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China pulls back troops from stand-off spots

Some success comes after Doval, Chinese counterpart Wang talk disengagement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The eight-week-old stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh has defused to some extent with the Chinese troops showing the first sign of disengagement.

The important breakthrough came on Monday after National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi talked to each other on Sunday stressing the need for early disengagement.

While the de-escalation has started from all the four face-off sites in Eastern Ladakh, including the Galwan Valley which saw bloody clashes on June 15 killing 20 Indian Army personnel, the Armed forces are keeping a close watch.

The Indian troops have also moved back at least one kilometre after the Chinese did so, but the local commanders do not want to take any chances, sources said here.

The other locations include Hot Spring, Gogra and Pangong Tso (lake). The face-off started from this lake on May 5 when the Chinese stopped an Indian patrol leading to fistcuffs between the two sides.

Responding to the pull-back, China said front-line troops are taking "effective measures" and making "progress" to disengage and ease the tensions in the Galwan Valley.

"China and India have made progress coming up with effective measures for frontline



Indian Army trucks depart towards Ladakh amid stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh, at Manali-Leh highway in Kullu on Monday PTI

troops to disengage and de-escalate the border situation at the third commander-level talks between the two militaries on June 30," China's Global Times quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian as saying.

Giving the reason for this "cautious wait and watch" policy, Indian sources said the Chinese had started pulling back in early June too from the Galwan Valley. However, the situation turned for the worst after the Chinese went back on



the agreement to retreat and returned on June 15 leading to the brawl. As of now, the Chinese

have retreated more than a kilometre on their side of the LAC. The agreement between the Corps Commanders of the two Armies in June stipulated that both the armies will go back more than three kilometres to ensure peaceful disengagement and de-escalation of tension on the border.

The two commanders held three rounds of parleys on June 6, 22 and 30.

The important development on Monday came after Doval and Wang Yi, who is State Councillor and Foreign Minister, had a telephone conversation on Sunday. The two Special Representatives had a frank and in-depth exchange of views on the recent developments in the Western Sector (Ladakh) of the India-China border areas.

On consensus for the diplomatic and military officials of the two sides should continue talks, the two Special Representatives agreed that both sides should take guidance from the consensus of the

leaders that maintenance of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas were essential for the further development of our bilateral relations, and that two sides should not allow differences to become disputes, the official statement issued on Monday said.

Therefore, they agreed that it was necessary to ensure at the earliest complete disengagement of the troops along the LAC and de-escalation from India-China border areas for full restoration of peace and tranquility.

In this regard, they further agreed that both sides should complete the ongoing disengagement process along the LAC expeditiously.

They re-affirmed that both sides should strictly respect and observe the line of actual control and should not take any unilateral action to alter the status quo and work together to avoid any incident in the future that could disturb peace and tranquility in border areas.

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Cong asks Modi to apologise for saying China didn't intrude

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to apologise to the country for his earlier statement that neither has anyone intruded into the Indian territory nor has anyone captured any military posts.

The party stand came following reports that the Indian and Chinese troops have started moving back in first signs of disengagement between the two sides.

The Congress also said either the Prime Minister or the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh should brief the nation about the ground situation in Ladakh now.

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India crosses 7L cases, 20K deaths

Over 1 lakh cases in Delhi; massive surge in south Indian States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's Covid-19 tally crossed 7 lakh mark and death toll breached 20,000 counts on Monday, a day after it replaced Russia to occupy the third place among the list of worst-affected nations.

While the three worst-affected States—Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Delhi—saw a considerable drop in the number of fresh cases on Monday, the national Capital crossed 1-lakh mark with 1,379 fresh cases and 48 deaths reported in the last 24 hours.

India added 22,500 cases to take its overall tally of positive cases to 7,20,346. The day saw 473 fatalities, which took its death count to 20,174.

The total number of cases in Delhi now stands at 1,00,823 including 72,088 recoveries. The death toll in the city is now at 3,115, according to the later health bulletin by the State



Government.

Southern India continued to see a massive surge with Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana joining Tamil Nadu among States severely hit by the virus. While Telangana reported 1,831 cases and 11 deaths, Karnataka reported 1,841 fresh cases and 30 deaths.

Telangana now has 25,733 cases and 306 death while Karnataka has 25,317 cases and 406 deaths.

Andhra Pradesh recorded 1,322 fresh cases and seven deaths, taking its overall count to 20,019 cases and 219 deaths. Meanwhile, after touching an all-time record of 7,074 Covid-19 positive cases on Saturday, the number of infect-

ed cases came down further in Maharashtra to 5,368 on Monday, even as 204 more people died of coronavirus in various parts of the State.

After the number of infections had virtually peaked to touch 7,074 on Friday, the State witnessed a steady decline in the number of positive cases. The number of cases slid to 6,555 on Sunday and dropped further to 5,368 on Monday.

As the infections touched 2,11,987 cases, Maharashtra on Monday overtook Turkey which ranks 14 on the Worldometer (205,758 cases). Earlier on Sunday, Maharashtra had surpassed Germany (197,651 cases). Similarly, with 151 new deaths and infections, the total number of deaths crossed 9,000 mark to touch 9,026. Of the total 204 fatalities declared today, Thane accounted for 57 deaths, while Mumbai witnessed 39 deaths.

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Girl pushed from bus on suspicion of being Covid positive, dies

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In yet another case of insensitivity during the present Covid-19 pandemic, a girl was pushed from a bus on suspicion of being coronavirus positive, leading to her death.

The inhuman act was reported from Mathura but the local police denied the allegations of the girl's parent and said that she was not pushed forcibly from the bus but collapsed after she was asked to leave the bus on suspicion of being infected with coronavirus.

Detailed report on P2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Coronavirus is airborne and even smaller particles can infect people, this has been the findings of more than one scientific studies, but the World Health Organization (WHO) has so far not acknowledged this as a possible mode of the spread of the contagion. The WHO has so far maintained that Covid-19 spreads primarily through coughs and sneezes.

Any admission that the virus can spread through air is bound to create an upheaval and panic across the globe. It will also raise fresh doubt about the WHO's whole approach towards tackling the pandemic.

A report in the *New York Times* says that clusters of infections are rising globally as people go back to bars, restaurants, offices, markets and casinos, a trend that increasingly confirms that the virus lingers

Corona can spread via air but WHO yet to admit it

Virus lingers in air indoors, infecting those nearby, suggest studies

in the air indoors, infecting those nearby. "...in an open letter to the WHO, 239 scientists in 32 countries have outlined the evidence showing that smaller particles can infect people and are calling for the agency to revise its recommendations," the report said, adding that the researchers plan to publish their letter in a scientific journal next week.

The WHO has long held that the coronavirus is spread primarily by large respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

In its latest update dated June 29 on the coronavirus, the WHO said airborne transmission of the virus was possible only after medical procedures that produce aerosols, or droplets smaller than 5 microns.

The guidance that the health agency has given to deal with the virus, such as wearing masks, maintaining social distance and frequent handwashing, since the pandemic first broke is based on its



claim that the virus spreads through large droplets when an infected person coughs and sneezes.

"If the airborne transmission is a significant factor in the pandemic, especially in crowded spaces with poor ventilation, the consequences for containment will be significant. Masks may be needed indoors, even in socially-distant settings. Healthcare workers may need N95 masks that filter out even the smallest respiratory droplets as they care for coronavirus patients," the NYT report said.

Continued on Page 2

Covid +ve journalist jumps to death from AIIMS Trauma Centre

New Delhi: A 37-year-old journalist undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at the AIIMS Trauma Centre died after allegedly jumping off the fourth floor of the hospital building on Monday afternoon, police said.

The journalist worked with a Hindi daily and was a resident of Northeast Delhi's Bhajanpura. Incident took place around 2 pm. He was rushed to the hospital's ICU where doctors tried to revive him abortively.

PTI

Fake Covid -ve report on sale! Meerut private hospital sealed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A private hospital in Meerut was issuing fake Covid "negative" report for a price. The Uttar Pradesh health department has sealed the hospital and suspended its licence after a video showing its staff member providing fake Covid-19 report had gone viral.

"A video had gone viral in Meerut. We have registered a case in this regard. We have suspended the licence of the nursing home. The authorities

have sealed it," said Anil Dhingra, Meerut DM.

In the video, the person can be heard saying that they provide Covid-19 negative report for ₹2,500.

Meerut CMO Rajkumar said, "In the video, a man from the hospital can be heard saying that he can arrange Covid-19 negative report and the person can get operation or other things done."

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav had assailed the Government for corruption.

Covid-19 IN INDIA

STATES	TOTAL CASES	DEATHS	RECOVERED
Maharashtra	2,11,987	9,026	1,15,262
Tamil Nadu	1,14,978	1,571	66,571
Delhi	1,00,823	3,115	72,088
Gujarat	36,858	1,961	26,323
Uttar Pradesh	28,636	809	19,109
Telangana	25,733	306	14,781
Karnataka	25,317	402	10,529
West Bengal	22,987	779	15,235
Rajasthan	20,688	461	16,278
Andhra Pradesh	20,019	239	8,920
Haryana	17,504	276	13,335
Madhya Pradesh	15,284	617	11,579
Assam	12,523	14	7,883
Bihar	12,140	97	9,014
Odisha	9,526	48	6,486
Jammu & Kashmir	8,675	138	5,318

TOTAL CASES: 7,20,346
DEATHS: 20,174
RECOVERED: 4,40,150
ACTIVE: 2,59,926



A traffic jam on the Outer Ring Road in New Delhi on Monday PTI

Let universities hold final term exams: Centre to HRD Ministry

HRD Ministry to hold meeting on higher education with UGC today

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday directed the HRD Ministry to allow universities and equivalent educational institutions to conduct the "final term" examinations which is pending since March/April due to the country-wide lockdown.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, in a letter to Higher Education Secretary Amit Khare, said the final term examinations are to be compulsorily conducted as per the UGC Guidelines on Examinations and Academic



Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) approved by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

"We have just received the directives and its details will be looked into," a senior HRD Ministry officer said.

The Ministry has convened a meeting of HRD, UGC and other stakeholders in higher education on Tuesday.

Around 10 State Governments have announced complete cancellation of all university and college-level exams so far. Prominent institutions like the Calcutta University has also resorted to similar measures while institutions such as the Delhi University, CCSU, AKTU, GNDU, CSJM, DTU & MGSU are waiting for UGC guidelines in order to take a final decision on the pending semester exams.

Continued on Page 2

8 lakh Indians may be forced to leave Kuwait as Bill cuts expat quota

PTI ■ DUBAI

Some 8 lakh Indians could be forced to leave Kuwait after a parliamentary committee approved a draft expat quota bill seeking to gradually slash the number of foreign workers in the Gulf country, according to media reports.

The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee has determined that the expat quota bill is constitutional.

According to the bill, Indians should not exceed 15 per cent of Kuwait's population. This could result in 8 lakh Indians leaving Kuwait, as Indian constitute the largest expat community in the country, totalling 1.45 million, Gulf News reported, citing a leading Kuwaiti newspaper.

The current population of

Kuwait is 4.3 million, with Kuwaitis making up 1.3 million of the population, and expats accounting for 3 million.

Amid a slump in oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic, there has been a spike in anti-expat rhetoric as lawmakers and government officials call for reducing the number of foreigners in Kuwait.

Last month, Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Khalid Al Sabah proposed reducing the number of expats from 70 per cent to 30 per cent of the population.

An official in the Indian embassy in Kuwait told PTI that the Kuwait Government is yet to inform the embassy about the measure being taken to drastically reduce the number of Indians in the country.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

75% QUOTA IN PVT JOBS FOR LOCALS IN HARYANA
Chandigarh: In a major decision to provide employment to local youth in the state, the Manohar Lal Khattar Government on Monday approved a proposal to bring an Ordinance to provide 75 per cent jobs to local candidates in private sector in the State.

VIKAS DUBEY NOW CARRIES A BOUNTY OF ₹2.5 LAKH
Lucknow: The Yogi Adityanath Government has increased the reward on the head of gangster Vikas Dubey to ₹2.5 lakh. Dubey, who is the main accused in the killing of eight police personnel in Kanpur on Friday, is absconding after the incident.

GOLD MAY CROSS ₹52,000 PER 10 GRAMS BY DIWALI
New Delhi: Considering the investors' interest in gold, the yellow metal's price is expected to cross the psychological level of ₹52,000 per 10 grams by Diwali.

Girl pushed from bus on suspicion of being corona positive, dies

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In yet another case of insensitivity during the present Covid-19 pandemic, a girl was pushed from a bus on suspicion of being coronavirus positive, leading to her death. The inhuman act was reported from Mathura but the local police denied the allegations of the girl's parent and said that she was not pushed forcibly from the bus but collapsed after she was asked to leave the bus on suspicion of being infected with coronavirus. The parents of the victim living in New Delhi claimed that their daughter had pain in stomach and also sometimes complaint of dizziness so they contacted a doctor who

got her tested for coronavirus. After her report came negative, they took the girl for ultrasound which confirmed that she had stone in the kidney. The doctor gave her medicines. The parents said that after the doctor prescribed medicines, they sent their daughter to their native village by a Roadways bus on Sunday. However, near the Mathura toll plaza, their daughter again complained about dizziness on which the conductor thought that she was a coronavirus positive and forcibly pushed her out of the bus causing head injuries and she died on way to hospital. Mathura said the girl was treated like ordinary passengers and a probe was ordered.

India engaging with China through diplomatic, military channels: FS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is engaging with China through diplomatic and military channels, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Monday, asserting that if there is no communication with that country, then the Sino-India border situation would be much worse. He made the remarks while talking about diplomacy in times of the Covid-19 pandemic at a webinar organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. Shringla said that diplomacy is looking at a very changed scenario in terms of how statecraft and relations between countries work in the wake of the pandemic. "Countries do need to communicate. You cannot stop communications because otherwise the other alternative is greater frictions, tensions and problems, and probably conflict also," he said. "For example the increased tension on our border with China. I mean, if there is no communication with that country then we would have a much worse situation, but yesterday our National Security Adviser (Ajit Doval) spoke to his counterpart.

TMC can do anything to remain in power: Nadda

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

BJP president JP Nadda on Monday slammed the Trinamool Congress Government for unleashing a reign of terror and corruption to remain in power. Launching a no-holds-barred attack on the Bengal ruling outfit Nadda told a virtual rally how "Criminalisation of politics had become the hall mark of Bengal government and now cut money has become a new addition to this... wherever you go in Bengal you only listen to cut money, cut money and cut money... so a time has come when these leaders who want cut money have to be cut to size." Alleging that the Trinamool Congress leaders would do anything to retain power he said "from corruption to criminalization they are ready to compromise on all fronts to remain in power... hence a time has come when Bengal has to be restored to its former glory by removing this government lock, stock and barrel." Lauding freedom fighter and Jana Sangha founder Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee for laying down his life for a united India Nadda said while on one hand Bengal produced leaders like Mukherjee who fought for a united country on the other hand there was a party like the TMC which had no other goal but to remain in power. Attacking the Mamata Banerjee government for mis-handling the corona pandemic he said she "doesn't believe in cooperative federalism... and does not share the data on corona related issues with the Centre."

Union Rural Dev Ministry seeks revision of 2011 caste census

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant development, a study commissioned by the Union Rural Development Ministry has sought the revision of the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC)-2011 list which was prepared following a mammoth exercise during the UPA regime almost eight years ago. The recommendation to revise the list came after numerous variations were pointed out by the study in the central rural scheme Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Grameen (PMAY-G) list prepared on the basis of

the SECC data. The study conducted as part of the Fifth Common Review Mission (CRM) for "independent assessment" of the progress of various programmes and schemes of the Rural Development Ministry, noted that "there have been serious errors of exclusion and inclusion and as such it may be risk to base selection of beneficiaries for any schemes only on basis of these lists." It was prepared by a 31-member CRM team led by Rajeev Kapoor, retired IAS and State Information Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh.

The team, with retired bureaucrats, academics and research organisations as members, had visited 120 various villages in more than 21 districts across eight states — Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh — during November 4-14, 2019. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Grameen, the Government has plans to construct 1 crore houses under first phase from 2016-19 against which 97.9 lakhs have been sanctioned but only 84.80 lakhs have been completed so far.

China pulls back troops from stand-off spots

From page 1

The two Special Representatives agreed that the diplomatic and military officials of the two sides should continue their discussions, including under the framework of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China border affairs (WMCC), and implement the understandings reached in a timely manner to achieve the above outcomes.

It was also agreed that the two Special Representatives will continue their conversations to ensure full and enduring restoration of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas in accordance with the bilateral agreements and protocols.

In the early 2000s, the two countries agreed that the Special Representatives of India and China will talk regularly to resolve the long-pending boundary dispute.

The two Special Representatives have so far held 23 rounds of discussions over the years. India and China have a more than 4,000 km disputed border known as Line of Actual Control (LAC).

On the ongoing disengagement, officials said Indian soldiers have also pulled back

and a buffer zone has been created between the troops of both sides. It is only the first step of disengagement, they said, adding India will need to wait to see if this is a lasting, genuine disengagement.

With Chinese removing their temporary structures including tents and makeshift bunkers and Indians reciprocating the gesture, sources said both the Armies have also started pulling back their heavy guns.

The June 6 pact between the Corps Commanders said both the Armies will also pull out additional troops and weapons from the operational areas and go back to their respective peacetime locations on either side of the LAC.

The two sides had bolstered their troop strength on the four face-off sites and operational areas in the last two months.

Incidentally, the pullback started three days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to Ladakh to boost the morale of the troops and take stock of the situation on the ground with the local commanders.

He also interacted with some of the soldiers now recuperating at the hospital after suffering injuries during the June 15 skirmish.

Cong asks ...

From page 1

"Our brave Army has been trying to push the Chinese PLA back and we are very happy to see these reports that we have succeeded. We are proud of our Army. We never had any doubt about the ability of our Army to do that. They have done that in the past... whether it was Pakistan or China. Our Army does not need anybody's certificate," Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said at AICC Press briefing.

He then referred to the Prime Minister's statement after the all-party meeting last month and said the "statement, unfortunately, within a matter of two hours, was used by the Chinese Government as a clean chit by the Indian Prime Minister." "In the same breath, the statement by the Chinese Government also said the Galwan Valley was theirs. It belonged to them. That is unfortunate that somebody as tall in stature as the Prime Minister uttered those

words which immediately got lapped up by China and used as a clean chit. The entire world was watching."

"The Prime Minister should today use this opportunity... to come out and address the nation, take the country into confidence, apologise to the country... say, yes, I went wrong. I misled you or maybe he wants to use some other words that I was incorrect in my assessment..." he said.

Khera said the Prime Minister should tell the nation that "the Chinese have withdrawn by 'X' kilometres" and clarify "how much of our territory is still under their occupation." "All the six, seven points that we have been reading about... he (the Prime Minister) should come and take the country into confidence and clarify not just his past statement which was unfortunate, but also how much of our territory is still under their occupation, how far had they come in and now how much have they withdrawn."

8 lakh Indians may be forced to leave ...

From page 1

"There is a lot of talk in the media but we haven't officially received anything," he said on condition of anonymity.

The official said the move is easier said than done as a large proportion of Indians living and working in the country can be categorised as essential services personnel.

"Imagine the large number of drivers, maids, nurses, and doctors that are here. They are needed and cannot just be removed without an alternative. It is just not practical," he said, adding that most of the job losses are happening in the government sector.

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told Kuwait TV that he and a group of lawmakers will submit to the Assembly a comprehensive draft law calling for a gradual reduction of expats in Kuwait.

Kuwait has a real problem in its population structure, in which 70 per cent are expats, the Speaker said, adding that what is more serious is that 1.3 million of the 3.35 million expats "are either illiterate or can merely read and write", the people Kuwait does not really need, the Kuwait Times reported.

"I understand that we recruit doctors and skilled manpower and not unskilled labourers. This is an indication that there is a distortion. Visa traders have contributed in increasing this figure," Ghanem said.

The Speaker said the draft law they intend to file will propose to impose a cap on the number of expats, whose numbers must decrease gradually by stating that this year expats will be 70 per cent, next year 65 per cent and so on, the report said.

The expat quota bill will now be referred to the concerned committee for consideration. It states that the Indian expatriate community should not exceed 15 per cent of the national population, which means around 800,000 of them might be required to leave Kuwait, the Arab News reported.

According to Indian national Nita Bhatkar, the proposed law is quite drastic and it's quite natural for people to panic.

"Their livelihoods are at stake; their futures are at stake. We can just hope that the cuts are not as huge as they are predicted to be," she told PTL.

Bhatkar, who was born in Kuwait, said she expected this to happen at some point. The decision won't just affect individuals, but will have a long-term impact on both the economies, as well as their families, she said.

Anwar Hussain (name changed on request), who is working as a marketing professional in Kuwait for several years, said Indians will eventually be affected if the law is implemented.

"We are told thousands of Kuwaitis have returned back home following the pandemic and the government has to safeguard their interests too. Also a lot of Egyptian teachers have lost their jobs too, so its not about Indians but about the labour's demand and supply dynamic," he said.

According to the Indian embassy in Kuwait, there are about 28,000 Indians working for the Kuwaiti government in various jobs like nurses, engineers in national oil companies and a few as scientists.

The majority of Indians (5.23 Lakh) are deployed in private sectors.

In addition, there are about 1.16 lakh dependents. Out of these, there are about 60,000 Indian students studying in 23 Indian schools in the country.

The bill will now be transferred to the respective committee so that a comprehensive plan is created. It proposes similar quotas for other nationalities. Kuwait is a top source of remittances for India. In 2018, India received nearly USD 4.8 billion from Kuwait as remittances.

Foreigners have accounted for the majority of Kuwait's COVID-19 cases as the disease spread among migrant workers living in overcrowded housing.

According to latest data from Johns Hopkins University, more than 49,000 cases of coronavirus have been reported in Kuwait. Globally, more than 5 lakh people have died and over 11 million have been infected by COVID-19. PTI

Let ...

From page 1

The HRD Ministry said UGC is likely to announce revised guidelines for the pending exams soon. The delay has been due to the second thought on evaluation of candidates who would have taken their first semester in a new class/session.

Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Haryana, Rajasthan are some of the States which have cancelled university exams so far. With the Kerala Government imposing a triple lockdown, the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala has also decided to postpone the semester or college and university exams.

Sources said the HRD Ministry and UGC officials are now contemplating a unified approach to deal with the situation and may go for the promotion of all college and university students across the country without examinations.

Universities and students have urged the UGC to clarify at earliest its guidelines on pending exams. Institutions and stakeholders have sought clarity on the evaluation formula to be followed for promoting students to the next grade without remaining examinations being conducted.

Sources said several universities and higher education institutions have written to the HRD Ministry with their own proposed remedial measures with regards to the semester exams.

For Instance, Calcutta University has communicated that it would not be holding semester exams but instead would hold internal assessment on the basis of previous semester marks to promote students to the next grade without holding exams.

Both Punjab and Rajasthan Chief Ministers, Capt Amarinder Singh and Ashok Gehlot, respectively, have announced that their Governments have decided to cancel all the pending university and college level exams for undergraduate and postgraduate level students in the State. They took the decision after looking at all the options, including logistical feasibility of holding the exams and the risk it poses to the students. However, the State Government has allowed universities to hold online exams, which are currently underway without any interruption.

While Rajya Sabha member and AAP leader Sanjay Singh on Monday wrote HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' for cancellation of DU OBT Exam or Open Book Test, Tamil Nadu has formed a panel for feasible study for Semester Exam 2020 to look into the matter of holding the pending semester and final year exams for the university and college students.

As per the latest announcement by Delhi University, the semester examinations are to be held from July 10 for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Corona can spread...

From page 1

It said that ventilation systems in schools, nursing homes, residences, and businesses may need to minimise recirculating air and add powerful new filters.

"Ultraviolet lights may be needed to kill viral particles floating in tiny droplets indoors," it said. WHO's technical lead on infection control Dr Benedetta Allegranzi, however, said in the report that the evidence for the virus spreading by air was unconvincing.

"Especially in the last couple of months, we have been stating several times that we consider airborne transmission as possible but certainly not supported by solid or even clear evidence. There is a strong debate on this." New agency PTI has quoted her to the effect.

Interviews with nearly 20 scientists, including a dozen WHO consultants and several members of the committee that crafted the guidance, and internal emails "paint a picture of an organisation that, despite good intentions, is out of step with science," the report said.

"Whether carried aloft by large droplets that zoom through the air after a sneeze, or by much smaller exhaled droplets that may glide the length of a room, these experts said, the coronavirus is borne through air and can infect people when inhaled," it said.

Experts pointed out that WHO's infection prevention and control committee is "bound by a rigid and overly medicalised view of scientific evidence, is slow and risk-averse in updating its guidance and allows a few conservative voices to shout down dissent."

"They'll die defending their view," one longstanding WHO consultant was quoted as saying in the report. The WHO was relying on a dated definition of airborne transmission. The agency believes an airborne pathogen, like the measles virus, has to be highly infectious and to travel long distances, said Linsey Marr, an expert in airborne transmission of viruses at Virginia Tech.

WHO's chief scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan said in the report that agency staff members were trying to evaluate new scientific evidence as fast as possible, but without sacrificing the quality of their review. She said the UN health agency will try to broaden the committees' expertise and communications to make sure everyone is heard. "We take it seriously when journalists or scientists or anyone challenges us and say we can do better than this. We definitely want to do better," she said.

As the pandemic spread across the world, a lag by the global health agency in issuing critical guidelines was seen as hampering efforts to control the outbreak.

Lagged behind most of its member nations in endorsing face coverings for the public. While many organisations, including The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have long since acknowledged the importance of transmission by people without symptoms, the WHO still maintains that asymptomatic transmission is rare.

The NYT report says that many experts said the WHO should embrace what some called a "precautionary principle" and others called "needs and values" - the idea that even without definitive evidence, the agency should assume the worst of the virus, apply common sense and recommend the best protection possible.

"There is no incontrovertible proof that SARS-CoV-2 travels or is transmitted significantly by aerosols, but there is absolutely no evidence that it's not," said Dr Trish Greenhalgh, a primary care doctor at the University of Oxford in Britain.

"So at the moment we have to make a decision in the face of uncertainty, and my goodness, it's going to be a disastrous decision if we get it wrong. So why not just mask up for a few weeks, just in case?" she said.

J&K to reopen for tourists soon

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Despite recording a sudden spike in the total number of coronavirus cases the Jammu and Kashmir government is all set to welcome tourists soon.

Large number of local residents are already flocking public places in Kashmir valley and tourist hotspots in and around Jammu with their families, ignoring SOP's related to social distancing and wearing masks in public places.

Spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir government Rohit Kansal late Monday evening posted a tweet saying, "J&K to reopen for tourism soon. Govt to issue detailed guidelines and SoP shortly. LG issued directions in a high level meeting in Srinagar today".

Each day around 20 flights are landing in Jammu and Srinagar on a daily basis. Around 2000-2400 passengers are reaching here via air route.

According to highly placed sources in the government, "movement of tourists from green zones across the country can be permitted with necessary precautions in the coming days".

To begin with, the government is also toying with the idea of allowing a restricted number of pilgrims/tourists via chartered flights to land in Srinagar.

"The pilgrims, keen on performing pilgrimage will be booked only through approved tour operators who will ferry them to the cave shrine via choppers from Srinagar", official sources revealed.

Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam in his recent meeting had already made it clear that pilgrims will be permitted to perform the pilgrimage after undergoing Covid testing and completing mandatory quarantine period on arrival in Jammu & Kashmir.

WESTERN RAILWAY
CONSTRUCTION OF LABORATORY
Jagjivan Ram Hospital (JRH), Mumbai Central, Mumbai, Western Railway invites offers for following work: **Tender Notice No: WR-HQ0-JRH (W/1WP/4/2020 dated: 07/07/2020)**
Name of the work : "Construction and Setting up of RT-PCR (BSL-III) COVID-19 Laboratory at JRH- MMCT"
Approx. Cost of Work (Rs.): 1,16,74,070.20 (including GST)
EMD (Rs.): 2,08,400.00 **Completion Period :** 120 days **Date & Time of Submission:** 03/08/2020 at 11.00 Hrs. **Date & Time of Opening:** 03/08/2020 at 11.30 Hrs. Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.reps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.
Like us on: [facebook.com/WesternRly](https://www.facebook.com/WesternRly)

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concerned that, Allottee of residential Flat No. R-142, Sector-21, Noida, Smt. Balbir Kaur W/o Late Sh. Gian Singh Grewal R/o R-142, Jalvayu Vihar, Sector-21, Noida has sold the above said flat on GPA basis.
1. A GPA was executed on 03-03-2011 in favour of Mr. Umesh Mehta S/o Sh. Gulshan Kumar Mehta, R/o House No. A-310, 2nd Floor, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024 which is registered in the office of sub registrar office-I, Ludhiana & the Agreement to sell was not executed.
2. Because the Agreement to sell written in para 1 is not executed so with the help of this notice it is informed that the transfer of the above flat on the basis of GPA goes in favour of Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Malhotra S/o Sh. Om Prakash Malhotra R/o M-208, Aruna Apartment, Patparganj, East Delhi-110092. If anyone has any objection, he/she can submit his/her objection in the Group Housing Management of NOIDA Authority within 30 days of publication of this notice.
Umesh Mehta

Helpline numbers of Covid hospitals must on corona app: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a view of timely health treatment amidst spike in Corona infected patients over one lakh, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal directed all the hospitals to make authorised helpline numbers to deal with Covid related queries. With this direction from Delhi government, Delhi Corona App will now show authorised helpline numbers for each hospital.

The Delhi administration's direction came after receiving a lot of complaints from the citizens that the phone numbers of these hospitals stay unreachable most of the time.

Taking cognisance of these complaints Delhi Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia who is also handling the additional portfolio of the health minister directed all the COVID hospitals of Delhi to make authorised helpline numbers to deal with COVID related queries.

Now all these hospitals have come out with 24*7 available authorised helpline numbers; all these numbers are available at the Delhi Corona app which was developed and launched by the Delhi government to provide COVID-19 pandemic related queries in Delhi.

"Any person who wants to reach out to these hospitals



with the COVID-19 related information can now dial these numbers directly from the app," Government said in its order.

In his virtual conference, Kejriwal said, "Now when a patient clicks on the name of the hospital where beds are available, its phone number, along with its location on a map, will pop up.

The Government had launched the 'Delhi Corona' app in June this year to provide real-time information on the availability of beds for the treatment of Covid-19 in hospitals across the city. Days after launching the app, the government had also ordered the hospitals to ensure real-time updating on the app. It is useful for getting information

regarding the availability of hospital beds and ventilators for treating Coronavirus patients. It also helps people in Delhi to locate a nearby healthcare facility to diagnose and treat a COVID-19 infection near them. The Delhi Corona application is also free for all Android and IOS users and is available both on the Google Play Store and Appstore.

The hospitals have also been colour-coded red, yellow and green depending on the availability of beds, with red denoting hospitals with very few beds available and green denoting hospitals with an adequate number of beds.

Till today Delhi has around 14986 beds, out of which 5169 beds are occupied and 9817 beds are vacant.

Govt ramps up installation of ICU beds in hospitals

Kejriwal, Sisodia pay inspection visit to Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Deputy Manish Sisodia on Monday visited the Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital to review the preparedness of the hospital to treat the Covid patients.

Notably, Delhi witnessed a steady increase in the number of Corona cases, the Delhi govt has ramped up the installation of ICU beds in RGSS hospital from 45 to 200, and in LNJP hospital from 60 to 180, which are both COVID dedicated hospitals in Delhi. CM Arvind Kejriwal said that more ICU beds will ensure higher treatment of critical patients and fewer deaths in the city.

Kejriwal said, "Rajiv Gandhi Super Specialty Hospital is playing an important role in our fight against Corona. The LNJP Hospital of the Delhi govt was the first hospital in the city which was declared a COVID Hospital, and then RGSS Hospital was declared a COVID hospital. Since then, the paramedic staff, doctors, and nurses are serving the people of Delhi day and night. Nobody showed any hesitation. Everyone is scared and cautious of Coronavirus. But the paramedic staff, doctors, and nurses at RGSS hospital have done a selfless job by treating Corona patients tirelessly."

Sharing corona history in Delhi, Kejriwal said that until now, 1000 patients have recovered and returned to their homes from this hospital. "We

are very happy with how RGSS is working for the patients. Till a few days back, there were 45 ICU beds in this hospital. We are treating Corona patients with mild symptoms or asymptomatic patients at their homes only through home isolation. We have sent oximeters at their homes, and doctors are in regular conversation with them and these patients are satisfied. Just in case a patient gets serious, he/she can get admitted to the hospital. We might need more ICU beds."

There are 5100 patients currently admitted to the hospitals, and around 10000 beds remain vacant. "But we might need ICU beds in the coming days. We currently have 1900 ICU beds out of which 750 beds are vacant, but we are increasing the current capacity of the ICU beds so that if there is a sudden spike in the number of cases, we are prepared with enough beds. If the number of ICU beds is insufficient, it may lead to a higher death rate," he added.

"I am happy that the RGSS hospital accepted the challenge and till a few days back, there were 45 ICU beds here, which have now been increased to 200. These ICU beds were increased in a limited time frame and limited capacity. We have also told the doctors to increase the number of beds to 500, and they will receive full support from the government in this initiative," he added.

He also said that similarly, there were only 60 ICU beds in



the LNJP hospital, which have been increased to 180 beds until yesterday. In the coming days, the number of beds will be increased in all Delhi govt hospitals for the better treatment of the people.

"Corona patients admitted to their hospitals cannot meet their relatives. We have arranged for tablets here, through which the family members of the patients can meet them and talk to them through video-conferencing. When the family members of the patients talk to them, they feel satisfied. Another facility is the installation of a bell at the nursing station so that when a patient rings the bell, he/she can talk to the nurses also when they need something. Many such facilities have been arranged here. I want to congratulate the doctors, nurses, and authorities, for serving the people in this pandemic," Kejriwal said.

Covid +ve scribe kills self by jumping off AIIMS building

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 37-year-old journalist with Hindi daily undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Trauma Centre died after allegedly jumping off the fourth floor of the hospital building on Monday afternoon.

Following the incident, the Union Health Minister Dr Harshvardhan formed a committee to enquire about the death of Sisodia. "The inquiry committee consists of Chief of Neuroscience Centre, Prof Padma, Head of Psychiatry Dept Prof RK Chaddha, Dy Dir (Admn) Sh Panda & Head, Physical Medicine & Rehab Dr U Singh. My deep condolences to media community that is shaken by the tragic loss of an esteemed colleague," Dr Harshvardhan tweeted.

The journalist, Tarun Sisodia was a resident of north-east Delhi's Bhajanpura. Police said that the incident took place at around 2 pm and the man was rushed to the hospital's ICU where doctors tried to revive him, a doctor said on condition of anonymity.

According to Devender Arya, Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest), the journalist was admitted to the COVID-19 ward at the Trauma

Centre on June 24 after testing positive for the virus.

Meanwhile, AIIMS spokesperson in a statement stated that Sisodiya was admitted in hospital on Jun 24 and he was making significant recovery from his Covid symptoms.

"He was stable on room air today and was planned for shifting to general ward from the ICU. He earlier had a surgery for frontal lobe meningioma (a type of brain tumor) at city's G B Pant Hospital in March 2020," he said.

"While he was in hospital for treatment of COVID-19, he was having bouts of disorientation for which he was seen by Neurologist and Psychiatrist and put on medication. The family members were regularly counselled regarding his condition," he said.

"At around 1.55 PM today, Sisodia ran out of the ward where he was admitted. Hospital attendants ran after him and tried to stop him. Sisodia ran to fourth floor where he broke a window pane and jumped out. He was immediately moved to the ICU in Trauma Centre in an ambulance. He was intubated and resuscitation was tried but unfortunately he succumbed to his injuries at 3.35 PM," the spokesperson further stated.

DCP resumes duty after recovery

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Eish Singhal who had tested positive for Covid-19 last month joined office on Monday after recovering from the infection.

He was given a warm welcome by the officers and staff. The DCP was in home quarantine after he was tested positive for Covid-19. Earlier, DCP (North) Monika Bhardwaj,

Additional DCP (Shahdara) Rohit Rajbir Singh and Additional DCP (Central) Sikander Singh also joined duties after fighting and defeating the virus.

According to a senior police official, at least 10 Delhi police personnel have died due to Covid-19. "Among the 2,000 police personnel who have been infected with the coronavirus, approximately 1,300 of them have successfully recovered," said the official.

Online counselling for home isolation +ve patients

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In a new initiative, a counselling session has been started by the Health Department Gurugram under the supervision of psychiatrists for corona patients undergoing home isolation in the city. So far the Gurugram district has 706 home isolation patients and they have all been counselled by the team of doctors.

During the counselling session the psychiatrists gave them tips to deal with depression and cleared their doubts about the coronavirus disease and pre-

cautions about home isolation.

These patients are divided into different groups according to age. Their counselling is being done according to the prescribed time. "A panel of doctors has been prepared for Corona infected patients in the district. During the session, the doctors are motivating patients to remain stress free along with the prevention of doubts living in home isolation," said Dr. Virender Yadav Civil Surgeon, Gurugram.

He explained that through the Zoom app, patients are sharing their views via video and at that time doctors suggest them

about do and don't so about the disease so that other family members are not infected.

The health officials further said experts are in touch with the home isolation patients and asked about their health problems so that they can be resolved in time. "At present 706 patients are living in home isolation in the district, which have been fixed for their counselling by dividing them into different groups. In addition, a group of Corona-infected patients has been created on WhatsApp to address common doubts," Yadav said.

According to the health

department a number 925 asymptomatic corona-infected patients have been identified by contact tracing in the district till June 30. These 925 patients are divided into 19 groups of 50-50. The last 19 groups have 25 members. They all have separate WhatsApp groups.

"All these are being given online counselling by psychologists through a zoom meeting. We have appointed Dr. Vinay and Dr. Sachin for online counselling session. Along with getting updates about the routine of patients by these experts, they are also given necessary instruc-

tions to patients to take care of themselves," Yadav asserted.

Yadav further said that we have made 4 slots for the doctor for online sessions for the patients. The first slot is 11 am to 12 am, second slot is 12 am to 1 pm, third slot is 4 am to 5 pm and the last slot is 5 am to 6 pm, in which counselling is being given to all the patients living in home isolation.

"It is important for the corona patients to be mentally fit because in such a situation the morale of the person makes him strong to fight the disease. We will reach all the corona

patients and strengthen them mentally and provide them with the possible help so that they can get well soon," Yadav asserted.

Meanwhile, the death toll due to Covid in Gurugram has reached 101 with one more death, health officials said on Monday. The city has also detected 109 fresh cases and 182 recovered on Monday. The district has 6,058 patients and 5,010 of them have recovered and discharged from the hospitals.

Gurugram now has 947 active cases and 706 of them are in home isolation, officials added.

Railway to become 'net zero' carbon emitter by 2030

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railways has taken steps to transform itself as a 'Net Zero' carbon emission mass transportation network by 2030 by installing solar power plants on its vacant unused lands on a mega scale.

"The use of solar power will accelerate the Minister of Railways, Piyush Goyal's mission to achieve conversion of Indian Railways to 'Net Zero' carbon emission railway. Indian Railways present demand would be fulfilled by the solar projects being deployed, making it to be energy self-sufficient. This would help in making Indian Railways green as well as 'Atma Nirbhar'," the ministry said in a statement.

A new dawn ushers on Indian Railways as it endeavors to be self-reliant for its energy needs as directed by the Prime Minister and solarise railway stations by utilizing its vacant lands for Renewable Energy (RE) projects, it said, adding that railway is committed to utilize solar energy for meeting its traction power requirements and become a complete 'Green mode of transportation'.

Indian Railways has acted as a pioneer in green energy procurement. It has started energy procurement from various solar projects like 3 MWp solar plant set up at MCF Raebareilly (UP). About 100 MWp rooftop solar systems have already been commissioned on various stations and buildings of Indian Railways.

Besides, one project of 1.7 MWp at Bina (Madhya Pradesh) which shall be connected directly to the Overhead Traction System has already been installed and is presently under extensive testing. It is likely to be commissioned within 15 days.

"This is the first of its kind project in the world commissioned by Indian Railways in collaboration with Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). It involves adoption of innovative technology for converting Direct Current (DC) to single phase Alternating Current (AC) for feeding directly to Railway's overhead traction system," it said.

The ministry further said that the solar power plant has been established near the Bina Traction Sub Station (TSS). It

can produce approximately 25 lakh units of energy annually and will save around INR 1.37 Crore for Railway every year.

"Indian Railways and BHEL officials have worked tirelessly to successfully implement this innovative project. The project was undertaken by BHEL under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme. Despite the COVID-19 lockdown and consequent difficulties faced in the availability of material and manpower, IR and BHEL worked together as a team to accomplish this mission in just eight months from the date of signing of the agreement on 9th October, 2019," it said.

Talking about the key challenge in this project, the ministry said that the conversion of DC power generated from solar

panels to the single phase 25 KV AC power which is used by the Railways traction system. "This required the development of high capacity inverters with single phase output which were not readily available in the market. The solar panels generate DC energy which will be converted into AC energy through these unique inverters and stepped up to 25 KV AC -1 ? through the transformer to directly feed power to the BINA TSS which will be used for running of electric trains," it said.

In addition to this, two pilot projects for the scheme of land based solar plants for meeting electric traction energy requirements of Indian Railways are under implementation. "One of them is a 50 MWp solar power plant on vacant unused

land at Bhilai (Chhattisgarh) which shall be connected with Central Transmission Utility (CTU) and is targeted to be commissioned before 31st March, 2021. The 2 MWp solar plants at Diwana (Haryana) which shall be connected to State Transmission utility (STU) is expected to be commissioned before 31st August, 2020," it added.

A senior railways official said that the Railway Energy Management Company Ltd. (REMCL) is working relentlessly to further proliferate the use of solar energy on mega scale. It has already floated tenders for two GW of solar projects for Indian Railways to be installed on unutilised railway lands. Indian Railways is also adopting an innovative concept

of installation of solar projects along operational railway lines.

"This will help in preventing encroachment, enhancing the speed and safety of trains and reduction of infrastructure costs due to direct injection of solar power into the traction network. Another tender for installation of 1 GW solar plants along Railway tracks is also planned to be released soon by REMCL," he said.

With these mega initiatives, Indian Railways is leading India's fight against climate challenge and is taking significant steps towards meeting its ambitious goal of being a net zero carbon emissions organisation and meeting India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) targets.

CAIT demands mention of country of origin must for online sales

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Intensifying its demand for an early roll out of e-commerce policy in India, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal in a letter sent to him to ensure the formation of a regulatory authority and putting an end to the long ongoing malpractices of deep discounting and predatory pricing, controlling inventory and making it mandatory to mention Country of Origin and contents of value addition on each product to be sold on e-commerce platforms.

CAIT secretary general Praveen Khandelwal said that these e-commerce portals have become a dumping ground for cheap Chinese imports without any substantive value addition. "Mandatory mentioning of Country of Origin & contents of value addition will inform the consumers about the fundamental details of each product as also the consumer will have a choice to select products," he said.

"The current COVID pandemic has comprehensively increased usage of digital platforms. It is expected that during forthcoming festive season from Navratri to Diwali, the usage of e-commerce will touch a new height as people gripped with fear of Corona will surely moved to digital portals and as such, it has become more important to make e-commerce policy a comprehensive guideline document which should encourage a fair competition in the market to enable the consumers to get their goods at their doorstep," he added.

Over twelve reptiles rescued in a week

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

From a Rat snake showing up in a police station to an Indian rock python seeking respite from the heat in a bathroom, over twelve reptiles have been rescued in past week.

Sharing details about rescue operation, Wildlife SOS shared that in one particular incident, the rising heat in the city drove a six-foot-long Rat Snake straight to the refuge of a police station in Bhajanpura.

"As police officers noticed the snake's tail emerging between the hinges of a door, they immediately contacted the NGO's rescue team on their helpline number (+91-9871963535) and requested for assistance," a member of rescue team said.

Donning protective gear,

the rescuers quickly and efficiently extracted the large snake and had it safely nestled in a transport carrier, earning the praise of the police officers! In another close call, the Wildlife SOS team rushed to the rescue of a five-foot-long Indian Rock Python that was found in the bathroom of a house in Sainik Farms.

Kartick Satyanarayan, CEO Co-founder of Wildlife SOS, said, "We would like to thank the Delhi Police officers for reaching out to us immediately. The rise in temperature is driving reptiles to seek respite from the heat in cooler spaces. The last few weeks have shown us people's compassion towards urban wildlife and we are truly grateful for the chance to be able to make a difference!"

In the past week, a Monitor

Lizard was also rescued from a school in Shakarpur, Delhi and another monitor lizard was found in a home in Ghaziabad. The rescued reptiles were later safely released into their natural habitats.

Wasim Akram, Deputy Director - Special Projects, Wildlife SOS, said, "In the past week alone, we have rescued more than 12 reptiles and the number is still on a rise. Rescues range from that of extremely venomous snakes like the cobra and common krait, to relatively harmless and non-venomous ones like the sand boa, wolf snake and rat snake."

As the lockdown is being lifted across the country and people are emerging on the streets, it is extremely imperative to keep in mind that the

wild animals getting used to empty spaces in urban habitats are going to continue exploring them. Wildlife SOS is consistently working towards changing



people's attitude and sensitizing the public to the presence of urban wildlife and how we can help keep the conflict at a minimum.

Students of Govt schools receive first worksheet

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Students of the Delhi Government run schools, from Kinder Garten (KG) to grade Eighth received their first worksheet on Monday. As per the Directorate of Education (DOE), students will receive this worksheet every day.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had announced the launch of Delhi Government's remote teaching learning approach for the month of July owing to the closure of schools.

According to Delhi government official, students from KG to Grade 8 received their first worksheet which they will now receive everyday contains engaging, syllabus agnostic activities to promote reading,

writing, basic numeracy and happiness among children. "Similarly, students in Grade 9 and 10 received worksheets for Hindi, Science and Maths today. Henceforth, they will receive 2-3 worksheets everyday."

All the worksheets were shared with the students by the class teachers through Whatsapp group created at the class level. Around 4.15 lakh students have accessed the worksheets on first day.

The students will be working on the worksheets and will share it with their teachers on the respective Whatsapp groups. For those students who don't have access to Whatsapp, teachers will get the printouts of these worksheets and will hand them to their parents on a weekly basis.

Gandhi family only interested in defence commissions: BJP

BJP slams Rahul for not attending meeting of Parl Standing Committee on defence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amidst the continuing India-China stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, the BJP on Monday made a sarcasm-mixed political attack on former Congress president Rahul Gandhi for "not attending a single of the 11 meetings" of the Parliamentary defence committee and accused that the "dynasty is only interested in defence commissions & not defence forces".

Led by BJP national president J P Nadda, the party asked Rahul to explain his conduct of not attending the key standing committee meetings on defence and even giving a go by to an important field visit to the border at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

Nadda pointed out that the former Congress president had not attended a sin-

gle meeting of the Standing Committee on Defence during the 17th Lok Sabha. The committee, which has met 11 times since 2019, comprises 21 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 members from the Rajya Sabha.

They have to examine bills pertaining to the Ministry of Defence and other defence-related issues.

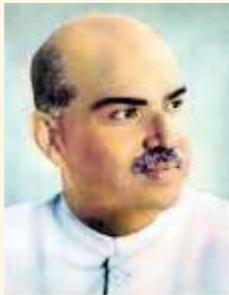
"Rahul Gandhi does not attend a single meeting of Standing Committee on Defence. But sadly, he continues to demoralise the nation, question the valour of our armed forces and do everything that a responsible opposition leader should not do", tweeted Nadda.

The BJP president, in his tweets, lamented that the Congress leader, on the other hand, continued to demoralise armed forces during the LAC faceoff with China and repeatedly criticised the Modi

PM, Nadda pay tribute to Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his birth anniversary

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President J P Nadda, the party on Monday paid tributes to the founder of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJP), a precursor to the BJP, Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his 119th birth anniversary as they cited his "exemplary contributions" to country's unity and the recent scrapping of Article 370 which, the party said, was inspired by his sacrifice.



"I bow to Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his Jayanti. A

devout patriot, he made exemplary contributions towards India's development. He made courageous efforts to further India's unity. His thoughts and ideals give strength to millions across the nation," Modi tweeted while remembering the BJS leader who passed away in Kashmir while demanding its "complete integration" in the country.

The BJP President said it is the act of sacrifice of Mookerjee that article 370 that until recently provided special status to J&K was scrapped

under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the strategy of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"Apna desh apni maati, ek desh, ek Pradhan, ek vidhan, ek Nishan ka sapna pura kar rahen hain", he said recollecting Mookerjee's assertion that one nation can not have two Constitutions, two PMs and two flags.

Nadda who paid tribute to the late leader at BJP headquarters here said Mookerjee's ideals were a "unique blend of regional aspirations and

national unity". BJP Chief said BJS founder sowed the seed of Jammu and Kashmir's development through his slogan, "Ek desh mein do vidhaan, do nishaan, do pradhan nahin chalega (One country can't have two constitutions, two leaders and two national emblems).

While praising the vision of Mookerjee, he said the first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru had adopted a flawed policy of "appeasement".

Mookerjee was part of

Nehru's Cabinet and resigned following differences with the latter over Liaquat pact. With the help of the RSS, he founded the BJS in 1951. Mookerjee was also the president of Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha from 1943 to 1946.

Home Minister in his tribute to Mookerjee said, he will "always be remembered for his efforts in making Kashmir an integral part of India. He will continue to inspire people for his sacrifice for upholding India's unity and integrity."

Government's handling of the situation along the LAC, making "unverified claims" such as Indian soldiers being sent to fight without weapons and the Chinese troops occupying Indian territory.

Accusing him of not behaving as a responsible opposition leader, Nadda sought to say that he belonged to a tradition where "commissions" matter more than committees.

Furthermore, he contended that the Gandhi dynasty would not provide to deserving Congress members who he said were keen to be in the parliamentary committee.

Soon after Nadda hit out at Rahul, BJP spokesperson GVL Narismha Rao demanded that Rahul as an opposition leader and Lok Sabha MP explain his absence in such an important

parliamentary committee and giving a miss to the visit by MPs to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

"The family has interest only in commission be it Bofors gun, HDW submarine, AugustaWestland helicopter or

other defence deals. Dynasty takes interest in commission not in armed forces," Rao said and further accused the Congress leaders of bringing down the morale of the country's armed forces.

Now, NHAI to undertake performance assessment, ranking of highways

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In its effort to improve the quality of roads after blocking Chinese infrastructure firms, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, has decided to undertake performance assessment and ranking of the highways in the country.



The assessment audit and ranking of the NH is aimed to take corrective recourse, wherever needed, to improve the quality and provide higher level of service to highway commuters.

A senior Road Transport Ministry official said the move is also aimed to encourage competition amongst the Indian road and infrastructure firms to provide world class facilities after the Government announced not to allow Chinese firms in the projects. He also mentioned that Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has already stated that when small projects can be undertaken by Indian firms then they should be given opportunities for large scale highways projects subject they meet quality and standards.

"The assessment parameters are based on different international practices and studies for benchmarking high-

way performances in Indian context. The criteria for the assessment have been broadly categorised in three main heads: Highway Efficiency (45%), Highway Safety (35%) and User Services (20%," said a Road Ministry official. On the basis of outcome of the assessment, the authority will undertake a comprehensive analysis and decide on the level of intervention required to enhance the overall service quality.

Additionally, important parameters like operating speed, access control, time taken at toll plaza, road signages, road markings, accident rate, incident response time, crash barriers, illumination, availability of Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS), functionality of structures, provision for grade separated intersections, cleanliness, plantation, wayside amenities and customer satisfaction will also be considered while conducting the assess-

ment. The score obtained by each Corridor in each of the parameter will provide a feedback and corrective recourse for higher standards of operation, better safety and user experience to improve existing highways.

This will also help in identifying and filling gaps of design, standards, practices, guidelines and contract agreements for other NHAI projects.

The ranking of the corridors will be dynamic and the concessionaire/ contractor/operator will get the opportunity to improve upon their ranking by improving the services on that corridor.

Apart from overall ranking of all the corridors, separate ranking for BOT, HAM and EPC projects will also be done. This process of ranking will bring out operational efficiency and ensure high quality maintenance of roads.

Rahul slams Modi Govt over rising corona cases



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Continuing with his attack against the Modi dispensation, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday lashed out at the Government over the rising coronavirus cases saying future Harvard Business School case studies on failure would include the Government's handling of Covid-19.

Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the former Congress chief also tweeted a clip which included portions from the PM's addresses to the nation on the COVID-19 crisis, including his remarks that the Mahabharata war was won in 18 days and the war against coronavirus will take 21 days.

The clip also showed a graph of rising coronavirus cases, making India the third worst-hit nation in terms of infection count.

National Covid-19 positive rate stands at 6.73 %

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India on Monday breached the 7-lakh cases mark, the Union Health Minister on Monday said the national positivity rate of Covid-19 infected patients is 6.73 per cent with Punjab reporting the lowest at 1.92 per cent among eight States and Union Territories (UTs) showing improvement.

The positivity rate is based on the tests per million people.

India tested 10 million samples for the infection in the past five-and-a-half months in the 1,100 laboratories that were identified, upgraded or established across the country for testing.

The Government attributed it to a joint effort of the central as well as the State and UT Governments to effectively manage the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

As part of the coordinated efforts, the ministry said

the Union Government emphasised on increasing testing, prompt contact tracing and timely clinical management of the cases.

It has also helped the States to significantly ramp up testing capacities, it said.

"This has resulted in reduced positivity in the country. Currently the national positivity rate stands at 6.73 per cent."

As per the data collated till July 5, 2020, Puducherry, Chandigarh, Assam, Tripura, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Goa and Punjab with their positivity rates are lesser than the national average and tests per 10 lakh population is higher than the national average.

Among these eight States and UTs, Puducherry is on top with 5.55 per cent positivity rate followed by Chandigarh (4.36 per cent), Assam (2.84 per cent), Tripura (2.27 per cent), Karnataka (2.64 per cent), Rajasthan (2.51 per cent), Goa (2.5 per cent) and Punjab (1.92 per cent).



Tests were ramped up through increased RT-PCR testing along with the new Rapid Antigen Point-of-Care (POC) tests which gives results in only about 30 minutes.

As per the data, the average number of samples being tested per day has increased an average of 18,766 samples per day between July 1 to 5 while it was just 5,481 between June 1 and 5.

In Delhi, despite significantly increased testing, the positivity rate has seen a substantial decrease from about 30 per cent to 10 per cent in

the last three weeks.

As per the data, maximum of 44,129 tests per million people have been done so far in Goa followed by Puducherry (12,592 tests), Tripura (10,941), Rajasthan (10,445), Punjab (10,225), Assam (9,987), Chandigarh (9,090) and Karnataka (9,803).

Amitabh Kant, CEO of Niti Aayog, emphasising the need for aggressive testing, tweeted, "We can succeed against #Covid-19 only with 3T strategy of testing, tracing and treating. This is the moment to act, and to act fast."

implementation," Gandhi tweeted along with the clip.

Rahul's attack on the Government came a day after India went past Russia to

become the third worst-hit nation by the COVID-19 pandemic. Only the US and Brazil are ahead of India in terms of total coronavirus

infections.

Rahul has been unrelenting in its attack against the Government over its handling of the Covid-19 situa-

tion.

He has also kept the Government in the line of fire over the face-off with China on the LAC.

Rain, thunderstorms in eastern India, predicts IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when over 200 persons have already died due to lightning strikes, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday warned of more thunderstorms with lightning along with moderate to heavy rain over east Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, south Bihar, Chhattisgarh, east Madhya Pradesh, interior Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal during the next 48 hours.

There's no relief for Gujarat too battered with heavy rain. The IMD predicted heavy rainfall in Gujarat in the next 48 hours due to well-marked low pressure area over Saurashtra and neighbourhood. Porbandar and Dwarka received 12 inches and 10 inches rainfall in the last 24 hours.

The weatherman predicted moderate rains, moderate to intense thunderstorm and more lightning strikes over

east Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, south Bihar, Chhattisgarh, east Madhya Pradesh, interior Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal during the next 48 hours. At least 200-250 people have died since March due to lightning in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh with many of the victims being farmers who were in their fields for plantations during monsoon rains.

The IMD also predicted heavy rains over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim during July 9th to 12.

The IMD said lightning and thunder are caused by large-scale instability in the atmosphere, fuelled by temperature rises and excessive moisture. Lightning strikes during the annual monsoon that runs from June to September are fairly common in India.

As per reports, at least 25 people were fatally struck on Saturday (July 4) in Bihar. On

Friday (July 3), 19 people died in the state due to lightning. There were 26 deaths on Thursday (July 2) while 125 people died on July 1 in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

As per the National Crime Records Bureau data, every year at least 2000 to 3000 deaths in India occur due to lightning strikes and torrential rains in India. Odisha tops with 9 lakh lightning strikes which is 15% of total strikes. Maharashtra, Karnataka, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh together account for more than 50% lightning strikes of India. The number of lightning days across India has shown a significant increase, every month progressively.

July witnessed the highest lightning days, especially in the later half due to turbulent onset of monsoon.

There has been constant lightning almost every day in one or the other parts of country. Odisha and Andhra

Pradesh have so far been the most lightning active states. Eight states of North East comprising Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim - the 2.4% of geographical area of India with 3.86% of national population falls in the most hot lightning rod zone.

India has received 244.9 mm rainfall as against the normal of 216.7 mm, an increase of 12 percent so far. As many as 30 states and union territories have received either normal or excess rainfall between June 1 and July 6.

After witnessing a spell of heavy rainfall over the past three days, Mumbai and neighbouring Thane received moderate rains on Monday. The Santacruz weather bureau (in suburbs) recorded 5.2 mm rainfall, while the Colaba weather station, representative of the island city, reported 1.2 mm rainfall from 8:30 am and 5:30 pm on Monday.

Govt launches 'Bal Vidyalaya' for rural India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the entire education system, particularly primary schools, the Centre on Monday launched Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-enabled primary schools - "Bal Vidyalaya" - for rural India.

The Common Service Centre, a unit of digital India arm under Ministry of Electronics and IT, launched the specially-designed Bal Vidyalaya for students of 10 states namely Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu.

Launching the 21 CSC Bal Vidyalaya pre-schools in 10 states, CSC CEO Dr. Dinesh Kumar Tyagi said: "Digital India is for the poor and underprivileged. We started the concept of Bal Vidyalaya to bridge the digital divide in rural areas. CSC's foundation is education, so we wanted to help cognitive development of children at the nascent stage."

The CSC Bal Vidyalaya will use technology and enable a child to learn rather than focus on teaching. The key to improving a child's motivation and ability to become an independent learner is to employ effective cognitive strategies. With the use of technology, a child

can learn fast. In villages, quality education will be ensured through CSC Bal Vidyalaya. To bridge limitations of access to technology tools and good teachers, CSC Bal Vidyalaya proposes to address these aspects.

Dr Tyagi said CSC aims to open 700 Bal Vidyalayas, one in every district across the country, by the end of current fiscal and then expand it to every Block by the end of 2021.

Rishikesh Patankar, COO-CSC, said, "CSC Bal Vidyalaya is ICT-enabled education for school children. With this initiative, CSC Academy is starting a new journey. Here, we will focus on learning by doing. We will encourage activity-based learning."

Common Service Centres (CSC) scheme is one of the mission mode projects under the Digital India Programme. There are over 3.6 lakh CSCs across India.

MP CM seeks GI tag for basmati

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday met Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and requested him for providing the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Basmati rice produced in Madhya Pradesh. Chouhan claimed the basmati rice grown in the State was on par with that from Punjab and Haryana and five other northern States.

"We export high-quality Basmati rice to America and Canada. In the meeting with the Union Agriculture Minister, I requested him to provide our Basmati rice, a Geographical Indication tag, as we have been demanding it for a long time," Chouhan said after the meeting with Tomar.

A GI tag is an indication used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to the origin. Such a tag conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is attributed to its origin.

The GI tag was for PUSA-1 and PUSA-1121 basmati rice varieties cultivated in Madhya Pradesh.

MP has been trying to get the GI tag for its basmati rice for quite some time. The state government had earlier moved the Supreme Court against the Madras High Court judgement rejecting the pleas of basmati growers and State Government challenging the exclusion of 13 districts of the state from a map submitted by the Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) for GI tags.

The matter dates back to 2008 when the Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) filed an application before the Chennai-based assistant registrar of GI seeking GI-Tag for the basmati rice.

In 2010, the State Government had opposed APEDA's application on the ground that it had excluded 13 basmati-producing districts, following which the authority directed APEDA to again file its application along with a map clearly showing areas where the rice is actually cultivated.

However, the APEDA moved to Intellectual Property Appellate Board (IPAB) against the authority and since then the litigation in the matter is on.

Chouhan also met Union Fertilisers Minister Sadanand Gowda requesting adequate supply of Urea as per the demand during the kharif season in the State.

Websites of PoK Govt hacked

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

A hacker group, styled as "Indian Cyber Troops" has hacked the websites of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) Government and public information department warning the Pak establishment against trying to hack Indian websites.

A message posted on the screen page of the so called Azad Jammu and Kashmir "pidajk.gok.pk claiming Message

from Directorate General of Public Relations said, "Awaam (general public) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir seek independence from Pakistan. Pakistan Army and police are involved in mass scale human rights violations, atrocities on innocent civilians and spreading terrorism. We strongly condemn Pakistanirulers for the discriminatory policies and misrule in Azad Jammu and Kashmir for the past 70 years."

Under the title "We Want

Azaadi", another message on the same page read, "Pak Airforce F-16 shot by IAF (Indian Air Force) last February is a dark secret Government of Pakistan has been keeping from its people. We pay respect to the family of the killed pilot (of F-16 of Pakistan Air Force) and soon the truth shall come out."

The screenshot of the hacked website also hosted a photograph showing a large mob burning the Pakistani flag. "Don't try to hack Indian

sites, otherwise result will be unimaginable, stay away from Indian cyber space. Pakistan Murdabad," warned another message posted on the official website of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The official website of POK, ajk.gov.pk read, "Website is undergoing maintenance."

The Pakistani website ajk.gov.pk was hacked on Saturday and till the filing of this report the authorities there have not been able to fully restore the site.

NIA files chargesheet against suspended DySP Davinder, 5 others

Srinagar: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday filed a chargesheet against six persons, including suspended Jammu and Kashmir Deputy SP Davinder Singh, in a special NIA court in Jammu.

Others named are Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu, Irfan Shafi Mir, Rafi Rather, Tanveer Ahmad Wani, and Syed Irfan.

Devinder Singh is held in Kathua jail at Heeranagar in Jammu division. He was arrested by the police on January 11 on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway when he was transporting two Hizbul Mujahideen terrorists -- Naveed Babu and Rafi Ahmad Rather -- and a law school dropout

Irfan Shafi Mir to Jammu. Naveed's brother Irfan was arrested on January 23 for his alleged role in the conspiracy while Wani came under the scanner for allegedly giving money to Naveed, a former Special Police Officer of J&K who had joined the terror ranks.

After the arrest of Singh, initial investigations were done by the J&K police before the case was handed to the NIA. Police had said that the two terrorists and the lawyer had planned to travel to Pakistan. Singh was earlier shifted from Srinagar to Jammu on a transit remand where an NIA team questioned him. After his arrest by the J&K police, multiple raids were conducted

at his residence in Srinagar. An NIA press statement said that its investigation revealed that the accused were part of a deep-rooted conspiracy hatched by the Pakistan-based terrorist organization Hizbul Mujahideen and Pakistani state to commit violent acts and to wage war against India.

"The investigation has revealed that Pakistan-based leadership of Hizbul Mujahideen, namely Sayeed Salahudeen, Amir Khan, HM deputy chief, Khurshed Alam, operational head of Hizbul, Nazir Mehmood, financial head of Hizbul, and others along with Pakistani establishment is extending support to the cadres and commanders of

Hizbul Mujahideen based in Jammu and Kashmir. "The investigation also revealed that accused Irfan Shafi Mir @ Advocate not only met Hizbul leadership in Pakistan but also met Umar Cheema, Ashan Chaudhary, Sohail Abbas and others of ISI of Pakistan and he was tasked to identify and activate the new hawala channels for transfer of money for sustaining terrorist activities in the Kashmir Valley," the statement said.

The statement said that investigation also revealed that certain officials of Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi were in constant touch with Mir alias Advocate, who was provided funds to organize seminars in J&K to mobilize the

masses against the government of India. Mir also used to receive instructions and money from Pakistan High Commission and also facilitated the visa applications for number of Kashmiris for their visit to Pakistan.

"Accused Davinder Singh was also in touch with certain officials of Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi through secure social media platforms. Investigation revealed that he was being groomed by Pakistani officials for obtaining sensitive information. Investigation has revealed that ex-Constable Naveed Babu had deserted police along with certain weapons and was responsible

for various killings, including incidents of terror in which labourers and truck drivers were killed after the abrogation of Article 370 from J&K. "Naveed Babu had made efforts to recruit gullible Muslims youths to join cadre of Hizbul Mujahideen. He was also receiving funds from LoC traders. Tanveer Ahmad Wani, who was an ex-President of LoC Traders Association, was providing him funds with the help of other traders based in PoK.

"Investigation has also revealed that the accused were obtaining weapons and ammunition from across the border with the help of arms smugglers and accused Davinder Singh. These weapons were later used

for terrorist activities," the statement added. It said investigation has further revealed that in February 2019, in order to shield HM commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq from the heightened surveillance of security agencies, accused Davinder Singh, a serving DySP of J&K Police, along with Irfan Shafi Mir alias Advocate and Syed Irfan Ahmad, arranged safe shelter for him and his associate in Jammu. Accused Davinder Singh used his own vehicle for the movement of HM terrorists and also assured them help in procuring weapons.

"Investigation has further brought on record that the Pakistani establishment has

been devising all possible ways and means to fund, arm and sustain the terrorist activities of the banned Hizbul Mujahideen. Further investigation in the case is continuing against arrested accused Tariq Ahmad Mir and others in the case," the statement said.

Singh was posted with the anti-hijacking wing of Jammu & Kashmir Police in Srinagar, and was part of the security staff that had received a group of foreign diplomats who visited Kashmir.

On June 19, a Delhi court had granted bail to Davinder Singh in a terror case after the Delhi Police failed to file a charge sheet against him and co-accused within the stipulated time

Maha hotels can welcome 33% guests from tomorrow

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As part of easing of lockdown norms, the Maharashtra government on Monday decided to allow hotels, lodges and guest houses outside the containment zones to operate from July 8, at 33 per cent capacity.

Through an order, the state government announced the "Mission Begin Again Phase-V" to implement new norms with effect from July 8, outside specified Covid-19 containment zones all over the state, including all municipal jurisdiction of Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune Metropolitan Region (PMR), and Solapur, Aurangabad, Nashik, Malegaon, Dhule, Jalgaon, Akola. Amravati and Nagpur.

Incidentally, a majority of the cities like Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Aurangabad, Nashik, Jalgaon, Akola have witnessed highest number of Covid-19 infected cases and deaths.

While it has permitted hotels, lodges and guest houses to operate outside the containment from July 8, the state government has not allowed shopping malls to restart during the "Mission Begin Again Phase-V".

"These entities if being used for quarantine facilities will continue to be used so

unless decided otherwise by the district/municipal administration. Similarly, some part or whole of the balance unused capacity (67 per cent) can also be used as the quarantine facility by the municipal / district administration."

The guidelines that have been laid down for the re-start of restaurants include: re-configuration of sitting arrangements to ensure social distancing, provision of e-menus and disposable paper napkins, encouragement of room service take-aways and restricting restaurants for resident guests.

As part of the new norms, hotels will now be required to maintain physical distancing among staff/guests with markings for queues and suitably configure seating arrangements, restrict the number of people in elevators with compulsory thermal screening at entrances to restrict the entry of any symptomatic persons.

Reception space must have a glass shield, sanitisers to be made freely available all over the hotel, the management must implement 'contact-less' procedures like QR codes, online forms, digital payments, etc for check-in/check-out, placing orders, etc.

Air Conditioning will have to be maintained at 24-30 degrees with 40-70 percent

humidity range with adequate cross-ventilation and maximum fresh air intake.

While only asymptomatic guests will be permitted, they will be allowed entry wearing of face mask, they will have to wear face masks at all times inside the hotel, install the Arogya Setu app, provide full details of their travel history, medical condition, and minimize use of housekeeping services.

While swimming pools, gyms, gaming arcades, children's areas will remain closed, the state government has allowed meeting halls to remain open with 33 percent capacity or maximum 15 persons shall be allowed.

Among other things, the state government has mandated sanitisation of rooms and other service areas. "After the client's stay, the room should be left unoccupied for at least 24 hours and all linen towels should be changed after guests vacate the room," one of the guidelines said.

The state government has also mandated other strict measures for cleaning, sanitising and disinfecting the hotel premises and rooms, and the protocols to be followed in case a guest falls ill or any suspect/confirmed Covid-19 case is located on the premises.

Maha daily positive cases drop to 5,368, deaths 204

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After touching an all-time record of 7074 Covid-19 positive cases on Saturday, the number of infected cases came down further in Maharashtra to 5,368 on Monday, even as 204 more people died of Coronavirus in various parts of the state.

After the number of infections had virtually peaked to touch 7074 forty eight hours, the state has witnessed a steady decline in the number of positive cases. While the number of cases had slid to 6555 and the figure dropped further to 5368.

With the 5368 fresh infections, the total number of infected cases jumped to 2,11,987.

As the infections touched 2,11,987 cases. Maharashtra on Monday overtook Turkey which has 205,758 cases. Earlier on Sunday, Maharashtra had surpassed Germany (197,651 cases).

Similarly, with 151 new deaths and infections, the total number of deaths crossed 9000 mark to touch 9026.

Of the total 204 fatalities declared today, Thane accounted for 57 deaths, while Mumbai witnessed 39 deaths.

There has been a steady decline in the number of deaths in Mumbai. The number has

come down two digits during the last few days. With the fresh 39 deaths, the total number of deaths in Mumbai mounted to 4,938 on Monday, while the number of infected cases has risen by 1,200 cases to touch 85,724.

Apart from 57 deaths recorded in Thane and 39 in Mumbai, there were 17 deaths each in Pune and Nashik, 16 deaths in Jalgaon, 14 in Palghar, seven each in Solapur and Aurangabad, five each in Dhule and Jalna, four each in Satara and Raigad, three in Akola, two in Latur, one each in Ratnagiri, Kolhapur, Ahmednagar, Nagpur, Amravati, Nanded, and Osmanabad.

With 49,485 positive cases and 1,327 deaths, Thane has emerged as the second worst-hit district after Mumbai in the state.

With 28,966 patients and 889 deaths, Pune district stands third in terms of infections and fatalities.

Meanwhile, the total number of patients discharged from various hospitals after full recovery since the second week of March this year touched 1,15,262. The recovery rate in the state stood at 54.37 per cent. The mortality rate in the state is 4.26 per cent. The state health authorities pegged the

number of "active cases" in the state at 87,681.

Out of 11,35,447 samples sent to laboratories, 2,11,987 have tested positive (18.57%) for COVID-19 until Monday. Currently, 6,15,265 people are in home quarantine while 46355 people are in institutional quarantine.

Vikas Dubey now carries bounty of ₹2.5L

Lucknow: The Yogi Adityanath government has increased the reward on the head of gangster Vikas Dubey to Rs 2.5 lakh.

Dubey, who is the main accused in the killing of eight police personnel in Kanpur on Friday, is absconding after the incident.

The Government had earlier announced a reward of Rs 50,000 for anyone who gave

information about Dubey's whereabouts. The amount was later increased to Rs one lakh.

Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police H.C. Awasthi said on Monday that the reward money was being raised to Rs 2.5 lakh as police teams continued to search for the gangster and his accomplices.

IANS

Kerala CM's office in gold smuggling crosshairs

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A new modus operandi to smuggle in gold to India has been busted at Thiruvananthapuram airport on Sunday with the Customs Department seizing 30 Kg of the yellow metal valued at Rs 15 crore in the local market.

The gold, concealed in the form of pipes, rods and faucets was seized from a diplomatic consignment addressed to the Consular General of the United Arab Emirates in the city. By Monday, the incident snowballed into a major scam with the name of a senior IAS official attached to Chief Minister's Office finding mention in reports associated with the smuggling.

The Customs Department took into custody Sarith, a former staff of the UAE Consulate Office and he was taken to Kochi for interrogation. It is reported that one of the principal secretaries working in the CMO rang up the Customs officials to make them hush up the case.

Sarith, who was dismissed from service by the Consulate long back was questioned by officials of Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) at the Kochi office of the Customs Department. Name of a former lady staff who worked with the consulate is also being mentioned as a possible associate in this smuggling operation.

The consignment which arrived at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport some time last week was kept pending customs clearance. Usually, diplomatic consignments are not subjected to Customs scrutiny as the invoices and other documents furnished by the office of the Consulate General is taken at face value and the material cleared without any hassle. But this time, the Customs officials got a tip

off and thus the baggage was stored in the air cargo complex for clearance.

The consignment was opened on Sunday in the presence of the Consular staff but the latter feigned ignorance about the contents in the package. Customs officials are of the view that this type of smuggling making use of the diplomatic goodwill would not have taken place without the knowledge of the higher-ups and the consular staff.

"This kind of consignments used to come quite regularly to the airport. There were much bigger consignments too in the recent past," said a senior airport official who is privy to the happenings in airport cargo complex.

Gulf News, a popular daily, has quoted UAE Ambassador to India, Dr. Ahmad Abdul Rahman Al Banna as saying: "We don't know anything about it. Anyone sending anything to the consulate doesn't mean that it is ours. It is nonsense [to think like that]."

By Monday evening the

Government of Kerala dismissed the service of Swapna Suresh from its IT Department. She has been working as a liaison officer in one of the units under the IT Department. Swapna is reportedly the kingpin of the entire operation. She was earlier working as an executive assistant in the Consulate Office from where she was sacked for improper conduct, according to persons who are close to her.

K Surendran, the young president of Kerala BJP, alleged that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and IT secretary M Sivasankar were trying to save Swapna Suresh from the case. "She is an accused in many criminal cases and was fired by the UAE Consulate General for misconduct. How come such a person was appointed in the Chief Minister's Office despite the Special Branch Police alerting the Chief Minister about her antecedents. Let Pinarayi Vijayan explain this to the people of Kerala because everything associated with Swapna Suresh is illegal," said Surendran.

Didi launches new app, opens water project worth ₹58,000 cr

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday announced a string of measures "in order to create jobs and revolutionise the State's socio-economic profile."

Launching a mega rural drinking water project, she said "our Government is undertaking a drinking water project worth Rs 58,000 crore for the rural areas that will benefit 2 crore people." Apart from the existing "Jal Dhara, Jal Bharo" scheme that entails digging and maintenance of water bodies hundreds of miles of drinking water pipeline will be fixed in the rural areas under the new project she said iterating "apart from reaching fresh drinking water to the rural people it will also provide jobs to thousands of youth." She said "the new project is revolutionary in the sense that it will save the rural women the time and labour involved in bringing drinking water from far off areas apart from preserving ground water." The new project is likely to change the lives of lakhs of people living in the arid western districts

of the States including Purulia, Bankura, Asansol region.

"The scheme will take five year to complete and revolutionise the socio-economic condition of the State," she said adding the new scheme will be christened Jal Swapna.

Apart from the water pipeline scheme the Chief Minister also announced the launching of a fully government created "self scanner" mobile App for the netizens.

Reminding what Gopal Krishna Gokhale said about what "Bengal thinkstoday rest of India thinks tomorrow" Banerjee said "this is the perhaps the first self scanner mobile App or SS App which will help the mobile users to scan their documents, and edit them for free and without any fear of one's information being stolen as the doc will not be linked to any server."

In an apparent reference to the BJP's "Swadeshi slogan," the Chief Minister said the App had been created by the State's Information Technology Department. "This App is the real example of Swadeshi and does not rely or is connected to any outside thing."

TMC writes to EC, questions senior citizens' new voting rules

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The TMC has written a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora saying that the postal ballot voting as decided for the voters beyond 65-year age was a violation of the right to secrecy to vote and right to free and fair elections.

In an apparent reference to the recent amendment allowing people above 65 years of age and the corona patients to vote from home TMC general secretary Subrata Bakshi wrote "We consider this move of wanting those above 65 years of age to vote through postal ballots as arbitrary, unconstitutional, and ex-facie a violation of the right to secrecy of the vote, right to free and fair elections, and right to health of the citizens of India."

Calling the decision arbitrary as no party was consulted regarding the decision Bakshi said that the amendment would in effect disenfranchise senior citizens above the age of 65 by denying them a "fair, equal, and reasonable chance to participate in elections."

61 die in TN as 3,837 test +ve

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Though there was a miniscule decrease in the number of persons diagnosed with Covid-19 in Tamil Nadu on Monday, death rate continued to rule the roost as 61 persons lost the battle against the pandemic.

While 3,827 persons tested positive for coronavirus (on Sunday the figure was 4,150), 3,793 were discharged from various hospitals fully cured on a single day.

Out of the total number of cases diagnosed with covid on Monday, Chennai accounted for 1,747 persons, said the medical bulletin released by the Government of TN. As on

Monday, the State had 46,833 patients while the total number of persons tested positive for Covid till date stood at 1.14 lakh.

There are 95 laboratories functioning round the clock in Tamil Nadu. While on Monday, these laboratories tested 34,782 persons, the number of persons tested till date reached 1.31 million. Tamil Nadu continued to maintain its supremacy in testing the maximum number of persons viz-a-viz its neighbours.

53 of the deceased persons had pre-existing morbidity or chronic diseases. Chengalpet (213), Kancheepuram (182) and Thiruvallur (175) did not show any let up in the number of patients.

NORTHERN RAILWAY OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

The Sr. Divisional Security Commissioner/RPF/Co-ordination, Northern Railway, New Delhi invites E-Tender for the following work:-

Name of work with its location	Hiring of one multi utility road vehicle (Bolero, Scorpio) along with vehicle driver for movement of day & night (24 hrs.) under jurisdiction of ASG/RPF/DL-W Delhi Division on monthly basis for a period of Two year. 80 KM per day and 2400 Kms/Per Month approx. cost of work ₹13,53,600/- with GST.
Tender Number	17 RPF/MT-Tender-III/DLI-W/2019
Office Address	Sr. DSC (Co-ordination)/RPF, P.K. Road, New Delhi-110001
Period of works	For Two years (Day and Night 24 hours)
Approximate cost of the work	₹13,53,600/- with GST as applicable
Earnest Money	₹27,100/-
The Tender document available on website	w.e.f. : As per NIT bidding start date
Date and Time of closing tender bid	04.08.2020 at 15:00 hrs.
Tender open date & time	04.08.2020 at 15:00 hrs.
Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in
Cost of tender documents	₹2000/- + 360 (GST 18%) total ₹2360/- Payments of Document Fee in respect of e-tendering should be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only.

No. : 17-RPF/MT-Tender-III/DLI-W/2019 Dated: 06.07.2020 1500/20

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

WESTERN RAILWAY E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE NO. STM JULY 2020 DATED 06.07.2020

Chief Engineer, Western Railway, Churchgate invites the following E-Procurement Tenders:

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Description of stores tender	Quantity in Nos.	Total Tender Value In ₹	Earnest Money In ₹
1	W628031925	Hydraulic Track Lifting Cum Slewing Device (Trails) 15 ton Capacity as per RDSO specification No.TM/SM/TRAILIS/220 dt.24.09.2004	35	₹72,27,500	₹1,44,550
2	W628021930	AT welding Equipment (Cap preheating System) with single shot crucible technology and Spare Parts	30	₹44,70,028	₹89,410
3	W628031933	Hydraulic Track Jack 15T capacity (Non Infringing Type) RDSO specification No. TM/SM/31 dt. 08.05.1996	3	₹12,390	NIL
4	W628031934	Magnetic Base rail Type Rail Thermometer as per RDSO specification no. TM-67 dt. 28.01.2002 (Rev.01 of 2010)	3	₹3,363	NIL

Sr. No. 1 - 4 Date of Closing of e-Tender Box: On 28.07.2020 at 11:00 hrs Date & Time of opening of e-Tender Box: On 28.07.2020 at 11:15 hrs

Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.ireps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.

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SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one female Namely: **Asma, D/o: Jaheer Ahmad, R/o: House No. H-692, J.J.C.Colony, Shakurpur, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since **23.06.2020** at 5:00 pm. from the area of P.S. Subhash Place, Delhi. In this regard a case vide **FIR No. 324/20 U/s 365 IPC dated 24.06.2020** has been registered at P.S. Subhash Place, Delhi. The description of the missing/ kidnapped female is as under: **Age:** About 23 years, **Sex:** female, **Height:** 4' 5", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Shallow, **Wearing:** Cream colour kameez/suit, white colour salwar and grey colour dupatta. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the female but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this female kindly inform to the following.

Website: http://cbi.nic.in
E-mail Id - cbc@cbi.gov.in
Ph. No.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No.: 011-24368639
DP/230/NW/2020

SHO P.S. Subhash Place, Delhi Ph.: 011- 27353014, 8750870224

Truce for now

China withdraws from Galwan but without agreeing to the definition of LAC on the ground, it won't give up landgrabs



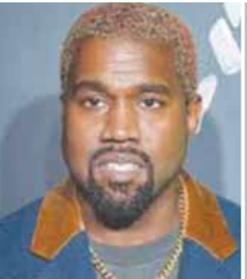
This seems uncannily familiar, the simmering down of tension at one end and a niggling pain surfacing at the other. The Chinese have withdrawn a kilometre from Galwan Valley after special representatives of both nations — National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi — agreed to disengage, respect the status quo on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), not seek to change it unilaterally and not threaten each other's sovereignty. Even as the grand declaration was made, Bhutan, another of our natural allies, raised

a hue and cry about Chinese intrusion into its wildlife sanctuary in a forested terrain. And in a veiled reference to India, China warned against third-party interference. So it looks like both India and China have been pragmatic rather than progressive at the moment. Both did not want a Siachenisation in Ladakh, or a prolonged vigil and confrontationist mode in the icy heights (15,000 to 17,000 ft) that would cost both nations men and resources, unwise in a pandemic-hit economy. But that doesn't mean China won't continue using low-key frontier strategies as it has done in Bhutan. The official statement said that the two sides decided to "take guidance from the consensus of leaders," implying a political understanding that would suit each other in post-pandemic realignments. It also adroitly separates the military leadership from the political, suggesting that the Wuhan spirit of summitry between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had not exactly waned and the two leaders could settle if they wanted to, thereby legitimising a wiggle room for backroom negotiations. Question is at what cost and to whom. Modi, who dilly-dallied quite a bit on China's militaristic zeal in controlling the Himalayan highs and finally called out its expansionism, albeit without mentioning Beijing by name, needed a face-saver. After all, despite his admiration for the monolithic matrix of China, his personal initiative in engaging with it had only given him more pain than gain. Wolf warrior China has used the civilisational contiguity card to its advantage, be it by stepping up territorial encroachments all along the LAC, deepening its hold on our economy or driving our digital revolution. Besides, for all his assumption of martial valour to protect national honour, one that he deployed effectively against Pakistan, he had seemed tongue-tied about the loss of 20 soldiers at Galwan. And truth be told, our forces could pay back the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in its same coin only because of their operational preparedness and now improved skills of mountain warfare. Modi couldn't have ignored the local military command's views on holding on to strategic gains and was undoubtedly bolstered a great deal by support from democratic nations, particularly the US, in taking the stand that India would not concede land under Chinese hegemonistic pressures. By visiting the frontline just a couple of days before Chinese withdrawal, he has been able to revive the "muscular leadership" card. For Chinese President Xi Jinping, having already lost world opinion for hiding the contagion and now newer viral outbreaks, this diversion in India, along with strong-arming in Taiwan, the Philippines and Hong Kong, helped him project himself as a protector of Chinese interests. By creating a new crisis point, Xi could hijack the discourse on joblessness (20 per cent of Chinese have lost jobs already) and increasing domestic dissent and frustration. Besides, through his militaristic flexing, he meant to warn India about becoming too pro-American and not forget its economic dependencies yet. Internationally, he knew he could not win the game of perception. He, therefore, played his strengths in the neighbourhood as leader of an Asian century. But without some congruencies with India, the second biggest Asian power, if not compliance, China would not be able to convince others. Xi, therefore, just played us, skirting the threshold of war without making either Modi or himself look bad.

Modi has said there will be no tradeoff but he must remember Doklam. The Chinese retreated a bit there, too, so that he could address his domestic politics with his claims that his summit with Xi worked but over time, they have intensely fortified their positions. So yes, the Galwan truce might just be temporary as China won't give up its territorial claims over what it has bitterly fought for historically. It wouldn't want any challengers to its geo-strategic relevance in Aksai Chin. There have been reports of ingress attempts in Uttarakhand even as the Ladakh de-escalation talks were on. Similar inroads have been reported from Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh, too. We should be wary of the fact that the PLA, which has been pitching tents, building roads and marking territories since 2013 and which directly takes orders from Xi himself, may lie low but not go silent. China itself has never shown any eagerness to actually delineate the LAC on the ground despite India's persistent attempts to do so. Agreed, this is not an easy job considering the fluid colonial era maps of the Himalayan terrain that are needed for reference and which kept changing according to who had the prime positions at a particular time in history. But without defining the LAC, there will be no end to China's claims.

Reality show

Kanye West's move to run for presidency is a bit late but stranger things have happened in the US' electoral politics



The end of the first week of July in a US presidential election year is a bit late in the process to announce a bid to become its President. But rapper Kanye West, famous in many parts of the world for being the husband of reality television star Kim Kardashian, thinks he can still win. In the US' democratic duopoly, both political parties have by now firmed up their candidates — incumbent Donald Trump for the Republicans and former Vice President Joseph Biden for the Democrats. Even Trump's insurgent campaign for presidency in 2016 began a year before the election. July is late even to mount a bid to get elected as a Senator or Member of Congress in the US. Maybe for a candidate with brand recognition value like Kanye, it might have been possible had one of the major political parties backed him. But that is unlikely as all resources, financial and logistical, have already been committed. May be Kanye stands a chance if a candidate drops out but that, too, is impossible.

In all likelihood, Kanye will contest as an independent — and that brings us to another crazy of "American Democracy" where the candidate with the fewer votes can actually win. Since every of America's 50 States and other territories have their own set of rules regarding independents, it is impossible for independent candidates, even those running as spoilers, to get their names on the ballot. For a country that extols the virtues of democracy, "American Democracy" is pretty undemocratic and highly capitalistic. While strange things have happened in the US — after all nobody is in their right minds other than those tracking the nether regions of the Internet expected Trump to win in 2016 — it might be too much for Kanye even with the power of the Kardashian clan on Instagram. Of course, Kanye could be doing all this to promote his new album but then again, Trump began his campaign to get a new reality show on network television. Instead, we got a reality show from the West Wing.

Himalayan blunders

Unless a comprehensive Nepal policy is enunciated and strong measures are taken, Pakistan and China will continue jihadi strikes and salami-slicing against India. Bangladesh could follow



SANDHYA JAIN

In May 2020, Beijing intruded into Indian territory at some places across the long border and Kathmandu claimed areas of Uttarakhand where India is building a road to Lipulekh Pass on the Tibetan border to smoothen the journey for pilgrims to the Kailash Mansarovar. Amid rising tensions, Nepalese police firing killed an Indian citizen and injured two others at the border in Sitamarhi, Bihar, on June 12. On the night of June 15, Chinese forces brutally assaulted our troops at the Galwan Valley in Ladakh, killing an officer and 19 soldiers.

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli fuelled nationalist hysteria and compelled all political parties in Parliament to pass a new political map showing Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh as Nepalese lands. Kathmandu claimed that in 1816, the East India Company fixed Kali River as its western boundary with India; hence land east of the river belongs to Nepal. The fact is that four kings — Tribhuvan, Mahendra, Birendra and Gyanendra — never made claims to these areas.

The developments stunned New Delhi and embarrassed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has invested much energy in putting ties with Kathmandu on a more even footing. Despite bitterness over the border blockade caused by the Madhesi unrest in 2015, Modi ensured that the oil pipeline to Nepal is finished 15 months ahead of the schedule and made operational in September 2019.

Oli's actions stem from the need to deflect pressure from his own party, with Pushp Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) and others demanding his resignation. The meeting of the 45-member standing committee of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), where Oli reportedly enjoys support of only 15-members, was deferred to July 6. He may split the party and declare an emergency.

Oli and Prachanda failed to settle their disputes on July 3. In May 2018, while launching the NCP, the duo had agreed to share the prime ministership for 30-month tenures each but in November 2019, they agreed that Oli could continue for full-term. Prachanda now insists that Oli has violated the spirit of the November accord and should, therefore, uphold the original agreement and step down in his favour. Oli accused India of plotting his exit, a charge resented by leaders of his own party. Indeed, discord heightened after Oli persuaded President Bidhya Devi Bhandari to prorogue the Budget session of Parliament without taking the party into confidence.

Nepali communists have always been close to the Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India-Marxist. In 2005, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government brokered a 12-point pact in Delhi to oust the Hindu monarchy and bring the communists to power. This forced the Nepali Congress to



abandon its support for constitutional monarchy as a "symbol of unity." Under the monarchy, Maoists were confined to the jungle and leaders of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) were in prison. Beijing persuaded the Maoists and CPN(UML) to form a united NCP. Nepal scholars lament that despite the massacre of the royal family, jihadi infiltration and Christian evangelism in the Himalayan nation, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Government has failed to rectify the UPA's missteps. Nepal was made a secular republic without a referendum; it is strategically vital to India but Indian foreign policy seems oblivious of its value.

Interestingly, when the Oli Government was facing a collapse in May 2020, the Chinese Ambassador, Hou Yanqi, managed a truce, revealing Beijing's power over Nepal's ruling party. The Chinese Communist Party reportedly holds training programmes in Kathmandu for the NCP's young cadres. Hundreds of NCP mayors, deputy mayors and province chiefs and Leftist journalists regularly visit China where they are trained to foment anti-India sentiments among the public. Currently, the President, Vice President, Speaker and Prime Minister are all communists and Left influence has permeated the police and judiciary. New Delhi must take cognisance of this situation. It is pertinent that in

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NEPAL SCHOLARS LAMENT THAT DESPITE THE MASSACRE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, JIHADI INFILTRATION AND CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM IN THE HIMALAYAN NATION, THE BJP-LED GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED TO RECTIFY THE UPA'S MISSTEPS. NEPAL WAS MADE A SECULAR REPUBLIC WITHOUT A REFERENDUM; IT IS STRATEGICALLY VITAL TO INDIA BUT INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY SEEMS OBLIVIOUS OF ITS VALUE
”

November 2019, Nepal's Survey Department revealed that Beijing had changed the course of 11 rivers and grabbed nearly 36 hectares of territory in S a n k h u w a s a b h a , Sindhupalchowk, Rasuwa and Humla districts. As protestors burnt effigies of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Oli downplayed China's encroachment and incited anger against India.

When India's Army Chief, Gen MM Naravane, said Kathmandu was acting at the behest of a third force (read China), some diplomats felt the statement was undiplomatic. The fact, however, is that Nepali politicians and members of civil society have long complained about the attitude of Indian diplomats in their country. Many appreciated Gen Naravane for highlighting China's excessive influence in Kathmandu. Indeed, the General was soon vindicated when the Bill to change Nepal's map was passed and quickly notified. Previously, India failed to act when Madhesi and other groups objected to the new Constitution in 2015; politicians who visited New Delhi could not get access to important personages in South Block. As long as this Constitution prevails, India will face problems from Nepal.

Nepal's national emblem has also been changed to include Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh. Official letterheads, passports, et al are being updated

to show these Uttarakhand areas as Nepali land. India must act tough and reject all correspondence bearing the new emblem. Foreign Secretary-level talks are meaningless as officials have no authority to negotiate what has been inserted into the Constitution.

Unless a comprehensive Nepal policy is enunciated and strong measures are taken, Pakistan and China will continue jihadi strikes and salami slicing against India. Bangladesh could follow. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed is possibly the sole leader with a soft corner for India, a legacy of 1971 and former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's exertions to ensure that Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was returned to Dhaka alive after the war. But Sheikh Hasina is a lonely figure, unable to protect even Muslim youth who oppose the rabid Islam preached by clerics from being hacked to death by fundamentalists. She has declared this is her last term in office. Yet, in all these years, the Foreign Ministry has failed to cultivate a second generation leadership in Bangladesh. A new Khaleeda Zia could be looming on the horizon. Nepal has sustained our ancient civilisational ties through people-to-people contacts; we must help salvage its soul. The gains made by Prime Minister Modi during his early years in office are being whittled away. It is time to take stock.

(The author is a senior journalist. Views are personal)

SOUNDBITE

He (Rahul Gandhi) is always complaining. They (Congress) fail to see all that is being done in the field of agriculture, sports, for women's rights and business.



Union Minister — Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi

When I made my transition from TV to films, I knew I would have my fair share of struggle but I am lucky that things were easier than expected.



Actor — Vikrant Massey

As the political scenario changes, it may be that I'll be able to visit you in Taiwan again. I hope so. Whatever happens I'll remain with you in spirit.



Spiritual leader — Dalai Lama

It's very easy coming after Dhoni and think, well, I've got to be like him, I've got to be this calm, calculated finisher, cool, ice man. Virat Kohli can never be the cool ice man.



Former England captain — Nasser Hussain

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't act in haste

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "The vaccine race" (July 6). Like many, one hopes India will be the first to introduce a vaccine for COVID-19, which will be a health milestone but in a proper manner. Therefore, many are unable to understand why there is such a tearing hurry in India to make a medical miracle happen so quickly at the expense of scientific rigour. Covaxin was approved for human trials only recently. When global scientific institutions are still facing an uphill task in zeroing in on a suitable vaccine, is the ICMR's "shrunk fit" vaccine timeline of almost 41 days realistic?

The suspicion is that the ICMR appears to be wanting to give those who matter in India's political set-up a major talking-point in the Independence Day speech on August 15. Overlooking crucial scientific steps should not result in a product deadlier than the disease. It does not matter who is first. Observance of protocol is the need of the hour.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad

Mounting problems as COVID cases rise

I t is worrying that according to the Health Ministry's data, India has registered 24,850 cases in the past 24 hours. This is the highest daily increase and also the third consecutive day of over 20,000 cases being recorded. With this, India has become the world's third highest, now behind only the US and Brazil while overtaking Russia. India's infection tally has reached 6,73,165. It's a matter of time that we will cross the one million mark. Of course, with a rapid rise in testing, more and more cases are coming to the fore. But even as the country has been testing 10 million samples per day, not even one per cent of the total population has been covered. The ICMR has made it clear that rampant testing is the cornerstone for India's fight against COVID-19. Thus, ramping up the testing apparatus will be critical. Yet, the flattening of the infection curve, whose signs analysts have been waiting for, continues to elude us. There is solace in the fact that India has registered a recovery rate of 60 per cent and second, there has been an improvement in the overall healthcare preparedness and infrastructure.

As the economy unlocks more, it's possible that people's risk perceptions drop. If so, it would be a costly

Policing failure

Sir — The dastardly attack on a team of Uttar Pradesh police in Kanpur by the history-sheeter Vikas Dubey and his assailants has once again brought to fore the

failure of the police and the political establishment in maintaining law and order situation in the State.

As per reports by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), in Uttar Pradesh, as many as 555 personnel were killed and 2,048

cops got injured during police operations in 2018, which was the highest in the entire country. This shows how increasingly dangerous the State has become. As police raids are always highly confidential, it wasn't surprising to know that Vikas Dubey and his



mistake. The threat is still high and caution must continue to be exercised so that India doesn't end up paying with lives. To start living with the virus, people must adapt to behavioural changes. Here a huge gap still remains. Whether it is about wearing masks, using sanitisers or maintaining physical distancing in public places or avoiding crowded indoor events, people are flouting all rules. This will need drastic improvement.

Shivansh
Via email

assailants were tipped off by other policemen. The Uttar Pradesh police must make amends for the loss of its personnel by bringing the Dubey gang to justice. It must also crack down on the greater threat to law and order posed by the illegal guns trade.

Tushar Anand
Patna

Bollywood sparkle

Sir — A big void has formed with the "Queen of Choreography" — Saroj Khan — passing on. A dance maestro, a choreography wizard and a versatile virtuoso of the art of film dancing — Khan had created a niche of her own with her splendid choreography that will remain forever in the hearts of film buffs and dance lovers across the world. The dance master has given us unforgettable dance numbers like *Ek do teen*, *Hawa hawaii*, *Do La Re, Do La Re* and *Maar dala* among others. Nobody will ever forget her contribution to the dance world.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Can Britain keep its word?

It would be nice if the UK could give citizenship to three million Hong Kongers with BNO status. But it would also be quite surprising



GWYNNE DYER

We will grant BNOs five years' limited leave to remain (in the United Kingdom), with the right to work or study," British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the UK Parliament on July 1. "After five years, they will be able to apply for settled status. After a further twelve months, with settled status, they will be able to apply for citizenship." The stunning thing about this promise is that it applies to all three million people in Hong Kong — almost half the population of the city — who have British National Overseas (BNO) status by virtue of having been born there before the former British colony was handed back to the People's Republic of China in 1997. They don't even need to have an actual BNO passport (as 3,00,000 of them do). All three million of them qualify: "All those with BNO status will be eligible, as will their family dependents who are ordinarily resident in Hong Kong. The Home Office will put in place a simple, streamlined application process. There will be no quota on numbers."

This is an unprecedented commitment and it's not even a legal requirement. Britain voluntarily gave asylum to 30,000 Ugandan Asians in 1972 when the dictator Idi Amin confiscated their property and expelled them from the country. But we're talking about potentially a hundred times as many people in Hong Kong. It is a debt of honour, however, as Britain negotiated an agreement with China that Hong Kong would keep the rule of law, free speech and freedom of the Press for 50 years after the handover in 1997. China has broken that "one country, two systems" deal, and Hong Kongers can only expect a thinly-disguised Communist dictatorship from now on.

It's right there in the new "security" laws imposed illegally last month by the regime's rubber-stamp National People's Congress in Beijing. New crimes include separatism, subversion, terrorism and "collusion with foreign forces", the same vague catch-all charges that the Communist regime uses to suppress dissent in the People's Republic. The maximum sentence for these "crimes" is ten years in prison. These laws will be enforced by China's "security" (i.e. political) police, who will now operate in Hong Kong. The charges they bring may be tried in Hong Kong's courts, but if there are "certain circumstances" or "special situations" the accused can be extradited to mainland courts, entirely under the regime's thumb, where the conviction rate is well above 99 per cent. In other words, it's over. The police now hoists a purple sign warning protesters that their chants could be criminal. Along major roads throughout the city, neon-coloured flags halting a new era of stability and prosperity stand erect as soldiers. It's not just freedom that's over. As Christopher Francis Patten, Hong Kong's last British Governor, wrote recently: "If China destroys the rule of law in Hong Kong, it will ruin the city's chances of continuing to be a great international financial hub that mediates about two-thirds of the direct investment in and out of China."

The decision has been taken and Hong Kong's residents have two good reasons to leave: Their freedoms are gone and the economic future is grim. Many will decide to leave but where can they go? For the 3,00,000 Canadian citizens in Hong Kong, the 1,00,000 Australian citizens, the 1,00,000 British citizens and the 85,000 Americans, it's easy. Most are ethnic Chinese from Hong Kong who understood that you could never trust the Communists and took out an insurance policy long ago by emigrating to another country and acquiring a citizenship.

Most of them even bought houses in the countries they adopted. But then they moved back to Hong Kong to be with the wider family and make better money. Many will go soon, because the Chinese regime may start forbidding people to leave (it doesn't recognise dual citizenship). Others will gamble on staying for the time being, in the hope that if it gets very bad they will still be able to get out later. For the three million more who have BNO status, it's a harder choice. They have much less money and no houses, no contacts, no jobs waiting for them in Britain. But they're ambitious, they're well-educated and a lot of them are young. It would be surprising if at least half a million of them didn't take up the British offer. Just one little problem: The children of people with BNO status who were born after 1997 but are too old to qualify as dependents — the 18 to 23-year-olds — are not currently eligible for BNO status. That includes a majority of the young adults who were active in the protests and have most to fear. But the British Government says it is considering their case.

And one little doubt. It is still hard to believe that an ultra-nationalist British Government that won the Brexit referendum with a wave of anti-foreign rhetoric and a Home Office that still stubbornly maintains a "hostile environment" for immigrants, will really keep these promises. It would be nice if UK can keep its word to give citizenship to three million Hong Kongers with BNO status, but it would also be quite surprising.

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE'VE THRASHED THEM (INDIA) A LOT. I BELIEVE WE'VE BEATEN THEM SO MUCH THAT THEY USED TO ASK US FOR FORGIVENESS AFTER THE MATCH.

—FORMER PAKISTAN CAPTAIN
SHAHID AFRIDI



SOME OF THE BEST MINDS IN THE WORLD HAVE SAID THAT THERE IS A CURE FOR SNAKE BITE BUT THERE IS NO CURE FOR MISCONCEPTIONS.

—FORMER INDIA BATSMAN
AAKASH CHOPRA

UP's most *priya* Gandhi

Led by Priyanka, the UP Congress put the SP and BSP to shame when it questioned Adityanath about the crumbling law and order situation in the State and the plight of migrant labourers



BISWAJEET BANERJEE

Priyanka has stolen the thunder from Akhilesh Yadav and Mayawati," a Samajwadi Party (SP) lawmaker said on telephone. "Everyone is now talking about the Congress Party and Priyanka. Today, the Muslims are more inclined towards the Congress than the Samajwadi Party," he said.

The lawmaker, who was a Minister during the Akhilesh Yadav regime, was reacting to the political developments in Uttar Pradesh (UP), including the proactive stand taken by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in politics. There were unofficial reports doing the rounds that Priyanka might shift her base to Lucknow from Delhi and people were raving about how she had picked up the gauntlet thrown by Chief Minister (CM) Yogi Adityanath on the law and order issue in the State.

Recent developments have changed the political spectrum of UP. Particularly after a highly politically-connected ganglord killed eight policemen in a village in Kanpur. The incident raised a big question mark on Adityanath's much-publicised encounters to eliminate local mafia and ganglords. He had even claimed that criminals would be sent to jail or to the house of Yamraj (the Hindu deity of death and justice) if they raise their heads. Despite such major claims by the CM, Vikas Dubey not only survived but also flourished.

Congress leaders were the first to question the UP Government on the issue of law and order. Numerically, the Congress is as small a party as the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party in the UP State Assembly, with just five lawmakers. But, led by Priyanka, the Congress put big parties like the SP and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) to shame when it questioned Yogi Adityanath and again about the crumbling law and order situation in the State and the plight of migrant labourers, who are being denied work under different Government schemes.

The three parties — the Congress, SP and BSP — enjoy a strange relationship. In the past, they had entered into alliances with one another on many occasions. During the last Assembly election in 2017 the Congress and the SP contested together with the tagline "Do ladke (two boys)" while the SP forged an alliance with the BSP in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Despite having a working relationship with each other, the three parties have failed to come together post-COVID-19. Last month when Congress national president Sonia Gandhi called an all-party meeting to chalk out a strategy against the Narendra Modi Government, both Akhilesh and Mayawati preferred to give it a skip.

No explanation was given about missing the meeting and it raised many eyebrows. The question asked was whether it was a political compulsion or a backdoor manoeuvre by the BJP which kept the SP and the BSP away from the meeting? One SP legislator was quoted as saying, "The SP would not go with Sonia because the Congress put up missing Member of Parliament (MP) posters in Azamgarh", Akhilesh Yadav's parliamentary constituency.

The developments show that there's more to this than meets the eye. Sample this: BSP supremo Mayawati was caustic against the Congress when Priyanka offered 1,000 buses to the UP Government to ferry migrant workers to their native places. Her statements reflected the words of BJP leaders. She attacked the Congress for not taking care of migrant workers in its own States — a replication of statements by BJP spokespersons. Priyanka retorted that some political parties were acting as spokespersons of the BJP — an obvious reference to Mayawati.

“POLITICAL OBSERVERS SAY THAT IT SEEMS LIKE THE SP AND THE BSP ARE DANCING TO THE TUNE OF THE BJP. TILL NOW, THE CBI HAS NOT MOVED AN INCH IN MAYAWATI'S CASE WHILE IN MULAYAM'S CASE, TOO, THE FEDERAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY IS YET TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION IN THE APEX COURT. IF BOTH MULAYAM AND MAYAWATI REFUSE TO DANCE TO THE BJP'S TUNE, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL UNLEASH THE CBI AGAINST THEM. IN THE LAST ONE YEAR, PRIYANKA HAS TRIED TO MAKE THE FIGHT ONE-ON-ONE IN UP, WHICH HAS MADE YOGI ADITYANATH NERVOUS



With the rise in Priyanka's stature, Mayawati feels insecure. She had been the only major woman leader in UP for a quarter of a century. But now she is being challenged by Priyanka. Second, the BSP and the Congress' vote banks overlap. Dalits and Muslims helped the BSP score 10 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, up from zero in 2014. The Congress hopes to dent these votebanks, which earlier supported it.

Ditto is the case with Akhilesh Yadav. There is a fear in his mind that the Congress' rise and the popularity of Priyanka among the masses may lead to the downfall of the SP. Of late, he has started virtual meetings with party workers in an attempt to set his house in order. The SP also hit the streets last week on the issue of rise in prices of petrol and diesel, just to keep his party workers involved.

There is a belief in political circles that the BJP wants the emergence of the Congress in the State so that there is trifurcation in the Opposition. This will come in handy during the elections because the BJP is comfortable when it is pitted against a divided house.

An advocate in the Supreme Court Vishwanath Chaturvedi says the Modi Government is using the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to put a leash on the SP and Mayawati. "Do not forget, both Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav and his family are facing CBI enquiries. The CBI is sitting tight on the probes and one signal from Amit Shah could prove detrimental for both these leaders," he says. SP patriarch Mulayam and his family are facing a Disproportionate Assets (DA) case. The Supreme Court (SC) had ordered a CBI inquiry on March 1, 2007 into the alleged accumulation of DAs by the Yadav family, on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Vishwanath Chaturvedi. The agency filed a status report in 2007 alleging that

the Yadavs had ₹2.63 crore worth of assets which were disproportionate to their declared sources of income, between 1993 and 2005. Of this nearly ₹1.4 crore is in the name of Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple.

Chaturvedi claims that the CBI had filed a false report in the SC, that it had submitted a final report to the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). But when a Right to Information (RTI) application was filed, the CVC said that no final report was submitted to it. As per Chaturvedi, the case against Mulayam and his family is still alive and the CBI is delaying the legal process for obvious reasons.

Same is the case with Mayawati. The CBI had launched a probe into alleged irregularities in the sale of 21 State-owned sugar mills under the Mayawati-led BSP Government in 2010-11. According to a report released by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the exercise caused a loss of ₹1,179 crore to the State. On April 27, 2019, the CBI filed a case against Mayawati. Yogi Adityanath had on April 12 recommended a CBI probe following the CAG's disclosure.

Political observers say that it seems like the SP and the BSP are dancing to the tune of the BJP. Till now, the CBI has not moved an inch in Mayawati's case while in Mulayam's case, too, the federal intelligence agency is yet to submit an application in the apex court. If both Mulayam and Mayawati refuse to dance to the BJP's tune, the Prime Minister will unleash the CBI against them. In the last one year, Priyanka has tried to make the fight one-on-one in UP, which has made Yogi Adityanath nervous.

In July 2019, she staged a protest at Chunar Fort when she went to meet the victims of the July 17 massacre in which 10 tribals were shot dead by the Gram Pradhan (village head) and his cohorts in a village in Sonbhadra over a land deal.

Priyanka stayed put in Chunar Fort, forcing the administration to bring the family members of the victims there and let them meet her.

The attack on the BJP was so fierce that the Yogi Government pulled out all records to show that the land deal was carried out during the Congress' rule. However, the BJP could not shirk responsibility for the murders of the 10 tribals. Extensive damage was done to the image of the UP Government by this incident.

Priyanka again visited UP — this time in February when the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) agitation was at its peak. She met the anti-CAA protesters in Bijinor and Azamgarh — the parliamentary constituency of Akhilesh — and also visited the residence of former IPS officer SR Darapuri, who was arrested during an anti-CAA protest in Lucknow.

In Bijinor she thundered, "Kisi ko Bhartiya ka pramaan maangne ki ijazat nahi hai (no one has the right to ask for proof of Indianness)." While in Azamgarh, she held a roadshow, driving home the point that people living in India are Indians and they do not need to prove that by showing documents.

Bijnor is considered the citadel of the BSP. Mayawati had won the Lok Sabha election for the first time in 1989 from Bijnor, while in seven Assembly seats the BSP had always maintained an upper hand. In 2019, the BSP won the Lok Sabha seat in Bijnor, too. So, it was a masterstroke by Priyanka to hold rallies and meetings in Bijnor and Azamgarh, both, challenging the SP and BSP leaders on their turf. Thus, the rise of Priyanka has pushed both the SP and the BSP towards the BJP. They would prefer to dance to Modi's tune rather than strengthening Opposition unity.

(The writer is Executive Editor, News, The Pioneer, Lucknow)

FDI facing the impact of a double whammy

Striking the right balance between liberalisation and exercising caution, while addressing the twin economic and health crises, will be challenging



ISHITA TRIPATHY ANURADHA GURU

Almost all aspects of world economics and finance today are affected by the ongoing pandemic. Economic growth is faltering, businesses are struggling to stay afloat, what with supply chains disrupted and demand nosediving, stock markets are erratic and capital is sitting up. Foreign investors are also trying on the fence watching how things unfold before moving. The health crisis has translated into an economic one, of dimensions being compared to the Great Depression of 1929 and the subprime crisis of 2008. While the global financial systems are said to be bet-

ter-equipped to handle economic destruction of such magnitude as the 2008 crisis, the challenge today is the uncertainty of the virus' containment and its ramifications.

There is strong empirical evidence that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows are less volatile than other forms of capital flows. However, at present they are also showing pessimism. It would be instructive to juxtapose the COVID-19 pandemic with the financial crisis of 2008 in terms of FDI movements to draw similarities and differences.

To begin with, the factors due to which the two crises emanated are different. Also at variance is the fact that the global financial malaise spread from the developed to developing economies, while the spread of the present health crisis has not hinged upon the level of development of economies. What is common is that the entire world has been engulfed by the two crises. With the collapse of Lehman

Brothers on September 15, 2008, the global banking crisis that had grown into a worldwide financial crisis eventually turned into a world economic crisis and its repercussions were felt globally within a few months. Especially in those economies which had a high degree of integration with the global one.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) *World Investment Report, 2009* pointed out that due to the world economic crisis, after five years of continued growth, global FDI flows had fallen from a historical high of around \$2 trillion in 2007 — which was the peak of a four-year upward trend in FDI flows — by around 29 per cent to \$1.2 trillion in 2008-09, primarily because of a fall in cross-border mergers and acquisitions. This decline was further attributed to liquidity constraints for transnational corporations (TNCs), declining economic growth in majority of countries and risk aversion by

TNCs. The decline was recorded in all three components of FDI, viz. equity, other capital and reinvested earnings. The dip in the flows was evident in developed countries first, followed by a decline in developing nations, too. Business-cycle-sensitive sectors such as metal and manufacturing were affected the worst. There was a degree of protectionism in the FDI policies of some countries, in the form of requirements of higher domestic content in Government procurement, discouraging banks from lending for foreign operations and so on.

Looking at the present times, even before the global spread of the pandemic, UNCTAD's *Investment Trends Monitor* had predicted in January 2020 that FDI flows, which stood at \$1.3 trillion in 2019, would rise marginally in 2020. According to estimates by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as a consequence of the global economic slow-

down, FDI flows are expected to decline sharply by around 30 per cent, in the most optimistic scenario of economies recovering in the second half of 2020. UNCTAD's estimation suggests that global FDI would decline between 30 per cent and 40 per cent during 2020-21, with developing countries and emerging economies facing most of this fall. This slump is almost of the same levels as one year after the 2008 crisis. The hardest to be hit by the likely downturn will be the energy and basic industries, airlines and the automotive industry.

FDI inflows started recovering in 2010 but remained below the pre-crisis level. It was only by 2015 that global FDI flows reached somewhere around the high level attained in 2007. Looking at trends in India, we see that after 2008, FDI inflows into the country declined from \$41.87 billion in 2008-09 to \$34.85 billion in 2010-11. Fluctuations continued till 2012-13, after which there has been an

increasing trend. The inflows in 2019-20 at \$73.45 were more than double that of 2010-11. During this recovery period, the three policies which were followed globally, including in India, were those of investment liberalisation, facilitation and promotion, which were required for economic growth.

However, it will be different this time, given that several jurisdictions are adopting a somewhat cautious approach to FDI inflows to prevent "opportunistic investment behaviour" triggered by declines in valuations of domestic businesses and by investment of State-owned enterprises. There are concerns that bids to take control of businesses of strategic importance during these times (such as healthcare, essential goods, and services) may be motivated by non-commercial priorities harming economic and/or national security interests. The list of countries includes US, Canada, Spain, Australia, Italy and the EU. India, too, is in a watchful mode to prevent its

businesses from unfriendly takeovers. It tweaked its FDI policy in April by specifying certain conditions required to be met by entities of countries sharing land borders with it. How the FDI policies of various jurisdictions will pan out in the near future remains to be seen.

We are far from seeing an end to the present health crisis, which has snowballed into an economic predicament. Riddled with a number of unknown variables, such as the trajectory of the virus, the effectiveness of mitigating measures and development of a potent cure, at this point in time, it is all the more difficult to chalk out a medium to long-term course of action. Striking the right balance between liberalisation and exercising caution, while addressing the twin issues of economic and health crises will be challenging.

(The authors belong to the Indian Economic Service. Views expressed are personal.)

China accuses UK of 'gross interference' in Hong Kong

First person charged under new Act denied bail

London: Beijing's ambassador to London on Monday accused Britain of "gross interference" in China's internal affairs over its response to a controversial national security law in Hong Kong.

The UK government has said it will offer Hong Kong residents a broader path to citizenship in response to the sweeping new security law for the former British territory.

The move could pave the way for more than three million Hong Kongers to move to Britain. But Chinese ambassador Liu Xiaoming said Beijing has expressed its "grave concern and strong opposition" to the proposals, arguing that London has "no sovereignty, jurisdiction or rights of supervision over Hong Kong."

"These moves constitute a gross interference in China's internal affairs and openly trample on the basic norms governing international relations," he told reporters.

China last week enacted the sweeping security law for the restless city of around 7.5 million people, banning acts of secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

The legislation, which has sent a wave of fear through the territory, has criminalised dissenting opinions such as calls for independence or autonomy.

Britain is among the Western nations moving to offer millions of Hong Kongers refuge in response.

London has said it has a duty of care to residents of a colony it handed back to China in 1997, under an agreement designed to preserve its autonomy and freedoms for 50 years.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson told parliament last week he will allow anyone with British National (Overseas) (BNO) status — and their dependents — to come to Britain and eventually receive citizenship.

About 300,000 Hong Kongers have BNO passports and another 2.6 million are eligible to apply.

However, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab conceded last week that Britain may be powerless if China moves to prevent a mass exodus.

Johnson's spokesman reiterated Monday that the law was "a clear and serious breach" of the 1984 Sino-British joint declaration governing Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule.

"We said we would make changes to the immigration rights of BNOs if China implemented this legislation and we have delivered on that promise," he added.

Liu said Beijing was mulling what reciprocal actions to take.

"We have to wait and see. We have to decide our countermeasures in accordance with the actual actions [are] taken by the British side," he added.

Hong Kong: A Hong Kong court denied bail on Monday to the first person charged with inciting separatism and terrorism under the city's new national security law after he carried a sign saying "Liberate Hong Kong" and drove his motorbike into police.

Tong Ying-kit, 23, was arrested after a video posted online showed him knocking over several officers at a demonstration last Wednesday, less than 24 hours after Beijing imposed sweeping national security legislation on its freest city.

The city's government has said the protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times", connotes separatism or subversion under the new law, stoking concern over freedom of expression in the former



A 23-year-old man, Tong Ying-kit, arrives at a court in a police van in Hong Kong Monday

British colony. Tong, who was unable to appear in court on Friday as he was being treated in hospital for

injuries sustained in the incident, appeared in court in a wheelchair. In rejecting bail, Chief

Magistrate So Wai-tak referred to Article 42 of the new law, which states that bail will not be granted if the judge has sufficient grounds to believe the defendant will continue to endanger national security.

The case was adjourned until Oct. 6 and Tong was remanded in custody.

Critics say the law - which punishes crimes of secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces with up to life in prison - is aimed at crushing dissent and a long-running campaign for greater democracy.

Authorities in Beijing and Hong Kong have repeatedly said it is aimed at a few "troublemakers" and will not affect the rights and freedoms that underpin the city's role as a financial hub.

On Monday, prominent democracy activist Joshua Wong pleaded not guilty to inciting others to participate in an unlawful assembly during anti-government protests last year.

Fellow activist Agnes Chow pleaded guilty to a similar charge. Their case has been adjourned to Aug. 5.

Wong and Chow, who were both granted bail last year, led a pro-democracy group called Demosisto that they dissolved hours after Beijing passed the national security law.

The United States, Britain and others have denounced the new legislation, which critics say is the biggest step China has taken to tighten its grip over the city, despite a "one country, two systems" formula meant to preserve its freedoms.

Facebook, WhatsApp suspend user info data requests from HK

Hong Kong: Facebook and its messaging service WhatsApp said Monday they are suspending requests from the Hong Kong government and law enforcement authorities for information on users.

The pause will take place "pending further assessment" of a new national security law imposed on Hong Kong by China, and would include "formal human rights due diligence and consultations with human rights experts", a Facebook company spokesman said in a statement.

"We believe freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and support the right of people to express themselves without fear for their safety or other repercussions," the spokesman said.

China last week enacted the sweeping security law for the restive city of around 7.5 million people, banning acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces.

The legislation, which has sent a wave of fear through the territory, has criminalised dissenting opinions such as calls for independence or autonomy.

Digital rights group ProPrivacy called Facebook's move "a win for both digital privacy and human rights in the region."

"With the stakes so high, and the punishments so severe, it is great news to see big tech companies like

WhatsApp pushing back in favor of democracy and freedom of expression," the group said.

However, it noted the move could lead to WhatsApp being blocked in Hong Kong as it has been in mainland China.

China issues travel warning for Canada amid Hong Kong spat

Beijing: China issued a travel warning for Canada on Monday and said bilateral relations could deteriorate further over Ottawa's response to a controversial national security law in Hong Kong.

Canada last week suspended its extradition treaty with Hong Kong and halted exports of sensitive military gear to the financial hub as Western nations voiced concern about the legislation's impact on the city's special rights. "China strongly condemns this and reserves the right to make further response. All consequences arising therefrom will be borne by Canada," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular briefing. The Chinese embassy in Ottawa separately issued the travel warning, urging its citizens to remain cautious because of "frequent violent actions by law enforcement agencies in Canada, which have triggered many demonstrations."

AFP

China criticises US joint carrier drills in South China Sea

Beijing: China on Monday accused the US of flexing its military muscles in the South China Sea by conducting joint exercises with two U.S. aircraft carrier groups in the strategic waterway.

Foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the exercises were performed "totally out of ulterior motives" and undermined stability in the area.

"Against such a backdrop, the US deliberately dispatched massive forces to conduct large-scale military exercises in the relevant waters of the South China Sea to flex its military muscle," Zhao said at a daily briefing.

The US Navy said over the weekend that the USS Nimitz and the USS Ronald Reagan along with their accompanying vessels and aircraft conducted exercises "designed to maximize air defense capabilities, and extend the

reach of long-range precision maritime strikes from carrier-based aircraft in a rapidly evolving area of operations."

China claims almost all of the South China Sea and routinely objects to any action by the U.S. Military in the region. Five other governments claim all or part of the sea, through which approximately \$5 trillion in goods are shipped every year.

China has sought to shore up its claim to the sea by building military bases on coral atolls, leading the U.S. To sail warships through the region in what it calls freedom of operation missions. Washington does not officially take a stand on the rival territorial claims in the region, but is closely allied with several of the claimants and insists that the waters and the airspace above be free to all countries.

Bucking China pressure, Taiwan, Somaliland establish ties

Taipei: Taiwan has scored a rare diplomatic victory in establishing relations with the independent region of Somaliland.

Intense pressure from China has reduced self-governing, democratic Taiwan to having just 15 diplomatic allies and being excluded from the United Nations and most other international organizations where Beijing has leverage.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by military force if it deems necessary. In elections and public opinion surveys, Taiwanese have overwhelmingly rejected political union with China.

Somaliland broke away from Somalia in 1991 as the country collapsed into warlord-led conflict and has seen little of the violence and extremist attacks that plague its neighbor to the south. Despite lacking international recognition, the region has maintained its own independent Government, currency and security system.

In a statement posted July 1 on the Taiwanese foreign ministry's website, Minister Joseph Wu said the Governments had agreed to establish ties based on "friendship and a shared commitment to common values of freedom, democracy, justice and the rule of law."

AP

TAIWAN SAYS DALAI LAMA WELCOME TO VISIT, A TRIP THAT WOULD INFURIATE CHINA

Taipei: Taiwan would welcome a visit by exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, its foreign ministry said on Monday, a trip that would infuriate Beijing which views him as a dangerous separatist. The Dalai Lama has not visited the Chinese-claimed, democratic island under the administration of President Tsai Ing-wen, who first took office in 2016. He last came in 2009. In a birthday message via video link to supporters in Taiwan on Sunday, the Dalai Lama said he would like to visit again.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
DEPARTMENT OF MATERIALS MANAGEMENT (PURCHASE-II)
SHER-I-KASHMIR INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, SOURA- 190011
Email: ammopurchase2@skims.ac.in, Fax: 0194-2403403

eNIT NO: SIMS 15 (P-II) of 2020
DATED: 03/07/2020

Sub: Abbreviated notice inviting e-tenders for supply oh HSD (High Speed Diesel) at SKIMS Soura Srinagar on annual rate contract basis.

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of Union Territory of J&K through Director SKIMS, e-tenders are invited under two bid system (Technical bid and Financial bid) from the Oil Companies/ their authorized and registered dealers with sound financial background for supply of HSD (High Speed Diesel) at SKIMS Soura Srinagar on annual rate contract basis for a period of one year.

Description	Tentative annual qty.
High Speed Diesel (HSD)	1654 KL

The detailed tender document containing quantity and other terms and conditions, is available on www.jktenders.gov.in and complete bidding process will be online on said e-tender portal, **as per following schedule:**

S. No.	Activity Description	Schedule
01.	Tender fee in the shape of Demand Draft favouring Director Finance SKIMS	Rs. 2,000/-
02.	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in the shape of CDR/FDR (pledged to Director Finance) or a Bank Guarantee pledged to Director & EOSG SKIMS	Rs. 20.00 lac
03.	Date & time for downloading of tenders	03/07/2020 (10:00 am) to 30/07/2020 (04:00 pm)
04.	Any clarification with regard to e-NIT shall be entertained only from (no representation/clarification shall be entertained beyond the stipulated period)	03/07/2020 to 13/07/2020 (during office hours)
05.	Start/last date & time for submission of tenders	14/07/2020 (10.00 am) to 30/07/2020 upto (04:00 pm)
06.	Date & time for opening of technical bids	03/08/2020 (2:30 pm)

The tender notice is also available on SKIMS website www.skims.ac.in (for reference only).

Complete bidding process will be online at www.jktenders.gov.in. (Technical and Price bids shall have to be submitted in electronic format on the said tender portal and in no case be submitted in physical form, unless demanded by SKIMS.

Director SKIMS reserves the right to accept/ reject or cancel any tender or all tenders in full or part thereof without assigning any reason.

The tenders should be submitted strictly in accordance with the provisions of the detailed eNIT.

No: SIMS 325-14/2020-1288-96- 4957-60
Sd/- Asst. Materials Management Officer
Dated: 03.07.2020 (Purchase - II)

Around the Globe

Islamabad: Pakistan's health minister Dr Zafar Mirza said on Monday that he was tested positive for the novel coronavirus, becoming the latest senior minister in the country to be hit by the deadly virus.

Washington: The White House is again rejecting calls for a national mask-wearing mandate. White House chief of staff Mark Meadows says in an appearance on "Fox and Friends" Monday morning that the president sees the issue as a "state-to-state" matter.

Melbourne: In a major step to contain the rising number of COVID-19 infections, Australia's hard-hit state Victoria on Monday announced to close its borders with the country's most-populous state New South Wales for the first time in 100 years.

Santo Domingo: A businessman who has never held elected office has won the presidency of the Dominican Republic, according to results on Monday, ending a 16-year run in power by a centre-left party.

Beijing: Chinese authorities on Monday detained a law professor who published essays criticising President Xi Jinping over the coronavirus pandemic and accusing him of ruling "tyrannically", according to friends of the man.

Meet to decide Oli's future deferred again

Kathmandu: The political future of Nepal's embattled Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli will now be decided on Wednesday after the ruling communist party postponed for a third time a crucial meeting, a day after the Chinese ambassador met a senior leader amidst the growing demand for his resignation over his style of functioning and anti-India statements.

The meeting of the Nepal Communist Party's 45-member powerful Standing Committee was scheduled to be held on Monday. But it was postponed at the last minute. Prime Minister's press advisor Surya Thapa said the meeting was postponed until Wednesday. The reason for the deferment for a third time was not revealed.

Israel announces successful launch of new spy satellite

Jerusalem: Israel announced the successful launch of a new spy satellite Monday that will help it monitor Iran's nuclear activities as the Israeli foreign minister hinted that his country may have been behind a fire that damaged an Iranian nuclear site last week. The "Ofek 16" satellite gives Israel what officials described as an additional tool in keeping tabs on many threats from across the region, joining a fleet of Israeli spy satellites that have been launched over the past two decades. While officials did not identify specific threats, arch-enemy Iran, which Israel accuses of trying to develop nuclear arms, is first among them. "The success of the Ofek 16 satellite very much increases our ability to act against Israel's enemies, near and far alike. It greatly expands our ability to act on land, at sea, in the air and also in space," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after the launch.

40 dead in Japan floods, more areas warned of heavy rain

Tokyo: The death toll from three days of heavy rain and flooding in southern Japan rose to 40 on Monday, including 14 who drowned at a riverside nursing home, as rescuers searched for 10 missing people and rain threatened wider areas of the main island of Kyushu, officials said. Army troops and other rescuers worked their way through mud and debris along the flooded Kuma River, where many houses and buildings were submerged nearly to their roofs.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. 197-S/49/Despatch/SSB
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system
Dy. Chief Material Manager, N.Rly, Shakurbasti, Delhi-110034, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following item:

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Opening date
01	49-GSD-SSB-Covid-19	Hiring of MUV	2400 Km per month & 10 Hrs.	10.07.2020

Note:- Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.
2. No Manual offer will be entertained. 1501/2020
Serving Customers with a Smile

AP FACT CHECK

Trump falsely says 99% of virus cases benign

Washington: President Donald Trump is understating the danger of the coronavirus to people who get it, as more and more become infected in the US.

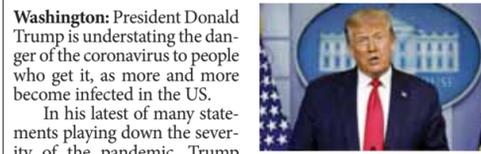
In his latest of many statements playing down the severity of the pandemic, Trump declared that 99 per cent of cases of COVID-19 are harmless. That flies in the face of science and of the reality captured by the US death toll of about 130,000. Trump also sounded a dismissive note about the need for breathing machines.

Throughout the pandemic, Trump has declared it under control in the US. When it hasn't been. His remarks on that subject and more from the past week: VIRUS THREAT

TRUMP: "Now we have tested over 40 million people. But by so doing, we show cases, 99 per cent of which are totally harmless." — Fourth of July remarks Saturday.

THE FACTS: This statement does not reflect the suffering of millions of COVID-19 patients.

The World Health Organization, for one, has said about 20 per cent of those diag-



nosed with COVID-19 progress to severe disease, including pneumonia and respiratory failure. Whatever the numbers turn out to be, it's clear that the threat is not limited to the merest sliver of those who get the disease.

Aside from that, those with mild or no symptoms also can spread the virus to others who are more vulnerable.

Asked Sunday to defend Trump's claim, Food and Drug Administration commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn declined to do so. He instead urged Americans not to back off the federal government's public health measures urging social distancing and wearing a mask.

"What I'll say is that we have data in the White House task force," Hahn told CNN's "State of the Union." "Those data show us that this is a serious problem. People need to take it seriously."

AP

WESTERN RAILWAY

VARIOUS CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS
Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, 6th floor, Engg. Deptt. Mumbai-400 008, invites E-Tender as per details given as follows

Sr. No.	Tender Notice No. & Date	Work and location	Approx. cost of work in ₹	EMD ₹
1	BCT/20-21/154 dtd.06.07.2020	Mumbai Central car Shed Improvement of Pit lines 5 & 6 with Elevated inspection pathways in Mumbai Central Car Shed.	₹8,46,89,267.66	₹5,73,500.00
2	BCT/20-21/155 dtd.06.07.2020	(Zone 6A-I) Santacruz-Virar Sec: General repairs & painting, White Washing, Colour Washing, distemper polishing etc. in the jurisdiction of SSE (W-II) Borivali between Santacruz (Incl) and Virar (Incl)Which includes all station bldgs. station premises, service bldgs etc. but excl staff qtrs colonies FOB's, ROB's.	₹95,00,000.00	₹1,90,000.00
3	BCT/20-21/156 dtd.06.07.2020	(Zone 6A-2) Santacruz-Virar Sec: General repairs & painting, White Washing, Colour Washing, distemper polishing etc. in the jurisdiction of SSE (W) Santacruz Which includes Railway quarters/Colony between Khar to Andheri and Jogeshwari South colony.	₹74,99,999.00	₹1,50,000.00
4	BCT/20-21/157 dtd.06.07.2020	(Zone 7A) Santacruz-Virar Sec: General repairs & painting, white washing, colour washing, distemper polishing etc for Railway quarters/colony between jogeshwari to Virar in the jurisdiction of SSE (W) Borivali.	₹70,00,000.00	₹1,40,000.00
5	BTC/20-21/158 dtd.06.07.2020	Santacruz Virar Section :- Repairs to platform fascia and Walls in the Jurisdiction of SSE (W-II) - Borivali.	₹2,06,17,051.20	₹2,53,100.00

Sr. No. 1 - 5 Date & Time of submission: On 04-08-2020 till 15:00 hrs Date & Time of opening: On 04-08-2020 at 15:30 hrs

Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit www.ireps.gov.in Manual offers will not be considered.

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Market soars 4-month high

On global rally, easing Indo-China tensions

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty hit their four-month highs on Monday, tracking upbeat global bourses and signs of easing tensions between India and China.

The BSE gauge Sensex closed 465.86 points, or 1.29 per cent, higher at 36,487.28; while the NSE barometer Nifty settled 156.30 points, or 1.47 per cent, up at 10,763.65.

Both Sensex and Nifty logged their fourth consecutive gains, helped mainly by index heavyweights Reliance Industries (RIL) and HDFC Bank.

RIL shares zoomed 3.57 per cent to close at an all-time high of ₹1,851.40 per unit — helping the company's market valuation surge to ₹11.73 lakh crore.

In terms of percentage gains on the Sensex, Mahindra and Mahindra topped the chart with over 7 per cent rise, followed by Bajaj Finance, RIL, Maruti, TCS, HDFC Bank and Tata Steel.

On the other hand, Bajaj Auto, HDFC, Bharti Airtel, HUL and HCL Tech were the five scrips ended with losses. Sectorally, BSE energy, realty, auto, metal, industrials, basic materials and capital goods indices rallied up to



2.97 per cent; while FMCG, healthcare and telecom ended in the red.

Broader midcap and small-cap indices surged up to 1.30 per cent.

Market analysts said that apart from firm global cues, positive sentiment led by signs of easing border tension between India and China helped boost investor sentiment, though growing Covid-19 cases remained a concern going forward for the participants.

In additive development, both Indian and Chinese sides have agreed that maintenance

of peace and tranquillity were essential for development of bilateral ties between New Delhi and Beijing.

The Indian government in a statement said that National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a telephonic conversation on Sunday during which they agreed on disengagement of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at the earliest.

"Disengagement in the Galwan Valley fired up the bulls today as Reliance, Maruti and Bajaj Finance notched up smart gains. The key highlight

of the day was the participation seen in the broader market in select PSU stocks," S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP securities, said.

Globally, massive buying momentum in equities on hopes of a Covid-19 vaccine and improving global macro-economic conditions too boosted sentiment, traders said.

In Asian, Shanghai rallied around 6 per cent, Hong Kong 4 per cent, Tokyo and Seoul up to 2 per cent on hopes of more government stimulus to support economic recovery.

Stock exchanges in Europe too jumped up to 2 per cent in early deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 1.43 per cent to USD 43.42 per barrel.

On the currency front, the rupee pared initial gains and settled 2 paise down at 74.68 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, India went past Russia to become the third worst-hit nation by the Covid-19 pandemic. Only the US and Brazil are ahead of India in terms of total coronavirus infections.

According to the Monday morning update of the Union Health Ministry, a single-day jump of 24,248 Covid-19 cases pushed India's tally to 6,97,413.

RIL becomes first domestic firm to cross ₹11.5 lakh cr m-cap mark

New Delhi: Reliance Industries Limited on Monday added another feather to its cap as its market valuation crossed ₹11.5 lakh crore mark, the first by any domestic company.

The market heavyweight stock jumped 3.57 per cent to close at ₹1,851.40 on the BSE. During the day, it rose by 3.94 per cent to a record high of ₹1,858.

On the NSE, it gained 3.75 per cent to settle at ₹1,855.

The company's market valuation rose by ₹40,508.8 crore to ₹11,73,677.35 crore at close of trade on the BSE.

In terms of volume, 9.49 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and over 2 crore on the NSE.

Gains in Reliance Industries' shares were also instrumental in taking the BSE 30-share index higher by 465.86 points, or 1.29 per cent, to close at 36,487.28.

Reliance Industries, the country's most valued firm, last month became the first Indian company to cross the ₹11 lakh crore market valuation mark.

Shares of Reliance Industries on Friday rose by nearly 2 per cent after announcement that Intel Capital will buy 0.39 per cent stake in Jio Platforms. PTI

FinMin: Govt not considering merger of CBDT, CBIC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is not considering any proposal to merge the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

The said merger was one of the recommendations of the Tax Administration Reforms Commission (TARC), headed by Parthasarathi Shome, which submitted its report in 2016.

Reacting to a media report which suggested that a merger of policy making bodies of direct and indirect taxes — CBDT and CBIC — is on cards, the Ministry in a statement said, "The Government has no proposal to merge the two Boards created under the Central Boards of Revenue Act, 1963."

The Ministry said that the report of TARC was examined in detail by the Government and this recommendation of TARC was not accepted by the government.

"As a part on an assurance made by the Government in Parliament in response to a Parliament question, the

Government has also placed this fact in 2018 before the Committee on Government Assurances.

The action taken report on the recommendations of the TARC is placed even on the website of Department of Revenue, which clearly shows that this recommendation was not accepted," it added.

The Tax Administration Reforms Commission (TARC) was constituted with a view to review the application of tax Policies and Laws in context of global best practices and recommend measure for reforms required in Tax Administration to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency.

TARC had made 385 recommendations out of which 291 recommendations are relating to CBDT and 253 to CBIC.

The Ministry further said it is in the process of implementation of a number of taxpayers' friendly reforms like transition from manual assessment based on territorial jurisdiction to a completely randomized electronic faceless assessment, electronic verification or transactions and our faceless appeals. PTI

Hyundai records over 15L visitors on its online car sales platform

New Delhi: Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL) on Monday said its online car buying platform has recorded over 15 lakh visitors and over 20,000 registrations since its launch in March this year.

With the 'Click To Buy' online sales platform, that integrates over 600 dealerships, the auto major is offering a complete end-to-end online car buying solution that enables customers to purchase cars from the convenience and safety of their homes, HMIL said in a statement.

The company said it has also partnered with the leading banks HDFC and ICICI, in order to facilitate application of loans online without the need to visit any bank branch for approval.

"The platform has seen outstanding traction, recording over 20,000 registrations and over 1,900 bookings is a testament of customer trust in brand Hyundai," HMIL MD and CEO SS Kim said.

With digital buying becoming a new normal during the Covid-19 pandemic, the company will continue to provide smart mobility solutions ensuring a seamless online car purchase experience for our customers, it added. PTI

Rupee slips by 2 paise to end at 74.68 as crude firms up

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared initial gains to settle down by 2 paise at 74.68 against the US dollar on Monday due to firming crude oil prices and dollar buying by importers.

Gains in domestic equities, foreign fund inflows and a weak US currency helped restrict rupee losses, forex dealers said.

In a highly volatile session, the rupee opened at 74.53 against the US dollar, and touched an intra-day high of 74.52 and a low of 74.82.

The domestic unit finally closed at 74.68 against the US dollar, down 2 paise over its previous close of 74.66 on Friday.

"Despite lower safe-haven currencies, the rupee was unable to add gains today amid higher crude oil prices and bargain buying of dollars by the importers. The Indian rupee gained 1.32 per cent or one rupee a dollar in the previous week," Devarsh Vakil, Deputy Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities said.

Vakil further said that the trend for the Indian rupee remains on bullish side following weaker dollar index

and foreign fund inflows. "Spot USDINR is having support at 74.30 and resistance at 75 for next couple of days," he said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.24 per cent to 96.94.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex settled 465.86 points, or 1.29 per cent, higher at 36,487.28; while the NSE Nifty soared 156.30 points, or 1.47 per cent, to 10,763.65.

Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in the capital market as they purchased shares worth ₹857.29 crore on Friday, according to provisional exchange data.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.66 per cent to USD 43.51 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the number of cases around the world linked to Covid-19 has crossed 1.14 crore and the death toll has topped 5.34 lakh.

In India, the death toll due to the disease rose to 19,693 and the number of infections spiked to 6,97,413, according to the Health Ministry.

Toyota suspends work at Bidadi plant for a day after worker dies of virus

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Suspension of the H1-B visas by the US will cost domestic IT firms ₹1,200 crore and have a marginal 0.25-0.30 per cent impact on their profitability, a domestic rating agency said on Monday.

An increase in local hiring over the last few years since the US — the largest market for Indian IT firms — started curbing the visa issuances will help limit the impact on the Indian IT companies now, Crisil Ratings said.

It can be noted that last month, the visas used by Indian tech professionals to work out of the US were suspended by the Donald Trump administration as it looked to arrest the rising unemployment.

Crisil, however, said that the marginal impact will be over and above the up to 2.50 per cent decline in IT firms' profits because of the Covid-19 pandemic and added that oper-

ating profitability is seen at 23 per cent in FY21 as per an analysis of 15 top firms' performance.

The US move on the H1-B and L1 visas will have limited impact because of the lower reliance on the entry system by hiring locally, it said, adding that renewals of the visas will be unaffected.

Zooming of the denial rates to 39 per cent in FY20, up from 6 per cent in FY16, had led to lower reliance on the visas by the local IT companies, it said.

"New H1-B visa issuances contribute less than 5 per cent of the US onshore workforce of the top 5 listed Indian IT firms, which account for 60 per cent of the industry revenue.

On the other hand, the share of local hires in their US onshore employee mix has steadily increased from 30-35 per cent in fiscal 2017 to about 55-60 per cent in fiscal 2020," its senior director Anuj Sethi said.

H1-B visa suspension to have ₹1,200-cr impact on Indian IT firms: Crisil

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The opening up of India's economy post lockdown and implementation of the economic package unveiled by the government have started showing results on the ground with initial signs of improvement in the performance of businesses now visible, says a survey.

The Ficci-Dhruva Advisors industry survey was conducted in June 2020 and saw participation of over 100 top corporate executives (CXOs) from across sectors. "While the green shoots of recovery are being seen, it is important to emphasise that sustaining this improvement in the operational parameters of businesses will require continuous support from the government.

"The support is particularly needed in the realm of strengthening market demand in the absence of which this initial recovery may fizzle out," Ficci emphasised.

On the jobs front, nearly 32

Gold may cross ₹52,000 per 10 grams by Diwali

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The price of gold in the spot and futures markets remained soft for the fourth consecutive day on Monday, but during the corona period the fundamentals of the precious metal are strong due to which it may touch a new high later this year.

The demand for the yellow metal may not be much in the upcoming festive season due to the uncertainty caused by the corona crisis, but considering the investors interest in gold, its price is expected to cross the psychological level of ₹52,000 per 10 grams by Diwali.

On July 1 last week, gold had risen to ₹48,982 per 10 grams on the domestic futures market — Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), which is the record level so far, while the price of gold in the domestic spot market has breached the ₹ 50,000 per 10 gram mark.

Oil market downturn turns heat on US shale producers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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Oil market downturn turns heat on US shale producers

New Delhi: The downturn in the oil market is beginning to impact those who had a fair share in keeping it oversupplied and prices suppressed. The US shale oil producers are beginning to feel the pain of lower oil prices with large-scale increase in bankruptcies.

A few shale companies in the US had already gone bankrupt, with the possibility of a few more on the way.

According to a report by Motilal Oswal Institutional Equities, the total number of E&P (exploration and production) bankruptcies has risen to 20 so far, with the latest victim being Chesapeake Energy, one of the pioneers of the US shale industry, with a total debt of \$9 billion.

It expected that the lower prevailing oil prices would result in write-down of \$300 billion of global E&P assets.

This is significant considering that exploration had just started to pick up a couple of years back and was expected to peak anytime now. But Covid-19 induced lockdown and pre-

vailing economic slowdown have turned the tables on the sector.

The US rig count has fallen to a record low of 278 units in the week ended June 26, 2020 (decline of 65% since Mar 2020 and 72% YoY), even as oil prices rebounded from historic lows in April, as some producers restarted production. As per Baker Hughes data, the worldwide rig count has declined 52% YoY to 1,073 units (vs 2,221 units in Jun'19).

According to a Platts Analytics Spotlight report, rigs are expected to stay relatively flat until early-2021 as operators are expected to wait several months for higher oil prices before starting to gradually increase rig count.

On the oil price front, the market is expected to remain flat, giving no immediate relief to oil producers from facing bankruptcies. According to the brokerage estimates, Brent would stabilize between USD40-50/bbl and settle at USD50-60/bbl in the longer run.

IANS

India's coal import drops 30% to 48.84 MT in April-June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's coal imports registered a drop of 29.7 per cent to 48.84 million tonnes (MT) in the April-June period of the ongoing financial year, according to industry data.

India had imported 69.54 MT of coal in the April-June period of 2019-20, according to provisional compilation by mjunction.

mjunction, a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL, is a B2B e-commerce company that also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals.

The drop in imports

assumes significance in the wake of Government mandating state-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) to replace at least 100 million tonne (MT) of imports with domestically-produced coal in 2020-21.

The country's coal imports also dropped 22.5 per cent to 15.22 MT last month, against 19.64 MT of coal imported in June last fiscal, it said.

"The weak trend in imports is in line with market expectation, given the continued high stockpile of coal in the system. The plunge in thermal power sector's PLF (plant load factor) in the past couple of months and the sharp decline

in cement output do not augur well for import demand in coming month," mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma said.

India's coal import during last month through major and non-major ports is estimated to have decreased by 8.01 per cent over May 2020, mjunction said.

Last month, the import stood at 15.22 MT (provisional), compared to 16.54 MT (revised) imported in May 2020.

Coal import in June last year stood at 19.64 MT, according to a compilation by mjunction's India Coal Market Watch (ICMW).

Covid-19 prompts kirana stores to adopt innovation, digital technologies: Report

New Delhi: Kirana stores are emerging as the hub that helps maintain regular supply of essentials as cities struggle to get back to their normal rhythm and many such neighbourhood stores are considering greater technology adoption, according to a report.

The report is based on a survey by consultancy firm EY that gathered insights through 27 qualitative interviews across 12 cities in India, 5 metros and 7 non-metros with participants who represent small and big kirana across a diverse socio-economic background.

Stating that there is a renewed trust in hyper-local communities, EY's latest report 'Sentiments of India - Pulse of the country, Kiranas' said 40 per cent of respondents (kirana store owners) want to partner with online delivery and sup-

ply platforms as they feel it can help them grow and tide over in these testing times.

Commenting on the findings, EY India Partner - Customer Experience and Design Thinking, Shashank Shwet said, "amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the kirana stores have emerged as local unsung heroes serving the community at large. The kirana store owners have taken a lot of effort to keep up with the changing demands of the crisis and managing their day-to-day supplies."

Moreover, he said, "the way that these kirana store owners have adopted to innovation and digital technologies, such as digital payments, changing operating models and reduced friction towards technology, to cope up with the pandemic is highly commendable. PTI

Eco package, opening up of economy post lockdown have begun showing results: Survey

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The results of the survey show that presently close to 30 per cent of the firms are operating at 70 per cent plus capacity utilisation, while nearly 45 per cent expect capacity utilisation to be above 70 per cent in the near term.

In terms of the challenges that firms foresee they will continue to face even during the unlocking phase, managing costs, weak demand and financial liquidity remain the top three items with 60 per cent, 59 per cent and 57 per cent reporting the same.

"Some of the survey respondents have also alluded to the second wave of Covid-19 as a challenge they foresee that could affect businesses going ahead. A sudden stop on the imports from China, given the most recent developments, also figured in the feedback received as part of the survey on challenges that could impact businesses," said Ficci on the survey.

On the jobs front, nearly 32

per cent of the firms have reported that they see a job loss of over 10 per cent from their company's perspective. In April edition of this survey, this figure was close to 40 per cent.

Unlocking of the economy is starting to have a positive impact on exports, cash flows, order books and supply chains, it observed.

It revealed that 22 per cent of the respondents have said that exports have improved in recent times. 25 per cent have reported a positive impact of unlocking of the economy on order books and 21 per cent have confirmed improvement in cash flows.

Nearly 30 per cent of the firms are seeing their supply chains getting back on track.

Notably, in the April edition of the survey only 5 per cent of the companies were expecting an increase in exports, 7 per cent had reported increase in order books and 10 per cent expected an improvement in cash flows.

BSES BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi

TENDER NOTICE Date: 07/07/2020

Sealed tenders under two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) is invited for following job from all bidders.

NIT No.	Brief Item Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/20-21/SV/AR/AN/862	CONSTRUCTION OF 7 NOS. NEW 11 KV SUB-STATION BUILDINGS OF SIZE 25 MTR X 5 MTR FOR EWSFLATS AT A-14 KALAJI EXTENSION, NEAR ALAKNANDA COMMUNITY CENTRE, DIV-ALN.	177 Lac	3.54 Lac	21.07.2020 15:45 HRS	21.07.2020 16:00 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/-

For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submitment of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bsesdelhi.com

Head (Contracts & Materials)

Regd. Off. - BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, BSES Bhawan, Nehru Place, New Delhi-110019 | Corporate Identification No. - U40109DL2001PLC111527 | Telephone No. - +91 11 3999 7235 | E-mail - brpl.education@reliancecsada.com | Website - www.bsesdelhi.com

पावरग्रिड POWERGRID

1. Approval under regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations '1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations, 2014 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations 2019 for i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2014-19 tariff block and ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block for system associated with Petition 1 : Asset-I: 1x500 MVA, 765/400 kV Transformer as spare ICT at Agra Sub-station, Asset-II: 1x500 MVA, 765/400 kV Transformer as spare ICT at Fatehpur Sub-station, Asset-III: 765/400 kV/500 MVA, single phase Auto Transformer as spare ICT at Jhatikra sub-station under 'Spare 765/400 kV Transformers for Northern Region, Petition 2 : Asset I: 50 MVAR Line reactor at Jaipur (South) in 400 kV D/C Kota- Jaipur (South) line (Part of 400 kV D/C Rapp-Jaipur TL) utilized as Bus reactor at Jaipur (south) substation (DOCO : 5.3.2018) and Asset II : 400 kV D/C Kota- Jaipur (South) line along with associated bays at Kota and Jaipur (South) (part of RAPP-Jaipur (S) 400 kV D/C line with one ckt LILCO at Kota) under 'Transmission system associated with RAPP' 7 & 8, Part-B" and Petition 3 : for Asset-I: 2 Nos. Line bays at Amritsar 400/220 kV Sub-station, Asset-II (a): 2 No. Line bays at Malerkotla GIS 400/220 kV Sub-station, Asset-II (b): 2 No. Line bays at Malerkotla GIS 400/220 kV Sub-station, Asset-III: 2 nos. 400 kV Malerkotla Bays at 400/220 kV GIS Substation at Kurukshetra under Northern Region System Strengthening Scheme-XXXI (Part-B) in Northern Region

2. The beneficiaries for Combined Assets of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (1) Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Prasaran Nigam Limited, (2) Ajmer Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd, (3) Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd, (4) Jodhpur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd, (5) Punjab State Electricity Board, (6) Haryana Power Purcha se Centre (7) Power Development Deptt. Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir, (8) Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd, (9) Delhi Transco Ltd, (10) BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, (11) BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd, (12) North Delhi Power, (13) Chandigarh Administration, (14) Uttaranchal Power Corporation Ltd, (15) North Central Railway (16) New Delhi Municipal council, (17) Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board.

3. Tariff details:

a) 2014-19 block

Petition no	Asset no	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Petition 1	Asset-I	-	-	-	118.60	214.67
	Asset-II	-	-	-	50.82	163.03
	Asset-III	-	-	-	143.05	163.05
Petition 2	Asset-I	-	-	-	21.13	297.43

HEALTH

GutFeeling

Misfolded protein build-up in the gut could contribute to the development of Alzheimer's-like symptoms, researchers have shown. This new finding, published in the Journal of Physiology, suggests a new treatment approach for Alzheimer's disease that would target the gut before symptoms of cognitive deficits appear in patients



DOCYARD

DR SK WANGNOO

Head, Centre for Obesity, Diabetes & Endocrinology

INDRAPRASTHA APOLLO HOSPITAL



Treat your mind well

It is time to end the stigma that surrounds mental health and seek medical help, says AROUBA KABIR



BOOST YOUR IMMUNITEA



Nutritionists suggest that our immunity comes down during

monsoon, making us prone to several diseases. Teas, however, can do the job, says SHIKHA PURI

The monsoons are here, and it's a welcome relief from the scorching summer heat. But, the rains also bring along a slew of seasonal diseases. We need to adjust to the nip in the weather and keep ourselves healthy.

When you sit by the window and watch the rain dance and listen to the pitter-patter of the raindrops, one gets tempted to have *chai*, *pakoras* or even *samosas*.

Health experts and nutritionists suggest that our immunity comes down during this season, making us prone to viral infection, seasonal flu, and stomach disorders. They suggest that you should increase the intake of immunity-boosting food during this season, like broccoli, almonds, turmeric and spinach. But you can also have calorie-free immunity-boosting teas.

The goodness of tea increases when you add herbs and spices to it. Tea blenders and tea tasters over the decades have made blends using traditional Indian spices and herbs, the perfect combination results in an exceptional cup of tea. Here is a list of teas that have an outstanding flavour and taste which can boost your immunity.

Masala chai: The monsoons are the perfect time to enjoy India's favourite *masala chai* or spiced tea. Made with good Assam CTC tea, traditional masala tea has ingredients like cardamom, star anise, pepper, cloves, cinnamon and ginger. Each herb/spice has its individual health properties, which will boost your overall health. Black tea is loaded with antioxidants and protects you from cardiovascular disease, lowers cholesterol and improves dental health.

Ginger green tea: A classic blend of young fresh ginger and green tea, it is excellent for a sore throat and cold. The ideal way to have it is to add a dash of honey; it soothes the throat and protects you from a sore throat and flu.

Kashmiri kahwa: Is tea from the Kashmir valley. There are various recipes the oldest traditional one uses green tea, cinnamon, cloves, green cardamom, almonds and saffron. The combination of these spices with green tea has kept the people of Kashmir warm and healthy in all weather conditions. The world's most expensive spice, saffron is known to boost your immunity.

Peppermint green tea: A refreshing blend of peppermint and green tea keeps the stomach healthy. When you binge on greasy foods, like samosas, pakoras in the monsoon, you are likely to feel heavy and full. Peppermint is known to have a soothing effect on the stomach and reduces bloating.

Chamomile tea: It is a popular beverage. Chamomile tea is a herbal infusion made using dried flowers. This traditional herbal infusion calms your body, reduces stress builds immunity and cleanses your system.

Enjoy the raindrops, read your favourite book and enjoy a sip of healthy tea.

The writer is Co-founder of Teacupstall, a premium tea brand and tea boutique



Sugar is the new tobacco

Sugar added to food has little nutritional value, does not make people feel full and is dangerous beyond merely the number of calories it contains. Sugar consumption has led to a 25 per cent increase in the Type II Diabetes among the obese and normal population. While the obese cultivate Diabetes due to sedentary lifestyle issues, normal person get affected due to genetics and the increased sugar intake.

Dependency on processed foods which have hidden sugar content is also to be blamed. Changing food habits due to unhealthy lifestyle has made processed foods and carbonated drinks as a part of the daily menu. Most people do not have the idea about the amount of sugar being consumed by them in a day. Due to this, the triple combination of ailments which are — obesity, Diabetes and heart disease occurs at a younger age among the population in the country.

How sugar reacts with the brain? Sugar leads to dopamine release in the nucleus accumbens — an area associated with motivation, novelty, and reward. Hence, intermittent sugar consumption affects the brain much like certain drugs.

Harmful effects: Glucose, the carbohydrate molecule of sugar, can be positively put to use by every single organ in the body. Furthermore, if your body doesn't produce enough of it, it'll start producing its own.

On the other hand, fructose is the fatty molecule of sugar and can only be processed in the liver. If the liver receives too much fructose, it becomes overloaded. When it can't take any more, the fructose (metabolised as fat) leaks into the body and the following complications can arise:

- Fatty liver
- Insulin resistance
- Hypertension
- Weight gain

If the condition deteriorates, the end result can include:

- Heart Disease
- Cancer
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Obesity

Ways how sugar can affect your body:

- **Weight gain:** Sugar can lead to weight gain because our cells do not require large amounts at one time, and the extra sugar is stored as fat. Sugar also slows down our metabolism.

- **Nutritional deficiency:** Refined sugar lacks vitamins, minerals and fiber, therefore, making our bodies work even harder to digest it. In order to absorb sugar completely, the body have to deplete minerals and enzymes from its own store house.

- **Fatigue:** Because sugar takes our blood sugar on a roller coaster ride, first being pushed up high and then brought back down really low, we experience what we all know as a 'sugar crash'.

- **Weakened immune system:** Consuming foods and beverages high in sugar or refined carbohydrates may be reducing your body's ability to ward off disease. When the immune system is compromised, one are more likely to get sick.

- **Aging and wrinkles:** Sugar can lead to premature aging by damaging collagen and elastin.

- **Headaches & migraines:** Sugar consumption can play a role in headaches and migraines.

- **Depression:** Excessive sugar can lead to depression. Additionally, we may feel comforted right before and right after eating a cupcake, and we may anticipate it lifting our moods, however, this typically will be very temporary. Eating this sweet treat really didn't get to the root of our stress or depression, so then we are back to square one.

SUMMERCoolERS

POMEGRANATE:

Pomegranate is among one of the healthiest fruits present on earth. The fruit is rich in fiber, protein, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, folate and potassium.

The punicalagins in pomegranate juice have been shown to reduce inflammation, one of the leading drivers of many serious diseases, including cancer and Diabetes.

Regular intake of pomegranate juice has been shown to lower blood pressure levels in as little as two weeks. Not only this, the fruit also

has antibacterial and antiviral properties which may be useful against common gum diseases and yeast infections. Several studies have shown that it may also help prevent Alzheimer's disease in older adults.

Having a glass or two of pomegranate juice daily will keep you health and fit.

Seldom would mankind imagine that in this fast paced, technologically advanced world, a minute invisible thing like a virus could absolutely stop life to a Point Blank. Similar is the comparison with our focus on physical health being massive which has to be complemented with our mental health which is so fragile.

However, slowly things are getting back to a new normal state, but after such a stringent lockdown many of us are dealing with a lot of emotional setbacks as the sudden and drastic alteration in the daily routine has affected everyone's mental health irrespective of their age, profession or gender.

Mental health issues have always been stigmatised in our society. With the Government taking unprecedented measures to focus on preventing the spread of this deadly virus, the situation has just amplified. Anxiety, depressive symptoms, symptoms of Internet addiction, pornography addiction, experiences of hostility, overthinking, changes in food and sleep habits, social empathy and relationship quality are most of the cases these days.

Some of us during this lockdown are wrestling with familial conflict while others are stressing over how coronavirus disruptions have affected their careers, businesses, academic performance, or daily wages.

Various studies being conducted are indicating that this sudden loss of employment, along with financial stress or even distress, could enhance the psychological impact on the working community, shown by symptoms of increased aggressiveness and post-traumatic

stress. This situation could also revive memories of old traumas in some people.

Here are a few tips to help all of us dealing with mental health issues during these testing times:

Mental health awareness at schools & offices

Schools and offices are places where one visits almost every day and spends a great time of the day there. Thus it becomes an important point where mental health talks can be initiated and sensitisation spread. The main goal should be to provide a safe environment so that eventually students/employees feel less pressure and more confident.

Staying connected

Indians, by virtue of our social structure, have a variety of personal and social resources that help cope with such crises. Family is one such vital resource, and being in close touch with relatives, in real life or virtually via social media or the Internet, alleviates stress considerably.

Resilience

Resilience refers to an individual's positive adaptation to the experiences of adversity. Healthy coping strategies help even high-risk individuals to stay positive. Simply view the lockdown as a good time to ruminate on your individual and social identity, and take steps to improve your relationships with your own self and people around you.

Offline time is as important as online time

Turning to social media handles such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook can make you get lost in a world of make-belief and lead to unhealthy comparisons. It's impor-

DadiKaKehna

Even with Unlock 2.0, people are apprehensive about visiting a salon for that much-needed face spa due to the fear of catching infection. ROSHANI DEVI tells you how some easily available ingredients at home can help you get that glow



Before salons came up, I remember my mother would make us girls spend at least 20 minutes in a day to clean our face by using the simple ingredients from her kitchen as a scrub and then make a mask which we had to put and leave it on for 10-15 minutes and wash off for that glowing pink and smooth skin.

COVID-19 has definitely put us on the backfoot but that doesn't mean one can't make use of the tricks that our grandparents used. Here are some of them.

The most common scrub can be made by taking four

tablespoons of *besan* and adding oil to it. One can use pure virgin cold pressed olive oil or coconut oil. Make a smooth paste. Apply on the face and massage gently in a circular motion for five minutes. Ensure that you don't rub harshly under the eye area. Wash off. Pat dry. Now for the mask.

Take four tablespoons of *maida* and two tablespoons of *dahi*. Make a smooth paste and apply this on the face, leave it on for 10-15 minutes or till it somewhat dries. Wash off and pat dry. You can do this every night before going to bed.



Probiotics can help

Ageing brings with it reduced immunity and several diseases. DR NEERJA HAJELA tells you how probiotics can help in improving intestinal health for better immunity

The fear of COVID-19 lurks everywhere. While children and adults are able to cope with the situation, it is the elderly who suffer the most. They are overcome with anxiety, fear and a sense of loneliness. Not only that, they are also worried about their health because of their weak immunity which makes them more vulnerable to the infection.

Intestinal health — linked to immunity

However, ageing is a natural process and immunity can be improved and maintained by eating a well-balanced diet and leading a healthy lifestyle. This is also a simple and practical way of reducing the risk of infections and need for antibiotics and medication.

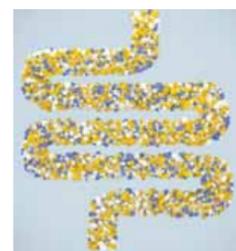
More recently scientists have shown that it is also possible to build your immunity by improving intestinal health. This is because more than half the body's immune system is located in the intestine and

therefore besides digestion, the intestine, which is also the largest immune organ of the body, plays an important role in protecting us from diseases and infection.

Intestinal bacteria — important for intestinal health

The intestine however cannot function without bacteria and contains 100 trillion bacteria that weigh almost 1.5 kg. These bacteria are essential for digestion of food, absorption of nutrients and for training and developing the immune system. The kind of bacteria determines the strength of the immune system and therefore it is important to have more numbers of the beneficial ones also called probiotics for a well-balanced and strong immunity.

However, as we age, our intestines age too and there is a slow but steady decline of the probiotic bacteria. This coupled with muscle weakness results in poor digestion and weak immunity. Therefore, it



is important to replenish these bacteria by increasing the consumption of scientifically tested probiotic products to strengthen the immune system.

Probiotics are closely associated with the immune system right from the moment we are born until we grow old. They are the first line of defence and shield us from invading bacteria and viruses.

Most often elderly suffer from constipation, diarrhoea and other digestive problems. One of the best benefits of a probiotic for the elderly is that

they improve digestive function and help to improve their immunity.

Ageing also affects the immune system which increases the risk of catching cold, flu and pneumonia. A study published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* showed that regular consumption of a probiotic drink reduced the incidence of viral infections in a group of healthy elderly population.

There is some evidence that probiotics can improve brain function especially mood and depression which is common as we age. Probiotics therefore help you stay well by giving your immune system the boost that it needs and gain greater level of wellness.

With the close connection between the intestine, probiotics and immunity, it makes sense to improve intestinal health for better immunity.

The writer is Secretary, Gut Microbiota and Probiotic Science Foundation (India)

The author is a mental health counsellor

Trend Glazer

Rajkumar salutes dreams, aspirations

Actor **RAJKUMMAR RAO** says he has seen big dreams in life, and he salutes everyone else's aspirations.

Rajkumar took to Instagram, where he shared a selfie he had clicked at the balcony. In the backdrop of the selfie, towering buildings can be seen.

"In oonchi imaraton se oonche sapne dekhe hai mainai. Aapke, mere, hum sabke sapnon ko salaam," he captioned.

His girlfriend, actor **Patralekhaa**, dropped a heart and hug emoticon on the comment section.



The art that we paint today shall be discussed and analysed some time in the future. So pick up that brush, load the palette with colours and paint it in vibrant hues so that when historians look back at 2020, they see not a speck of black but a smorgasbord of undying human spirit, says **ASHISH AHUJA**

LIFE GOES ON

In three words I can sum up everything I have learned about life — it goes on." Robert Frost, the great American poet, who lived through turbulent times, has given us a peek into the future. With the world facing one of its worst crisis ever, these words help to balm the excruciating pain being experienced by humanity. The truth behind this balm is firmly nestled in fact and experience, buried in the annals of history. All we need is to look back, understand, learn and appreciate the resilience of mankind to come back each time and make our world a better place. It has happened before. It is happening now. And it shall happen in the future. The crazy choreography between short intense periods of suffering followed by healing, rejuvenation and progress.

History is witness to the first World War that began in 1914. For the next four years, over a hundred nations were involved in the conflict. Eight million soldiers were martyred, twenty one million injured and hundreds of millions lost their livelihoods. During those dark times, it would have been very difficult to imagine a better future. But Earle and Josephine Dickson, the couple invented the Band-Aid in 1920. The war did not kill their dreams of a better future.

The end of World War I plunged humanity into the cauldron of the Spanish Flu. It raged from 1918 to 1920, and wiped out 3 per cent of the world's population. But life went on. Hope and resilience helped humanity overcome. Humanity did not give up. Sir Fredrick Grant Banting was one of them. He was busy finding insulin and finally he invented in 1922 because he believed in a better future. Imagine if he gave up.

The American stock market crash in October 1929 heralded the start of The Great Depression. It lasted until the spring of 1933. Global GDP declined by 27 per



cent, one out of every four persons was unemployed. Poverty, hunger and despondency were all encompassing. Life, in general, was too bleak. But Charles Darrow was busy inventing the board game *Monopoly* because he was convinced that better times await and that the world would need leisurely board game nights. *Monopoly* has been selling since 1934.

The deadly affliction of The Great Depression and the ensuing period of a massive recession culminated into the start of the second World War in 1939. Sixty Four million lives were lost in combat. Millions others suffered. The misery that lasted over six years would have normally broken the dreams of most but Willem Koff was adamant. He gave the world its first kidney dialysis machine in 1944 and made the world a better place.

These dark periods of history, starting from 1914 to 1945 were probably the most poignant portraits of threats to human survival in the last hundred years. Would those suffering during this period have imagined a world so beau-

tiful or advanced, as it was in the winter of 2019, just before COVID-19 struck? Probably not. If asked at that moment of suffering to paint their view of 2019, most would have splattered it with black ink. However, we have the benefit of reading and perusing through history. We know, that while dreams were being shattered, lives being lost and human spirit being tested, there were millions who lived in hope. There were millions who were resilient enough to dare dream again. There were millions who kept working on ideas to give us inventions that made our lives better in 2020. Sir Banting, Josephine Dickson, Charles Darrow and Willem Koff were among those who painted their canvases with a flourish of vibrant colours. It is this hope and resilience that defines humanity.

As we deal with the repercussions of COVID-19, we see immense challenges all around. Someone has lost a loved one, a loss that is irreplaceable. Another is struggling to pay bills because the pink slip landed on the desk. Yes, it is tough. Yet another is grieving over the loss of a business that could not be saved, a case of shattered dreams. Many are hyperventilating over what the future holds. Yes, it is understandable. But take a moment and rewind back to 1916, 1918 or 1930 or for that matter 1940. The current theme was being played in almost similar fashion, causing as much anguish if not more. The striking similarity does not end with the pain. The similarity portends a future worth being dreamt of. Our fore-fathers went through all of it and emerged to give us what we call "our world" today. As, shall we.

Someone rightly said that history repeats itself. The present is simply mimicking periods of history when humanity suffered. And this present would soon be history morphing into the future — one which mimics the progress humanity made after each such crisis.

The temples are closed. Schools are shuttered. Facial expressions are hiding behind masks. But the canvas is begging us to paint. The art that we paint today shall be discussed and analysed some time in the future. The year 2020 would be assigned to history, sooner than later. Pick up that brush, load the palette with colours and paint it in vibrant hues so that when historians look back at 2020, they see not a speck of black but a smorgasbord of undying human spirit. Simply, imagine what the world should be in 2050 and make it happen.

Yes, life goes on. To learn from the past, to build a resilient today and to dream a far better tomorrow.

'I believe the biggest lesson is to realise the extraordinary importance of preparation at least for the coming future, in case something like this ever had to happen again. I also guess we have learnt to feel a new sense of appreciation for our lives and for the ones we love. One needs to be grateful on so many levels.'



—Vaani Kapoor

Amid the pandemic, actor **RADEEP HOODA** has taken part in a clean-up drive at Versova Beach.

On social media, Randeep posted a few pictures in which he can be seen cleaning the beach. He also made sure to follow the necessary precautionary measures while stepping out. He was spotted wearing masks and gloves. Not only this, he also urged everyone to do their bit for nature.

On screen, Randeep will soon be seen sharing screen space with Salman Khan in *Radhe*.



Rihanna focusses on beauty line

Pop star **RIHANNA** has pushed plans to release new music to concentrate on her skincare range.

"Rihanna's ninth album is on hold indefinitely. She wants to make her millions with beauty and is planning a new skincare line to go alongside her Fenty Cosmetics range. Her lingerie range has gone down so well too that she feels she needs to strike while the iron's hot. Whenever she drops pics of her modelling the gear, sales go up," said the source.

With her music and her Fenty brand, Rihanna has amassed a fortune of nearly \$60,00,00,000.



A thousand journeys

Mumbai-based artist **SABIR SARDAR's** abstract expression of life is about losing self-control, says **UMA NAIR**

Lockdown revelations brought one face to face with the abstract world of Sabir Sardar. Upon questioning, he said his forefathers belonged to West Bengal and his parents settled in Bengalipura, a small pocket of a colony in Mumbai, which lies at the intersection of a railway crossing. So he uses this crossover icon of culture to give full play to his inspirations, both from his origins and his adopted home.

MINIMALIST MOORINGS

Sabir's studio is situated under the railway crossing. When asked how the tracks affect his creative surge, he said, "It shakes me, feels like a drop of water falling on a reservoir of stable water. But the railway bridge inspires me to paint. It keeps offering me fresh perspectives."

Sabir's abstract landscapes move in the hinges of minimalist moorings. In the sensory works of Sabir, we find more than a thousand journeys. There is a succinct

calculation and spontaneity in his work.

Irrespective of the colours he has used in his *Yaatra*, there is a mad freedom that operates beyond the restraints of his own control. "I create works as I look at the walls in the place where I live," said Sabir who humbly stated that his inspiration stems from the lesser temporary structures of Mumbai's slums.

SALT IN WEAKENED BROTH

Sabir's work reminded me of the great poet Naomi Shihab Nye, who in her poem *Kindness*, wrote:

"Before you know what kindness really is, you must lose things.

Feel the future dissolve in a moment like salt in a weakened broth.

What you held in your hand, what you counted and carefully saved,

All this must go so you know

How desolate the landscape can be between the regions of kindness."

The description of salt in

a weakened broth brings us to Sabir's many meditations that flow free and sometimes get entangled, too. From this poem of kindness and the many metaphors the poet gives us, we come to Sabir's compositions where he plays with contrasting colours and brushstrokes. Minimal strokes lace his work, which break down into fractional elements, thus unveiling a light backdrop gradually taking over. Bright turquoise layers strategically make an appearance in compositions along with buttercup yellows and mustard mango hues, which brilliantly balance out the compositions, drawing the eye while providing a dynamic character to the paintings. Melancholy and solitude are Sabir's companions. The appearance of a heavy dark corner of a rectangle with contrasted relatively light central brush strokes in the compositions become a liberation of sorts.

Robert Herrick and said he thinks of the "fragrance not the flower." Then painting is both a physical and cerebral activity, a conduit for intellectual and philosophical enquiry. Whether employing strong linear elements, by turns painterly or rich bursts of colour, his work corrals diverse influences within a signature abstract language, often collapsing traditional distinctions.

His central and peripheral brushstrokes lend tonality. Each inclination of the brush produces shifts in technique and colouration, all of which encourage the composition to smoothen, expand and condense, turn dense and light at the same time.

The works lay bare the principles of light, colour and movement. We can understand why Sayed Haider Raza bought one of Sabir's works from a show in London. Their abstract element lets the viewer submerge himself in sheer solitude.

BRUSQUE BRUSHSTROKES Sabir quoted poet

Photo: Sabir Sardar Studio, Mumbai

A glimpse of hope

Shot during the lockdown, a documentary, *COVID-19: India's War Against The Virus*, captures key moments and developments that shaped India's fight against the pandemic

The pandemic has impacted almost all of us in innumerable ways. Each one of us now have a story to share, especially the ones who are the forefront, fighting the deadly virus. Shot during the period of lockdown, a documentary, *COVID-19: India's War Against The Virus*, traverses across the nation mapping the pandemic and telling the story through interviews with subject matter experts, front line workers, patients, migrant workers, and others working tirelessly behind the scenes to arrest the spread of this deadly disease.

It provides a glimpse into all the key steps being taken across the country to battle the Coronavirus pandemic. The documentary follows both, the global and the Indian timeline, of how the virus spread and the key developments that have taken place ever since India's first Coronavirus victim was detected in Kerala.

The film will also shed light on the innovations and the way technology is being used to combat the virus. The Hindi voiceover for which will be provided by Bollywood actor Manoj Bajpayee and the Tamil voiceover by writer, director, actor Gautham Vasudev Menon.

It features scientists, doctors, ministers and government officials on the forefront of the Coronavirus battle including: Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Science and Technology; Earth Sciences, Government of India, K VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, Bill Gates, Co-Chair and Trustee, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, World Health Organisation, South-East Asia Region, Satyendra Jain, Health Minister, Government of Delhi, K K Shailaja, Health Minister,



Government of Kerala, Rajesh Tope, Health Minister, Government of Maharashtra, Economist Arun Kumar, Dr Rajesh Malhotra, Chief, AIIMS Trauma Centre, Delhi, Dr Atanu Basu, Deputy Director, National Institute of Virology, Dr Shiv Kumar Sarin, Chairperson, Delhi COVID-19 Task Force, Journalist Sanket Upadhyay, along with Sonu Sood, the Bollywood actor who has extensively worked on ground to help the migrant workers during the pandemic.

"Meaningful cinema and projects have always endeared me, and I believe specials like *COVID-19 India's War Against The Virus*, are relevant not just for today but will continue to engage our future generations as well," said Bajpayee. "This is an important story and needs to be told in an impactful manner. I target to bring all my experience into play for the narration in Hindi."

"The fact that we all have been directly impacted by the pandemic makes this project different from others. You almost relive part of your life as the reels go by but at the same time the documentary shines light on so much that you weren't aware of. That is

why documentaries, as an entertainment tool, in my view, will always have a special pride of place," said, Writer-Director-Actor Gautham Vasudev Menon. "It is a valiant effort. I could not have asked for a better debut as a narrator, especially in my mother tongue Tamil, and coincidentally this marks my first documentary ever."

"The documentary will help Indian audience understand deeper perspectives. It captures key moments, developments that shaped India's fight against COVID over the past few months," said, Megha Tata, Managing Director - South Asia, Discovery. "There's more at work than what meets the eye as new challenges unfold every day with pandemic raging fire; our attempt is to bring it all together with a line-up of prominent experts and officials to provide a comprehensive view."

The other three documentaries which explore this deadly disease include *Invisible Killer*, *Pandemic Covid-19* and *The Zoo: Covid-19 and Animals*.

(The documentary, available in 7 languages, premieres on July 20 at 8 pm on Discovery Channel and Discovery Channel HD.)

Barca stay in title race



Barcelona's Lionel Messi celebrates his goal before it is cancelled during La Liga match against Villarreal on Sunday

AFP ■ VILLARREAL
Antoine Griezmann answered his critics in style on Sunday by scoring with a sensational chip as Barcelona thrashed Villarreal 4-1 to keep their faint La Liga title hopes alive.

After the humiliation of being brought on in the 90th minute against his former club Atletico Madrid, Griezmann was back in the starting line-up at La Ceramica and repaid the faith with a stunning

goal, teed up by Lionel Messi. "It was the kind of goal only great players can score," said Barcelona coach Quique Setien. "He played a spectacular match." Messi also laid on a curling Luis Suarez shot into the top corner after Gerard Moreno cancelled out a Pau Torres own-goal that had put Barca in front. Ansu Fati then added a fourth late on.

An impressive victory for Setien's side reduces the gap

to four points behind Real Madrid, who earlier ground out another 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao.

Griezmann had experienced his lowest moment since joining Barcelona on Tuesday in the draw against Atletico but this was the perfect response. He celebrated his goal by sharing a warm embrace with Messi.

Villarreal looked a difficult opponent after winning five games out of six since the restart, a run that has put them in in touching

Messi will finish career at Barca: Bartomeu

VILLARREAL: Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu has said that Lionel Messi will end his career at the Catalan club, dismissing a report saying the Argentine no longer wishes to renew his current contract when it expires next year. "Messi has said he will end his working and footballing life at

Barca," Bartomeu told Spanish network *Movistar* after his side beat Villarreal. "I'm not going to explain the details because we are focused on the competition and we are negotiating with many players but Messi has explained to us that he wants to stay and so we're going to enjoy him for much longer."

The 33-year-old Messi, who signed his last contract in 2017, has become more outspoken against the club's hierarchy in the last year and radio station *Cadena Ser* said last Thursday he is unhappy with how Barca is being run and wants to leave in 2021. **Agencies**

distance of the top four. This defeat leaves them three points behind Sevilla, who play Eibar on Monday. The first half was perhaps the most entertaining in La Liga since the restart, with four goals and chances for two or three more.

Barca were ahead within three minutes, Torres diverting Jordi Alba's cross into his own net under pressure from Griezmann at the near post.

But Villarreal were level 11 minutes later as a superb pass from Samuel Chukwueze sent Paco Alcacer scampering in down the right and he did brilliantly to switch to Santi Cazorla on the opposite side.

Cazorla's drive was parried but only to Moreno, who finished. Messi laid on two sumptuous assists before half-time but the fin-

ishes were even better. After chesting the ball down in the centre circle, Messi touched and turned, leaving his marker for dead. He drove through two Villarreal defenders before pushing the ball left to Suarez, who arrived from the angle on the edge of the box and curled first time into the far corner.

If that was power, Griezmann's was finesse, Messi and Suarez combining before Messi dragged back to the Frenchman, who caressed a delightful chip over Sergio Asenjo and in.

Messi thought he had his goal in the second half but Arturo Vidal was offside. Suarez was taken off, presumably rested, and Fati added a fourth off the bench. The teenager cut in from the left and pulled his shot back inside the near post.

SAINTS STUN CITY

AFP ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola admitted his side cannot lose games in the manner they did in going down 1-0 at Southampton on Sunday if they are to take the Premier League title back from Liverpool next season.

City lost for the ninth time in the league this season as Che Adams's spectacular first Southampton goal condemned Guardiola's men to defeat despite enjoying 74% possession and 26 shots at goal.

"We played really well, but it was a little bit the resumé of this season. We make one mistake, they punish us," said Guardiola. "We lost a lot of games and losing a lot of games you cannot compete to win Premier Leagues. We need to improve because it happened many times this season."

Just four days ago City showed what they are capable of when at their best by thrashing newly-crowned champions Liverpool 4-0. But defeat on the south coast sees the Reds regain their 23-point lead at the top of the table.

Guardiola, though, insisted his plan to get back on top does not involve a summer spending spree on new players.

"No, I don't think so," added the Catalan when asked if new signings were the key to a change in fortunes.

"I think we played good. The desire, the character to play until the end was



Southampton's manager Ralph Hasenhuetel celebrates with his player's Kyle Walker-Peters, left, and Ryan Bertrand, right after win

there, we put Southampton with 10 players in the penalty spot, so we did really well. When you review the games and the chances we created you cannot do more. I like the way we played but it is not enough."

Adams has endured a nightmare run in front of goal since a \$18.7 million move from Birmingham a year ago. But on his 30th appearance for Southampton, he caught City goalkeeper Ederson stranded well outside his area from fully 40 yards out.



New Zealand offers to host IPL after UAE and Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI: New Zealand is the latest country after UAE and Sri Lanka which has offered to host the IPL in case the billion dollar league can't be held in India due to rising cases of coronavirus.

The postponement announcement of the T20 World Cup, to be held in October-November in Australia, is imminent, creating a window for the IPL.

The BCCI has already reviewed on the end Sept-early November window for the IPL. The board's first choice is staging the tournament at home but that is looking increasingly unlikely with India having the third largest case load of coronavirus cases.

"Staging the event in India has to be the first choice but in case it is not safe to have it, then we will look at the overseas options. After UAE and Sri Lanka, New Zealand has also offered to host the IPL," a senior BCCI official said.

"We will sit down with all stakeholders (broadcaster, teams, etc) and take a call. The safety of the players is paramount.

There will be no compromise on that," the official said.

The IPL has been held overseas in the past. The entire 2009 edition was staged in South Africa due to the general election back home and partially in the UAE in 2014 due to the same reason.

However in 2019, despite elections, the BCCI managed to schedule the IPL in India avoiding clashing with poll dates in various states.

The UAE again is the front-runner to host the tournament if it happens overseas. Sri Lanka is a cost-effective option while New Zealand, which has been largely free from Covid-19, faces feasibility issues.

With New Zealand, India has a seven and half hour time difference and even if the game starts at 12:30 pm in the afternoon, maximum office-goers (even those who work from home) will miss the action.

Apart from Hamilton and Auckland, which can be covered by road, places like Wellington, Christchurch, Napier or Dunedin will require air travel. **PTI**

ISL approves 4 foreign players regulation for 2021-22 season



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Super League on Monday approved 3+1 foreign player regulation for matches of the franchise-based event, bringing it down from the existing five to boost "increased participation" of local players.

The regulation will become part of the competition guidelines from the eighth season in 2021-22.

The decision was taken during a Football Sports Development Ltd (FSDL) meeting attended by its chairperson Nita Ambani and is being communicated with the stakeholders including clubs and the All

India Football Federation (AIFF).

As per the new regulation, an ISL club could sign maximum of six foreigners in the squad including a compulsory Asian origin player, with four foreigners on the field.

The 3+1 foreign player rules are governed by the Asian Football Confederation competition regulation.

The move is expected to boost increased participation of Indian players in the top-flight competition. Currently an ISL club is allowed to sign up to seven International players and play a maximum of five on the field. **PTI**

ISL 7 to be held behind closed doors

New Delhi: The seventh Indian Super League is set to be held behind closed doors from November to March and it is likely to be restricted to two states in view of the Covid-19 pandemic with Goa and Kerala emerging as frontrunners.

"The league will be held behind closed doors for sure and the dates are from November to March. Kerala, Goa, West Bengal and Northeast were discussed as the likely states but Goa and Kerala can be said as the frontrunners at this point of time," a source said. "The plan is to host in one or two states across multiple venues."

Both Goa and Kerala are better placed than many other states at the moment as far as the Covid-19 situation is concerned, and that makes it "favourable" for the organisers to host the league there.

In the northeastern region, Aizawl, Imphal, Shillong, Guwahati and Gangtok were discussed as probable venues while Kolkata was also part of the discussion. **PTI**

AFP ■ LEICESTER

Brendan Rodgers says Jamie Vardy's decision to stay at Leicester has cemented his legacy at the King Power Stadium after the striker joined the Premier League's "100 club".

The striker turned down the chance to join Arsenal in 2016, just weeks after spearheading the Foxes' Premier League title success.

Other members of that Leicester team including N'Golo Kante, Riyad Mahrez and Danny Drinkwater made big-money moves.

On Saturday Vardy, 33, scored his 100th Premier League goal, 206 games after becoming the first £1 million (\$1.25 million) signing from a non-league club (Fleetwood Town) when he joined Leicester in 2012.

Of the 29 players to have become Premier League centurions, only Ian Wright (28 years 286 days) made his debut in the



competition at an older age than Vardy (27 years 232 days). Leicester manager Rodgers said: "I think as things stand he's a legend here now for the rest of his time at the club — it's just what he adds to that status over the rest of his career."

"It's hard to knock players if they do want to move on because their careers are so short but he's obviously felt really comfortable."

Aussies told to get ready for Eng series

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

The Australian cricket team, which started outdoor training, has been told to get ready for a white-ball series against England in September as the ICC T20 World Cup is expected to be postponed this week, according to a media report here.

"Cricket's World Cup is set to be officially postponed this week as Australia's players are told to start preparing for comeback battle against England," Australian newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* reported.

The report also stated that if Cricket Australia decides on allowing its players to play in the IPL, "The ideal scenario would be they could go straight from the England limited overs series to wherever the T20 league is held in Middle East or Asia."

The Australian team is, therefore, now preparing for ODIs and T20s against England in an away series.

Federer hopes to play Wimbledon next year

AFP ■ PARIS

Roger Federer on Monday said he is "missing" Wimbledon after the grass-court Grand Slam was cancelled, but hopes to play the tournament in 2021.

The 38-year-old, who has undergone two knee surgeries this year, had already announced he will not play again until next year.

This week was scheduled to be the second week of Wimbledon, where Federer has won a record eight men's singles titles, but the tournament was cancelled for the first time since World War II due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Personally, it has been very pleasant to stay in the same place for a long time, I hadn't experienced that for more than 25 years," Federer said at the launch of the *Roger Federer Center Court* running shoes created by *Swiss brand On*.

"But of course I miss Wimbledon, of course I would like to be there currently playing on Centre Court for a place in the second week."

"Clearly, one of my big goals, and that's why I do recovery work every day and work so hard, and why I'm preparing for a 20-week physical preparation block this year, is because I hope to play at Wimbledon next year."

Federer also said the coronavirus lockdown gave him the chance to recuperate following surgery, but said he will have to be "patient" as he waits to return to the court.



IPL shouldn't be played during T20 WC window, feels Inzamam

PTI ■ KARACHI

Former Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq has said that questions will be raised if Indian Premier League is slated in the window allotted to ICC T20 World Cup in Australia, which in all likelihood will be cancelled in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

The ICC is yet to decide the fate of the T20 World Cup in Australia which is scheduled to take place from October 18 to November 15.

"There are rumors that the World Cup was clashing with the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Australia-India series, therefore, it (T20 World Cup) won't take place," Inzamam said in his *YouTube* channel.

"The Indian board is strong and has control in the International Cricket



Council (ICC). If Australia says that we cannot hold the World Cup because of the Covid-19 pandemic, then their stance will be easily accepted, but if any such kind event happens during the same time, then questions will be raised," he said.

The 50-year-old former batsman, who has scored 8830 runs in 120 Tests and 11739 runs in 378 ODIs for Pakistan, further said: "People will think, if a country could host 12 to 14 teams (16 teams), then why the ICC should not look after the teams, after all Australia is such an advanced country."

"Another thing is the ICC should not be allowed to give priority to private leagues (IPL) on Int'l cricket. This will lead to young players forcing on private leagues other than Int'l matches."

The former coach, however, agreed that it is not easy to host 16 nations during the T20 World Cup.

"Australia can say that it was difficult for it to manage 18 teams (16) for the

mega event as it is not easy. Likewise, the Pakistan team was in England in a hotel and all the facilities were being provided there, therefore, it has not been easy to manage 18 teams (16)," he said.

The fate of Asia Cup which PCB will be hosting in a neutral country for security reason is also an issue as no one knows the fate of the tournament originally scheduled in September.

Inzamam said: "I have also heard that objections are also raised on the dates of the Asia Cup as it is clashing with some other event."

"The ICC, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and all cricket boards should sit together and give a strong message that any such kind of impression (giving priority to private leagues instead of international cricket), won't take place," he said.

Broad could miss 1st Test

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Senior England pacer Stuart Broad might be dropped from the playing XI for the first Test against West Indies starting on Wednesday with Jofra Archer and Mark Wood being tipped to partner James Anderson.

According to a report in *The Guardian*, "Broad faces the prospect of missing a first home Test match in eight years as England give serious consideration to unleashing the dual pace of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood at the earliest opportunity."

Both Wood and Archer have had their injury issues but are now match fit.

With only one spinner in offie Dom Bess, Broad's place in the playing XI has come under doubt.

"With no spare batsman in this final group for Wednesday and one spinner, Dom Bess, it leaves the make-up of the seam attack as the only issue still to be



debated by Chris Silverwood, the head coach, and Ben Stokes, his stand-in captain," the paper reported. Even Chris Woakes despite his good show in the intra-squad warm-up game is likely to miss out in the Ageas Bowl game.

Broad last missed a home Test when he was rested against West Indies in 2012 and with 485 Test scalps is only second to Anderson in terms of highest wicket-takers for England.

England head coach Silverwood and stand-in captain Stokes, however, might go for Wood, who is known to bowl at 90 miles per hour.

However with six back-to-back Tests against the Windies and Pakistan, the rotation policy could be used to keep the paces fresh.

"Three back-to-back Tests against West Indies, followed by three more in quick succession versus Pakistan in August, make rotation inevitable this summer and mean the seamers who miss out first up may not be on the sidelines for long," the paper reported.

Don't need Test captaincy pressure at moment: De Kock



PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's limited over skipper Quinton de Kock didn't want Test captaincy as "extra pressure" of leading the team in traditional format would have been "too much stress".

The 27-year-old had replaced Faf du Plessis as ODI skipper in January this year with South Africa's director of cricket Graeme Smith announcing in April that De Kock would not be elevated to Test captaincy.

De Kock said he had a discussion regarding this with coach Mark Boucher.

"Me and Bouch had a very informal chat and I told him, look, I don't know how I feel about being Test captain. The reality is that's just too much for me to handle. I know that and I realise that. I don't need all that stress on myself," he was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricinfo*.

"I could see from a mile away that I didn't need that on top of my shoulders. I'm wanting to come up the order in Test cricket and so I don't need all that extra pressure."

PCB struggling to find team sponsors

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is feeling the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as it has failed to find a main sponsor for the national team which is presently in England.

A well-placed source in the PCB said that negotiations were continuing with the one multi-national beverage company, which had shown interest in signing a new team logo sponsorship deal but had offered an amount far below the expectations of the board's marketing pundits.

He said the company had offered only 35 to 40 percent of the amount it had earlier paid to the board in their last contract.

"It is a problem but negotiations are still on but it is becoming clear that the coronavirus outbreak has even hit the multinational companies badly," he said.



The PCB's marketing department has also failed to find sponsors for its revised domestic structure and for the second season running it has

been forced to bear all expenses of the 12 provincial teams in the division one and two competitions.

It is also facing problems finding a new broadcaster to buy the rights of Pakistan's International home series after its four-year deal with *Ten* sports expired recently.