of the year and ODI cricketer of the year awards.

Pacer Lungi Ngidi was named ODI and T20 play-



er of the year while David Miller was voted the fans' favourite player.

Anrich Nortje, who made his Test debut in India and took a five-for in the Test series against England, was adjudged the international men's newcomer of the year.

Shabnim Ismail took home the women's T20 player of the year with left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba was recognised as the women's newcomer of the year.

This is the second time de Kock has won the men's Cricketer of the Year, having claimed the accolade in 2017.

England tour is like Ashes for us: Roach

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Pacer Kumar Roach feels the upcoming series against England is equivalent to the Ashes for the West Indies team which will look to defend the trophy it won at home last year.

West Indies had handed Joe Root's men a 2-1 defeat when England travelled to the Caribbean last year and Roach said the visiting team wants to emulate that result in the three-match series starting Wednesday at Ageas Bowl.

"We were relentless and it



set the tone. Everyone put in and we're looking to emulate that here. Taking the trophy back home to the Caribbean is the number one goal," Roach was

quoted as saying by *The Guardian*.

"Winning in England would be perfect but it's about defending the trophy. This is our biggest series, like the Ashes for us, so it's about getting into that zone," he added.

Roach ended as the leading wicket-taker with 18 scalps in the last series between the two sides. He ran through the English batting line-up in the first innings of the opening Test in Barbados, and was awarded the Man of Series for his consistent performance.

Bottas wins dramatic Austrian race

AFP ■ SPIELBERG

Valtteri Bottas stayed calm in a stormy race on Sunday to claim a measured victory for Mercedes as Formula One returned with a bang in a belated, dramatic and incident-strewn 2020 season-opening Austrian Grand Prix.

Seven months after the final race of 2019, the Finn, who had started from the 12th pole position of his career, led from start to finish to come home ahead on the road of team-mate six-time champion Lewis Hamilton.

The Briton, however, had been given a five-second penalty during the race and was demoted to fourth behind Charles Leclerc, who brought his Ferrari home second and Briton Lando



Mercedes driver Valtteri Bottas, center, pose after end of Austrian Grand Prix

the four-time champion in his final season at Ferrari, finishing 10th.

Before the race even started, there was drama when six of the 20 drivers opted against taking a knee to protest against racism.

Hamilton wore a *Black Lives Matter* t-shirt, while other drivers, who all lined up with him at the front of the grid, sported black tops saying *End Racism*.

Leclerc and Red Bull's Max Verstappen had confirmed a split among F1 drivers when they said they would not take a knee on the grid, but that they remained committed to fighting racism.

Carlos Sainz of McLaren, Daniil Kvyat of Alpha Tauri, Antonio Giovinazzi and Alfa Romeo team-mate Kimi Raikkonen also chose to stay on their feet.

Mendis held after fatal car accident

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka batsman Kusal Mendis was arrested on Sunday after the vehicle he was driving hit and killed a 64-year-old cyclist.

The accident took place at 5am on the Old Galle Road in the Colombo suburb of Panadura.

Mendis will appear before a magistrate even as the police conduct an investigation into the accident.

According to police, Mendis' car crashed into the bicycle of the deceased who has been identified as a resident of Gokarella.

The victim suffered serious injuries and died as he was being admitted to the hospital.

The police has taken the cricketer's SUV into its custody and would investigate if he was driving under the influence.

The 25-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman has represented Sri Lanka in 44 Tests and 76 ODIs. Mendis was part of the national squad which had resumed training after the Covid-19 lockdown. *PTI*

Langer hails Warner's presence in team

MELBOURNE: Australia coach Justin Langer on Sunday likened David Warner to unbeaten boxing great Floyd Mayweather, calling him an "absolute ripper" who will never get to be a leader thanks to the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

"Look, I support him. Having David Warner in the team is like having Floyd Mayweather in the team," Langer told *Channel Nine* television's *Sports Sunday*, referring to the American icon who remained

undefeated in his 50-bout professional career and owned 15 major world titles in five weight divisions.

Warner, who was identified as the instigator of the 2018 incident was slapped with a lifetime captaincy ban.

"Officially he's been banned from captaining Australia again," Langer said.

"I don't think he'll be a captain of Australia again because of where we're at, but I

love having him in the team. He's an absolute ripper," he added.

After his return to the game, Warner has proved himself to be a valuable player to the team, that struggled in his and Smith's absence.

Langer, who took up the position of the coach a couple of months after the scandal, said Warner has been a fantastic addition to the side since he has come back from the ban.

"I love him. He talks it up, he is a great player for any calculations and he's been fantastic in the team over the last two years," Langer said. *PTI*

