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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 156 Issue 179
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY JULY 3, 2020; PAGES 14 ₹3



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₹38,900 cr defence deal OK'd

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

While the MIG-29 procurement and upgradation from Russia is estimated to cost ₹7,418 crore, the SU-30 MKI will be procured from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) at an estimated

cost of ₹10,730 crore," Defence Ministry officials said. These inductions, likely to take over the next two to three years, will shore up the squadron strength of the IAF's fighter fleet.

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

The 12 SU-30 MKIs are

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

The IAF has currently 30 fighter squadrons against a sanctioned strength of 42 squadrons. It will start adding the first batch of Rafale multi-role jets this month end. Another deal for 83 Light Combat Aircraft Mk-1A estimated to cost ₹28,000 crore is expected to be signed in the next two months.

Meanwhile, giving details

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

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

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

On the missile systems, officials said acquisition of Pinaka missile systems will

enable raising additional regiments over and above the ones already inducted by the Army.

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Rajnath defers Leh visit, reviews LAC situation with Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Continued on Page 6

India fastest among top 15 nations in Covid rate

NAVIN UPADHYAY ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

While India took just 20 days to double — from 2,87,154 on June 10 to 5,85,792 on June 30, the USA needed 50 days to double from 12,71,640 on May 10 to 25,376,36 on June 30, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) data.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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12 of Scindia men get ministerial berths in expanded Shivraj Govt

Total 28 inducted into State Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

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

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

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

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

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



Prabhuram Choudhary, Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Pyadyumna Singh Tomar, Hardeep Singh Dang, Rajwardhan Singh Dattigaon, Suresh Dhakad and OPS Bhadoria were sworn in as Ministers of state.

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

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

Over 65 yrs, quarantined corona patients can vote by postal ballots, says EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections in November, the Election Commission on Thursday said that the Ministry of Law and Justice has notified an amendment in the Conduct of Elections (Amendment) Rules 2020 for extending postal ballot facility for electors above the age of 65 years and corona patients under home and institutional quarantine.

The decision has come ahead of the Assembly elections in Bihar, which is expected to be held in October-November and bypolls in Madhya Pradesh on 24 Assembly seats.

People over the age of 65 are particularly vulnerable to the virus, along with pregnant women and those suffering from chronic health conditions including diabetes, hypertension and kidney ailments.

Medical experts and the Government have been continuously discouraging such people from venturing out. This facility will be extended to people infected with coronavirus who are in quarantine.

The postal ballot facility has so far been reserved only for people over the age of 80 and those who are not in their home State.



Earlier, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury had written to EC, saying that from the media reports we are constrained to infer that the tearing hurry that the Election Commission displays is on account of the impending Bihar Assembly elections, scheduled to be held in November this year.

He said our electoral system has always treated the physical verifiability of voters as the bedrock of integrity. "With the two amendments to the Rules, a very large number of voters will be out of the verifiability matrix," he added.

The tenure of the Bihar Assembly is till November 26. Sources said the model code of conduct will be enforced in the first week of September and polling will be held in October-November.

Shah calls for unified strategy in Delhi-NCR, telemedicine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI / LUCKNOW

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) along with Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Shah stressed on the need to have a unified strategy in Delhi-NCR to tackle the pandemic. Analysing the situation, Shah emphasised on the adoption of more testing using Rapid Antigen Test Kits to help reduce infection transmission rate. It was decided in the meeting that these kits can be provided by the Government to UP and Haryana.

Other areas which were discussed - focus on early hospitalisation to reduce mortality rates and extensive use of Aarogya Setu and Iitahaas App to help mapping of Covid in NCR.

In the meeting, it was also decided that UP and Haryana can avail AIIMS-Telemedicine consultation through which patients will get advice from experts while small hospitals in both states can take guidance from AIIMS through tele-video-graphy.

Soon after the meeting, Spokesperson, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) tweeted, "A meeting was held today by HM Shri @AmitShah to review



management of #COVID19 situation in NCR..."

In Lucknow, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has suggested that as the traffic between Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) is regular and heavy, asymptomatic COVID-19 patients should be kept in hospitals under the watchful eyes of doctors as they can pose a big threat of community transmission of the virus.

"There is need to control the movement of asymptomatic patients. Therefore, it is mandatory that they be kept in hospitals so that we may check community transmission (of the coronavirus)," Yogi Adityanath said during a virtual meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah that was also attended by the chief ministers of Haryana and Delhi on Thursday.

He said all the district hospitals had TruNat machines which could detect COVID-19 patient in two hours. "This facility has helped in treatment of non-Covid patients, he said."

India wins case against 2 Italian marines

They were accused of shooting down Indian fishermen in Kerala in 2012

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has won its case against the two Italian marines who were accused of shooting down Indian fishermen in Kerala in 2012. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India has won the Italian marines case at the international tribunal — the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague.

The marines were in violation of the international laws

but enjoy immunity. Actions of the Italian military breached India's right and India is entitled for compensation from Italy for loss of lives, it said.

The two Italian marines were held violating international law and as a result Italy breached India's freedom of navigation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Tribunal ruled.

The Arbitral Tribunal was constituted under Annexure VII of UNCLOS on June 26, 2015 and the last hearing in the case was made in July last year. The constitution of the tribunal was based on Italy's request in respect of the dispute concerning the shooting incident of February 15, 2012,



involving Italian tanker 'Enrica Lexie' and Indian fishing vessel 'St. Antony'." The case refers two Italian marines — Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre — who were accused of shooting two Indian fishermen off Kerala coast in 2012.

The major bone of contention between India and Italy was on the issue of jurisdiction

to try the accused Italian marines. While India contended that it had jurisdiction over the case as the fishermen killed were Indians and accordingly the case must be tried as per Indian laws.

Italy claimed that the shooting took place outside Indian territorial waters and its marines were on-board a ship with Italian flag and Rome enjoyed jurisdiction over the case. India had contested the claim that the shooting occurred outside Indian territorial waters.

The Italians also claimed that they were in international waters and acted to protect an Italian oil tanker as part of an anti-piracy mission.

Continued on Page 6

Pvt trains likely from April 2023

Ticket fares in these trains will be competitive with airfares on similar routes

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways has announced operation of private trains in the country by April 2023, and the ticket fares in these trains will be competitive with airfares on similar routes.

Addressing a Press conference online, Railway Board Chairman VK Yadav said train sets have to be brought by pri-

private operators and maintained by them. Private train operations are likely to begin by April 2023, all coaches will be procured under Make in India policy. Fares in private trains will be competitive and prices on other modes of transport like airlines, buses will have to be kept in mind.

Private players in passenger train operations will mean a quantum jump in technology and coaches that run at higher speeds, he said.

"The introduction of private players would also mean that trains will be available on demand and that passenger waitlists will decrease. The private operators will also pay fixed haulage charges for path, stations, access to railway infra-



structure and charges for electricity consumed. It will also share revenue with Indian Railways through competitive bidding," he said.

The private entity has to ensure 95 per cent punctuality and record not more than

one failure per lakh kilometre of travel.

"The improvement in technology will also mean that the coaches that now require maintenance after running 4,000 km, will need maintenance after every 40,000-km, that is either once or twice a month. If any performance indicators are not met by private players in passenger train operations they will be penalised," said Yadav.

He also said there will be a power meter in every locomotive and private operators will pay for the actual amount of energy consumed. The move will encourage them to keep their energy consumption low, he added.

Continued on Page 6

CM: Better surveillance to arrest corona spike

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Expressing concern over rising number of coronavirus positive cases in Meerut division, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked heads of departments and district authorities to work on improving surveillance to arrest the spike.

"House-to-house survey for surveillance was started in six districts of Meerut division on Thursday and it should be done strictly following all norms," the chief minister directed officials during his routine Team 11 meeting in Lucknow on Thursday.

While 7,485 teams are conducting surveys in six districts, the chief minister asked officials to double the number of teams to 15,000 so that the work could be completed in the next 10 days.

A total of 2,375 gram and 1,516 mohalla nigrahi samitis

would assist health department teams during the surveillance drive in Meerut division.

Also, coronavirus screening drive started in six major districts of Meerut division — Gautam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad, Bulandshahr, Hapur, Baghpat and Meerut. The first two districts reported the maximum number of coronavirus positive cases in recent weeks. The state government has also gone for rapid antigen tests in these districts and 50,000 additional kits have been provided for instant testing. The chief minister said that all citizens of the state would be screened under the initiative.

Testing has also seen an encouraging rise across the state, with more than 25,000 samples being tested daily as of now.

The number of beds for COVID-19 patients has also been increased. There are now 1.51 lakh beds for the purpose. Briefing media persons

about the meeting, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Awasthi said that the chief minister directed all districts to set up quarantine centres where people identified with coronavirus symptoms during the surveillance drive could be put up till their test reports were received.

The state has already notified over 1.51 lakh Covid beds in the state. The chief minister also requested the Centre and ICMR to allow private hospitals in the state to go for TruNat machines to test patients for coronavirus infection.

"This will also help a lot in giving treatment to non-Covid patients," the chief minister said. Awasthi said that over 1,000 Covid helpdesks had been set up in Meerut division.

He said that there were 2,716 hotspots under 797 police stations with a population of over 53 lakh across the state.

Maurya releases ₹5.6 cr more for road laying



Lucknow (PNS): To further add momentum to development work across the state, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya who holds the PWD portfolio, released Rs 5.63 crore for laying roads under Pandit Deem Dayal Upadhyaya Connecting Road Projects on Thursday.

Under the project, 10 connecting roads will be laid in Sitapur, six in Fatehpur, nine in Prayagraj, three in Shravasti, two in Gorakhpur and one in Bahraich. On Wednesday too, Maurya had released Rs 150 crore for seven ongoing projects after procuring the funds as loan from Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Demand to announce PGV as CM candidate

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The demand to announce Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as the chief ministerial candidate of the party for the next UP assembly election once again gained momentum after the Central government served notice on her to vacate her house in New Delhi.

Majority of leaders in UP are of the view that now Priyanka Gandhi Vadra should shift her base to Lucknow to regain power in the state in the next election.

"The door to forming government at the Centre goes in Uttar Pradesh, which has the maximum 80 Lok Sabha seats, so it is high time that Priyanka should accept the challenge and project herself as the chief ministerial candidate of the party in the assembly elections slated for 2022. This will revive the party in UP before the next parliamentary elections in 2014," said a former president of UPCC on condition of anonymity.

"The coming of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on the front would also unite the party in UP that is presently divided into two camps, one of the newcomers who are Ajay Kumar Lallu's loyalists and the other of old warriors of the party who have spent more than three decades in Congress but are now not even getting due respect," the leader said, while stressing that instead of working through Lallu, Priyanka should shift to Lucknow and take over the fight with the government.

Another senior leader who was a minister during United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime, said the way Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's aggression during lockdown, especially in dealing with problems of migrants, had upset Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, and to some extent Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, indicated that Congress had equal opportunity in the next election to grab power if Priyanka fought from the front. "The best chance for the

Congress will emerge if it gets a big chunk of the Muslim-Dalit vote. This will make it an attractive bet for undecided voters, including OBCs who may be looking beyond the BJP and SP," the leader said, adding that the scare in even Yogi Adityanath government over rising popularity of Priyanka was another pointer that BJP feared shift of its upper caste vote bank.

"But for that to happen, the Congress cadre in Uttar Pradesh need to start believing in their party and themselves. So far there is no proof on the ground that Priyanka has made a noticeable impact. Setting up a permanent base in Lucknow is a signal that she means business and the party has also a more inspiring chief ministerial face than that of SP and BSP whom the people have already seen in the past and are upset with their performances, he added.

"At present I cannot say whether she will stay in Lucknow it will be announced once she decides," UP Congress

Chief Ajay Kumar Lallu told a new agency while replying whether Priyanka Gandhi Vadra would shift her base to the state capital.

He had, however, noted that it was the wish of every Congressman in UP that Priyanka should move to Lucknow and lead the battle.

Another senior Congress leader, PL Punia, had also reiterated that the final decision regarding shifting her base would be taken by Gandhi.

Sources said that Priyanka, who has already made her maternal aunt's house as her base in Lucknow, might shift here as the central government has asked her to vacate her government bungalow in Delhi's Lodhi Estate by August 1 next, as she is no longer an SPG protectee.

During the past one year, Priyanka has stayed several times in the house. The Lucknow house of Priyanka, known as Kaul House, belonged to former prime minister Indira Gandhi's maternal aunt Sheila Kaul.

UP's Corona recovery rate nearly 70 pc, better than national

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

At a time when authorities are grappling to arrest coronavirus spread in west UP, the state government claimed that recovery of COVID-19 patients in UP was almost 70 per cent, 10 per cent more than the national average.

Additional Chief Secretary (Health) Amit Mohan Prasad said on Thursday that the recovery rate of COVID-19 patients in the state had touched the 69.36 per

cent-mark which was considerably higher than the national average of 59.43 per cent and was hence it was an achievement.

The additional chief secretary said that there were 6,869 active cases in the state while the number of recovered patients stood at 17,221 which included 592 discharged from hospitals on Thursday.

At present, there are 6,874 people in isolation wards of Covid hospitals and 4,495 in institutional quarantine across the state.

"On Wednesday, 24,890 Covid tests were carried out in the state. With this total number of tests done stood at more than 7.81 lakh tests. Of the total tests done on Wednesday, 1,779 were 5-sample pool tests and 195 10-sample pool tests," he said.

Prasad also informed that Covid helpdesks had started showing positive results and at 6,500 helpdesks, 2,553 persons were identified with symptoms of coronavirus and were now being tested.

CITY BRIEFS

SBI FOUNDATION DAY



On the occasion of the 65th foundation day of State Bank of India, the bank organised many programmes. In the morning, chief general manager Ajay Kumar Khanna felicitated esteemed doctors — RK Saran from Cardiology department of Medanta Hospital, Sharad Chandra Yadav from Lari Cardiology, D Himanshu, (KGMU) and Bhuvan Chandra Tiwari (RML Hospital) and extended his best wishes on the occasion of Doctors' Day. He also donated 250 PPE kits to RML Hospital and 15 ventilators to six different hospitals at Prayagraj, Jhansi, Shahjampur, Gorakhpur, Varanasi and Kanpur. As many as 25,000 masks were also distributed among the customers by different branches in the state. Khanna also inaugurated mobile ATMs at Lucknow and Bareilly through video-conferencing. He planted 101 saplings at Lucknow-Ayodhya NH near Indira canal, in collaboration with National Highways Authority. Meritorious students were felicitated and SME branches at Barabanki and Ayodhya were also inaugurated by Khanna.

BBAU DIRECTIVES

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and on the basis of UGC guidelines, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University

has told the UG & PG students that they are not required to come to the university till further orders by its administration. MPhil, PhD and project staff have also been told by the administration not to come to the university before July 15. "Further work will be done on the basis of UGC guidelines and circumstances. The decision has been taken by the BBAU administration keeping in mind the current state of affairs," media spokesperson Rachna Gangwar said.

ONLINE CLASSES

Regular online classes have started in City Montessori School with the onset of new academic session. The excitement can be gauged by full attendance of students. Parents are also giving positive response to the e-learning method of CMS. The classes are held according to time-table so that students do not find any difficulty in time, duration and curriculum. For the convenience of students and parents, all the information regarding online classes, book list, syllabus and time table, etc is available on the website (www.cmseducation.org). Principals of all CMS campuses are managing the learning process, lesson plan and ways to make online teaching more interesting for the students and motivate them for e-learning. They are also focussing on the students who are weak in any particular subject and analysing the progress of each and every student.

AKTU NOT TO OPEN ON JULY 6

Dr Abdul Kalam Technical University will not be reopening for the new session, which was scheduled from July 6. AKTU media spokesperson Ashish Mishra said the decision was taken keeping in mind the new guidelines of UGC regarding the coronavirus pandemic and Unlock 2.0.

BJP targeting Cong workers, says Lallu

Lucknow (PNS): UP Congress Committee chief Ajay Kumar Lallu slammed the Yogi Adityanath government, saying that Bharatiya Janata Party leaders, who once spied for Britishers, were now using the police and intelligence agencies to spy on the Congress. Lallu claimed that Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's activism in UP was bothering the ruling BJP and hence they were trying to break the party workers' spirit. He also alleged that the Yogi government was getting restless over the increasing influence of Congress and was hence using arrests as a weapon to scare party workers. "It has been a month since police were stationed outside the Mall Avenue Congress office gates till late in the night. What were they doing there?" Lallu sought to know while addressing media persons at the state Congress office on Thursday.

Termining the recent arrest of Shah Nawaz Alam as 'illegal, undemocratic and condemnable', Lallu said the suppressive government would not be able to silence committed Congress workers and leaders. "Congress leaders and workers are committed to raising their voice on issues relating to common man, come what may. The BJP government can use the police to oppress and silence the voice of other parties, but not ours," he said, adding that Congress workers were being sent to jail by implicating them in fake cases and were being subjected to oppression across the state, at the behest of Yogi government.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by the undersigned for and on behalf of LIC Housing Finance Ltd. Area Office, Sitapur Road, Lucknow pursuant to Circular No. 422/Annexure-E of LIC HFL that the Original Sale deed dated 15.05.2001 executed by Uttar Pradesh Awas Ewam Vikash Parishad Lucknow in favour of Asha Ram Chaudhary S/o Kalendra Chaudhary. The said sale deed is registered in the office of Sub Registrar IInd Lucknow in Book No. 1, Volume 3328 on pages 227/240 Serial No. 9431 dt. 15-05-2001 in respect to House No. 5/304 area 60.59 sq. mtr. Situated at Sector-5, Vikas Nagar, Lucknow. has been lost by its Present owner Shesh Kumar S/o Shalendra Kumar Verma and Neelam & Raj Kishore Verma has applied for housing loan for which has proposed the said property to be mortgaged by depositing Affidavit Original sale deed dated 15.05.2001 with LIC HFL and as such any person claiming to be the said property covered by the said document may file claim before me within 15 days from the date of publication of notice failing which it will be presumed that the property in question is free from any encumbrance and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as mortgages shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 days of publication of the notice.

Mahendra Mohan Mishra, Advocate
Chamber: No. 4 & 5, Ground Floor, Krishna Tower, Near CMO Office, Kaiserbagh, Lucknow - 226017
Mob: 9415426914, 9559895554

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Rank no. 5852066 F NK Shruan Kumar Tiwari My Son's name in army record written as Ans Kumar Tiwary. So I want to change the name of my son as Ansh Tiwari.

NOTICE

Notify that I have changed my name from Aleem Khan to Mohd Aleem Khan for all purposes. Mohd Aleem Khan S/o Mohd Saleem Khan 110/126, Naya Gaon Purab, Aminabad Park, Lucknow.

NOTICE

In my Army record, my wife Liawati's birth year is 1960, which is wrong, correct birth year is 1963. ARMY No. 13876694Y Ex-HAV Rajan Singh Sharma C-52 Balajipuram Mathura

NOTICE

In my Army record, my wife's name is Leeladevi, which is incorrect, correct name is Leelawati. ARMY No. 13876694Y Ex-HAV Rajan Singh Sharma C-52 Balajipuram Mathura

Uma Bharti miffed at being ignored in MP cabinet jig

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bharatiya Janata Party leader and former Union minister Uma Bharti expressed unhappiness over the cabinet expansion in Madhya Pradesh, saying that her suggestions were ignored.

Bharti, who appeared before a special CBI court in Lucknow to record her statement in the Ayodhya demolition case on Thursday, said that the caste balance was ignored during the cabinet expansion.

Bharti is accused of inciting a mob to demolish the Babri mosque in Ayodhya.

"I am glad that Jyotiraditya Scindia switched to the BJP along with his colleagues and the Congress was destroyed. But then ignoring my suggestions while forming the cabinet is an insult to all those whom I am associated with," Bharti told media persons.

"I have to speak to Vinay Sahasrabudhe, Suhas Bhagat and VD Sharma to amend the list accordingly," the BJP leader said.

On Thursday, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expanded his cabinet, adding 28 new faces.



Among them were a dozen of Scindia's loyalists while several BJP leaders were ignored.

This is perhaps the first cabinet in Madhya Pradesh where 12 non-MLAs have been included as ministers. All are former Congressmen, mostly from Scindia camp, and were obliged with ministerial berths.

Uma Bharti reiterated that she was ready to die for "Ganga, Tiranga and Gau" as these were the pride of India. She said that she had no regrets for what happened at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, but added that "no one planned to demolish the structure".

Besides Bharti, the court is set to record the statements of BJP honchos including former deputy prime minister LK Advani, former Union minis-

ter MM Joshi and former chief minister of UP, Kalyan Singh, via video conferencing. Earlier on June 29, Sadhvi Rithambara was questioned by the special CBI court over her alleged involvement in the demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya.

Government of India (Min. of Railway)

RESEARCH DESIGNS AND STANDARDS ORGANISATION

Manak Nagar, Lucknow-226 011

1. Open E-Tender Notice No. UTHS-96-2020-01

E-Tender No.: UTHS-96-2020-01 is invited by Director, Urban Transport & High Speed Directorate, RDSO, Manak Nagar, Lucknow for and on behalf of President of India for following Works:

Description of Work	Approx. Cost (Rs.)	EMD Money (Rs.)
Maintenance and Development of Lawns & Gardens and other horticulture works of Engine Development and UTHS Directorates.	Rs. 9,92,077/-	Rs. 19,900/-
Completion time	01 Years	

Tender Document Cost : Rs. 2,000/-

- Manual offers are not allowed in this tender.
- The tenderer must have Class-III Digital Signature certificate & must have registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer can participate in e-tendering.
- Last Date and Time of submission: 05.08.2020 up to 15:00 Hrs.
- Tender Opening Date and Time: 05.08.2020 at 15:30 hrs.
- The tenderer can be viewed at website <https://www.ireps.gov.in>.
- Amendments/Corrigendum, if any, would be hosted on the website <https://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Director/UTHS/Civil
RDSO, Manak Nagar, Lucknow

उत्तर प्रदेश आवास एवं विकास परिषद

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता, वृन्दावन वृत्त, पंचम तल, आफिस कामप्लेक्स, वृन्दावन योजना लखनऊ

E-Mail : circlevrinda@upavp.com

पत्रांक : 1103 / एम-33 / 23 दिनांक-02.07.2020

विज्ञापित

"उपरो आवास एवं विकास परिषद द्वारा विक्रयशीलता की कमी के कारणों से उ0प्र0 रेरा में पंजीकरण परियोजना Construction of 576 Nos. LIG G+3 Type Houses at Sector-13, Vrindavan Yojna No.-4, Lucknow (संख्या-UPRERAPR/15376) को सरन्डर / कैन्सिलेशन / निरस्तीकरण कराने का निर्णय लिया गया है। किसी व्यक्ति / संस्था आदि द्वारा इस परियोजना में यदि कोई बुकिंग करायी गयी हो तो कृपया अपना क्लेम/दावा प्रस्तुत करें। उक्त क्लेम/दावा को विवरण सहित 15 दिनों के अन्दर यूपी रेरा की ई-मेल आई0डी0 contactuprera@up-rera.in पर भेजा जाए तथा क्लेम/दावा विवरण को सचिव, उ0प्र0 रेरा मुख्यालय, नवीन भवन, राज्य नियोजन संस्थान, कालाकांकर हाउस, पुराना हैदराबाद, लखनऊ-226007 को प्रेषित किया जाए।"

सक्षम अधिकारी

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

E-Tendering Tender Notice No.: TMC/CPOH/PRYJ/20-21/01 E-Tender Notice Dated: 29.06.2020

CWM/CPOH/North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following work up to 15.00 hrs. on 31.07.2020. The details of the Tender are as under:-

Tender No. & Name of Work	Approx Cost	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender Form	Completion period
Tender No.:TMC-CPOH-ALD-01-20-21: Overhauling of BCM & FRM machine at CPOH workshop, Prayagraj by repairing various mechanical sub assemblies as per schedule of work.	₹ 2,55,67,413.41	₹ 2,77,800/-	₹ 10,000/-	24 Months

Date of Opening of tender: 31.07.2020, Eligibility Criteria for similar work: Repair/renovation/fabrication work related to any type of track machines. **Note:-1.** The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in up to 15.00 hrs. on the due date of tender opening. **2.** Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act 2000. **3.** Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightly ignored and shall not be considered. **4.** The tenderers shall submit a notarized affidavit on a non judicial stamp paper of ₹ 100/- as given in tender document in standard format, without which their tender will not be considered and may be rejected. **5.** The supplier/contractor of goods and/or services would be subject to GST Act and Rules as applicable from time to time. **6.** Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. **7.** This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. **8.** Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) & Tender Document Cost (TDC) in respect of e-tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. **9.** In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. **10.** Tender online can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs. on 31.07.2020. **72020 (R)**

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPNCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, PRAYAGRAJ

No.: CEN/84/PRYJ/2020-21-01 E-Tender Notice Dated: 29.06.2020

Dy. CE/Const/North Central Railway/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites the following E-Tenders on prescribed form for the following works up to 14.30 hrs. on 31.07.2020. The details of the tenders are as under:

S. N.	Tender No. & Name of work	Approx. cost of work	Earnest Money	Completion period	Eligibility criteria for similar work	Type of tendering
1.	CEN/2020-01: Construction of platforms new/ extension, platform shelter, ramp and stair case for existing FOB, toilets and other developmental works in c/with development of Subdarganj Railway station of Prayagraj division.	₹ 12,97,37,219.15	₹ 7,98,700/-	12 months	Any Civil Engg. Work	Two packet system
2.	CEN/2020-02: Track work including linking of track, insertion/removal of turnouts, supplying and spreading of ballast, deep screening, transportation of PWay materials and other connected PWay activities in connection with Development of Subdarganj station of Prayagraj division.	₹ 5,35,79,840.68	₹ 4,17,900/-	15 months	PWay work	Single packet system
3.	CEN/2020-03: Provision of loop lines which includes Civil work, bridge work and track work in connection with conversion of 'D' class station Vishwanathpuri into 'B' class station between Chunar and Shakteshgarh for splitting of long block section (20.94 km.) of Prayagraj division.	₹ 7,81,80,569.81	₹ 5,41,000/-	18 months	Any Civil Engg. Work	Single packet system

Cost of Tender Form: For S.N. 1 to 3: ₹10,000/- Date of Opening of tender: For S.N. 1 to 3: 31.07.2020. Note:-1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in up to 14.30 on the due date of tender opening i.e. 31.07.2020. **2.** Bids other than in the form of E-bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificates issued by CCA under IT Act 2000. **3.** Payment of earnest money deposit (EMD) and tender document cost (TDC) in respect of E-tendering should be accepted through Net Banking or payment gateway only. **4.** Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form/letter head if attached by vendor shall be straightly ignored and shall not be considered. **5.** Joint Venture (JV)/Consortiums/MOUs shall be considered for the tender having cost more than 10 Cr. **6.** Documents being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. **7.** The tenderers shall submit a certificate as given in tender document in standard format for all items without which their tender may not be considered and shall be summarily rejected. **8.** Each page of the copy of documents/certificates in support of credentials, submitted by the tenderer, shall be self-attested/digitally signed by the tenderer or authorized representative of the tendering firm. Self-attestation shall include signature, stamp and date (on each page). Only those documents which are declared explicitly by the tenderer as "documents supporting the claim qualifying the laid down eligibility criteria", will be considered for evaluation his/their tender. In case of any wrong information submitted by the tenderer, the contract will be terminated, earnest money (EMD), Performance Guarantee (PG and Security Deposit (SD) of contract will be forfeited and agency will be banned for doing business on entire Indian Railways for five (5) years. **9.** GST Act & rules issued from time to time by the Government authorities shall be applicable. **10.** In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. **11.** Tender online can be submitted up to 14.30 hrs. on 31.07.2020 and will be opened at 15.00 hrs. on same day. **71920 (R)**

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @ CPNCR

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

37 more diagnosed with Covid-19

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Thirty-seven more persons were diagnosed with Covid-19 in the city on Thursday, included 12 women. In the state, 817 people tested positive for coronavirus, taking the total number of patients to 25,059. CMO Dr Narendra Agarwal said those who tested positive in the city included three each in Jankipuram & Saadatganj, four in Vikasnagar, two each in Rajajipuram, Eldeco Colony & LDA Colony, and one each in Vrindavan Yojana, Kursi Road, Triveninagar, Balaganj, Sarojini Naidu Marg, Indira Nagar, Maqboolganj, Faridinagar, Cantt, BKT, Gomti Nagar, Rajendranagar, Ruchi Khand, Jopling road, Mahanagar, Malihabad and Alamnagar.

As many as 18 CMO teams, along with six supervisors, carried out a drive in 1,787 houses, covering 7,404 people. As many as 704 samples were collected under contact tracing and sent to KGMU for testing. A total of 26 patients recovered in the city, including nine at KGMU, five at SGPGL, three at LBRN, eight at RML and 1 at RSM hospitals.

Twelve new areas were made the containment zones while two areas ceased to hotspots. The new containment zones are 195 Sadar Bazaar, 41/455 Narhi, 548/C-640 Rajajipuram, 551 Alambagh, Kamalbad Badaoli, Satyalok Colony, 46 Cantt road, 1/98 Vipul Khand, F-22 Narayanpuri, G-222 South City and A-1036 Indira Nagar.

Among the 817 new patients in the state, 129 tested positive in Ghaziabad, 116 in Noida, 29 in Mathura and 49 in Bareilly. There were 17 deaths in the state, including one each in Agra, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Ferozabad, Moradabad, Varanasi, Bulandshahr, Ghazipur, Sambhal, Amroha, Bareilly, Baghpat, Etah and two in Jhansi, taking the death toll to 735 cases. As many as 593 patients recovered, taking the figure to 17,221.



Sanitisation drive inside high court premises in Kaiserbagh after a case was detected

Pioneer

City way ahead in number of tests

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The maximum number of tests for coronavirus have been carried out in Lucknow, which is leading other districts by a huge margin. According to Chief Medical Officer Dr Narendra Agarwal, a total of 54,000 tests have been conducted till now, which is one per cent of the total population of the district.

"It's a good figure and other districts of the state are not doing even 50 per cent of the tests which Lucknow is carrying out. Currently, we are carrying out 1,200-1,300 tests per day and we intend to increase this capacity to 1,500 tests per day," he said.

The CMO said the antibody tests will be first carried out only by KGMU as of now and later other institutes will be roped in, as per the Health department plan. "It all depends on the results and how effective they are," he said.

Dr Agarwal said the teams formed for the door-to-door survey, starting on July 5, will also be given thermal scanners and pulse oximeters. "With the thermal scanners, the teams will check the fever and with the help of pulse oximeter, they will check the amount of oxygen in the lungs of patients having co-morbidities," he added.

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A senior official from the CMO office said that in the contact surveillance, a call centre employee who tested positive for coronavirus used abusive language when the mandatory information was being sought from him and they had to take the help of local police. "When we tried to get information from him, he started abusing us and we had to call local police to help us out. We then came to know about his family and that there were 15 members in his family who needed to be tested," he added.

The official said when the person, who is now admitted at RSM hospital, was contacted, he made excuses and claimed that he had not answered the call. The official said they had to face many challenges in contact surveillance and it was one of them.

Meanwhile, media spokesperson of Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital Dr Srikesh said that people from eastern parts of the district, who have been regular visitors to the hospital for treatment, have resumed their visits after lockdown.

"Nearly 50-70 per cent of the patients have returned to the hospital which includes emergency services, semi-emergency services and follow-ups which had been held up because of the lockdown," he said.

He pointed out that people from Faizabad, Gonda, Deoria and Gorakhpur are regular visitors to the hospital because of its services and also because of close proximity to polytechnic highway. Dr Srikesh said they ensure proper precautions since patients come from other districts.

"We do double screening and details are taken from the areas which they are coming from and then we also both the patients and their attendants," he said. Drug inspector Brijesh Kumar said 50 per cent of the current sale comprises that of thermal scanners, oximeters and PPE kits. "Now since all the shops and malls have opened, pulse oximeters are being purchased by the shopowners," he added.

A member of Central Bar Association said that after their vice-president tested positive for coronavirus, all his contacts were tested and their reports came out negative. Meanwhile, SGPGL director Dr RK Dhiman said they are conducting a poster competition for two categories — those below 12 years and others in the age group of 12-18 years. "Those who can participate are the children of employees and domestic help. The winner and first & second runner-ups will get Rs 7,000, Rs 5,000 and Rs 3,000 respectively," he added.

'Ayurveda helps patients get better in less time'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lok Bandhu Hospital's research on the impact of Ayurveda products and drugs on coronavirus has just concluded and the results show that they help patients test negative sooner. Director Dr DS Negi said the research shows that since these products boost immunity, the patients get better earlier. The research was carried out with three sets of Covid-19 patients.

"The first group was given Ayurvedic drugs while the other natural Ayurveda products like ginger, garlic, hot water while the third was the control group that was given none of these products," he pointed out.

He said the results showed that Ayurveda drugs and products had the right effects. The results showed that the Covid-19 patients get well in five to six days sooner with Ayurveda drugs and its products in natural forms. Between Ayurveda

drugs and its products in natural form, the impact was almost equal with drugs doing a shade better," he said. The study, which started in April, concluded in June.

Many Ayurveda experts recommend that boosting immunity is necessary for prevention from coronavirus and Ayurveda mentions many things which can be used for the same. An expert said that the best prevention is to put two drops of mustard oil or desi ghee in the nostrils.

"Giloy has also been good for prevention from coronavirus. The stem of this plant is used for making 'kadha' and helps in fighting all viral diseases. Hence, it plays an immense role in increasing the immunity of a person. Giloy is widely available across the gardens and is easily identifiable," he pointed out.

The experts also said that since all the diseases are related to the stomach, efforts should be made to ensure there

is no stomach disorder.

"The important thing is that one should include all seasonal items in their diet. It is also important to include ginger, fennel, lemon, asafoetida and black pepper in daily diet," another expert said.

A senior medical expert said everybody should apply mustard oil in the nostrils because the mucosa in the nasal openings is the common route for the entry of the virus.

"The oil in the nasal lining may trap mucosa there. Giloy 'kadha' is scientifically proven to be having several immunity-boosting effects. This plant is called Tinospora cardifolia and is commonly available over neem trees," he added.

In researches carried out by BBAU, it was seen that a combination of garlic and tulsi could be effective as it could impact the protein in the coronavirus. In addition, dachini, ginger and cloves were also found to be effective in the fight against coronavirus.

Axe falls on Eco Green, LMC to rope in Indian firm for garbage collection

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The executive committee of Lucknow Municipal Corporation, which had a meeting on Thursday, decided to remove Chinese company Eco Green, which presently carries out door-to-door garbage collection in Nagar Nigam wards. Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia told mediapersons that it was a unanimous decision taken in view of the increasing tension between India and China.

She said that following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', an Indian company will be selected for door-to-door garbage collection and a request will be made to the state government in this regard. She added the performance of the company has also not been up to the mark.

The mayor said it was also decided that the road leading to the house of soldiers, who have laid down their lives for the country, will be named after them and if any such road is in need of repair, it will be repaired. It was also resolved



Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia presiding over LMC executive committee meeting on Thursday

Pioneer

that polythene drive will be carried out under the guidance of an LMC officer.

The executive committee also took up the issue of increasing the income of LMC. "It was decided that parking lots should be developed in all areas for the purpose," she said. The mayor said that for separate sanitisation of shops, houses and schools, charges should be realised by LMC and private companies could be roped in.

Mystery shrouds man's death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 30-year-old man died under mysterious circumstances and the body was recovered from railway tracks in Mahanagar on Thursday. Police said the deceased was mental unsound and was mowed down by a train.

As per reports, some commuters spotted the body of a man lying on the tracks near Badshahnagar railway station. Later, a person, identified as Ishqiaq of Railway colony in Badshahnagar, called the police and a team led by sub-inspector Gowardhan Das reached the scene. The police said the deceased was identified as Shyamu Shukla (30) of Keshav Nagar in Madaion. "The identity of the deceased was ascertained by Shyamu's brother Dinesh. He told us that Shyamu was mentally unstable," the police said.

However, the police failed to explain how Shyamu strayed his way from Keshavnagar in Madaion and reached the tracks near Badshahnagar railway station. The police also drew a blank when asked as to when was Shyamu reported missing and if his family had lodged a missing report.

Meanwhile, a 33-year-old woman drowned in Indira canal in Gosainganj on Thursday afternoon. Reports

Man who killed sis-in-law held

Lucknow (PNS): The Chowk police arrested a man who had killed his sister-in-law and critically injured his wife on Wednesday night after being taunted for being dependent on his in-laws. The accused, identified as Mohammed Irfan of Yahiyaganj in Chowk, was arrested from near a tempo stand in Hazratganj on Thursday. He owned up his crime and said since he was jobless, he was being humiliated for depending on his wife and sister-in-law to make ends meet. On Wednesday night, he demanded money from his wife Azrin and sister-in-law Shamin for some work. As both refused to give him money, Irfan lost his cool and started beating up Azrin. Shamin intervened and it further riled up Irfan. In a fit of rage, he picked up an iron rod

and hit Shamin on her head. He also attacked Azrin but developed cold feet when he saw Shamin slumped down and bleed profusely.

The police said Irfan hid the blood-stained iron rod and did the vanishing act taking advantage of commotion which followed.

Meanwhile, the Indira Nagar police arrested two auto-lifters and recovered stolen motorcycles and dismantled parts of bikes. The accused were identified as Mohammed Samir and Mehtab, both of Sitapur. They owned up their crime and disclosed that they would dismantle the stolen bikes and use the spare parts in other vehicles.

In another incident, a 72-year-old woman was found dead at her house on

Thursday. She had been staying there all alone for the last ten years. Police said the woman, identified as Mithilesh Kumari Pandey of Adil Nagar, was found dead at her house. Reports said some neighbours felt a putrid smell emanating from the house and they alerted the police. The investigating team said the woman was found lying dead on the bed. "It seems that the woman succumbed to some illness and we are sending the body for autopsy," the police said.

The police said Mithilesh's daughter Meera shifted to Gorakhpur after her marriage while her son Shambhu Pandey lives in another house in the same locality. Neighbours told the police that they last saw the woman at a function in a nearby house on June 28.

said Sunita of Dularmau in the area had gone to the forest cover with her goats. In the meantime, she reached near the canal and entered in it. She was driven towards the middle and drowned. Other cattle grazers present there rushed to her rescue, but in vain. Later, her husband Rajesh, who is a labourer, also reached the scene. He informed the police about the

incident. The police got the body fished out and sent it for autopsy.

In another incident, a 60-year-old man died while a youth sustained grievous injuries when a loader laden with potatoes hurtled down a trench alongside the road in Gosainganj around 4.30 am on Thursday. Reports said driver Pramod of Kannauj, along with

his brother Kishor Singh and their helper Lalaram of Farrukhabad, were going to Faizabad from Kannauj. Around 4:30 am when they reached Rehmatnagar, Pramod dozed off for while. As a result, the loader hurtled down the trench. Police said Lalaram died on the spot and Kishor suffered injuries while Pramod saved his life by jumping off.

Man cancels marriage over dowry demand

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man and his family were accused of cancelling the marriage over dowry demand. A case was lodged in this connection by the girl's family.

As per reports, the marriage of the girl was fixed with Amit of Barabanki six months ago. After negotiations, the date of marriage was fixed as June 28. The girl's mother alleged that Amit and his maternal uncle Rajendra called

her on June 26 and demanded a motorcycle and cash as dowry. She said she requested them to reconsider his demand but they were unmoved.

"They cancelled the marriage on June 28 and refused to come with baraat. I gave money to the tent house owner and caterer and arrangements were made for 25-30 guests. We suffered embarrassment and losses due to cancellation of marriage," she told the police.

In another incident, a youth, who was hit on the head with an iron rod by a tipsy group of youths on Tuesday night, succumbed to injuries on Thursday. Police had registered a cross-FIR in this connection. The police now will annul the FIR lodged by the accused who will be booked under other sections of IPC. Rishi of Shankarpur locality was attacked after he stopped a group of youths from creating a scene outside his house.

Acid thrown on crane driver

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three bike-borne unidentified miscreants threw some acid-like substance on a crane driver engaged in pond beautification work on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. The victim, identified as Naseem Ahmad of Barabanki, has been engaged by a contractor carrying out pond beautification work in Papnamau village of Chinhat. After the work was over on Wednesday night, Naseem went to take rest in a semi-constructed house at the con-

struction site. Around 4 am, the miscreants reached the scene and threw the substance on Naseem before speeding off. As the victim started crying in pain, labourers rushed to the scene and called police. A police team reached the scene and rushed Naseem to a hospital. Doctors confirmed that some chemical was thrown on Naseem and he sustained burns on his shoulder.

The police were clueless about the motive for attack. "If he had an enmity with someone, Naseem would have been attacked with some

weapon," police sources said. They said the mafia who had grabbed government lands and ponds were on police radar following the state government's directives. They suspected that the attackers might have intended to intimidate him.

"My son has no enmity with anyone. We also have no enmity with anyone. Naseem has been driving the JCB for a long time to eke out livelihood. Why the miscreants attacked him is beyond us. We will not allow him to do this work in future," Naseem's parents said.

Honour killings continue unabated

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The demon of killing kin for 'saving' family honour refuses to die down. In this sequence, a teenage girl was murdered in Pratapgarh, the mutilated bodies of a young couple were found hanging in Sambhal, while love birds were found hanging in Farrukhabad in the last 24 hours.

In Pratapgarh, an 18-year-old girl was killed by her father and brother for showing the temerity to love a neighbour against their wishes.

As per reports, daughter of Suryamani Maurya of Chaupai area was having an affair with a neighbour. On learning about it, her kin sent the girl to a relative's house in Kansapur. After her recent return, the girl slipped out of

the house to meet her beau on Tuesday night and returned early Wednesday morning. Irked by her move, Suryamani and his son Dhananjay assaulted her and tried to coerce her to lodge a case of rape against the youth. When she refused, they strangled her and to mislead the police, took her to hospital claiming that she was assaulted by the youth.

After the autopsy confirmed that she had been strangled to death, the accused were arrested. A video of the incident recorded on a mobile phone was also recovered.

Elsewhere in Sambhal, the mutilated bodies of a young couple were found hanging from a tree in Ghada hamlet of Danari. The bodies of Bunty (20) and his neighbour Sukhiya (18) were found with

their faces burnt with acid. The couple had eloped on June 25, after the youth's parents settled his marriage with another girl for June 28.

The cops arrested the girl's parents, her uncle and sister-in-law while the other kin absconded. The police suspect that the lover were caught by the girl's kin, assaulted, showered with acid to disfigure them and then hanged.

Meanwhile in Farrukhabad, the bodies of teenaged lovers were found hanging in their respective homes at Gausingpur hamlet in Mohammedabad around the same time on Thursday morning. Reoti Ramn Jatav (19) was pursuing BSc course while his neighbour and lover Shweta (20) was a student of BA.

Akhilesh raps govt for LPG, fuel price hike

Lucknow (PNS):

The Samajwadi Party rapped the Bharatiya Janata Party government for the hike in prices of diesel, petrol and cooking gas, saying that woes of the people reeling under the ill-planned lockdown were only aggravated by the galloping inflation due to the price surge. "After the unabated hike in prices of petrol and diesel, the Yogi Adityanath government is in the process of raising power tariff by at least 8 per cent. During the first three years of BJP regime, power tariff has been hiked by 27 per cent and another hike will break the back of masses and farmers," SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said in Lucknow on Thursday.

Akhilesh said that during the last three years, UP Power Corporation had hiked the fixed charges for farmers by 500 per cent and 70 per cent for urban power consumers.

"During 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP claimed credit for providing millions of power connections to the poor and farmers. The same sections are now being targeted by UPPCL for the recovery of power dues and their power connections are being disconnected and recovery certificates are being issued," the SP chief said.

Akhilesh pointed out that inflation was galloping after continuous hike in prices of petrol and diesel for over two weeks in June.

UP second in warehousing business across India

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh ranks second after Haryana in warehousing transactions across the country and this fact has surfaced in the latest India Warehousing Market Report-2020. The report, released in Lucknow on Thursday, said that UP used 0.6 million square feet of warehousing transactions in 2020. It also said that Lucknow was emerging as the hub of warehousing in the country. The report further said that availability of Grade A warehousing space on Lucknow-Kanpur Road had been reported as prime attribute to a healthy 26 per cent hike in transactions. The Lucknow-Kanpur highway

cluster contributed to 66 per cent of volume, followed by Bijon-Nadarganj cluster with a contribution of 34 per cent.

Rents in newer locations of Lucknow-Kanpur highway, such as Asha Kheda, Kushi and Sohrarau, range between Rs 183 and Rs 226 per square metre per month (Rs17-21/sq ft/month) for Grade A type warehouses and between Rs 161 and Rs 194 per sq m/month (Rs 15-18 per sq ft/month) for Grade B type warehouse facilities. Almost two million square feet of Grade A built-to-suit space is scheduled for completion in the next 18 months. With an estimated stock of approximately four million square feet, upcoming space

works out to a significant 50 per cent addition in a relatively short time. Third Party logistics and e-commerce companies accounted for 73 per cent of space transacted during 2019-20 in Lucknow. The report said that Lucknow was emerging as one of the most attractive warehousing markets in the country. The Lucknow-Kanpur highway cluster is expected to continue witnessing high market transactions in demand and development activity due to availability of reasonably priced large land parcels, good road connectivity and benefits of industrial land use classification under Lucknow Industrial Development Authority, the report added.

Varanasi admn grappling with coronavirus spread

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The sharp increase in the cases of COVID-19 as well as mortality rate and decline in recovery rate in the recent days is a clear indication that the district administration is losing its grip in its fight against worldwide coronavirus pandemic. As the situation has turned alarmingly, it has forced the administration to re-impose some restrictions. Recently, the administration was seen too active in development work than its fight against corona.

The alarming situation may be imagined by the fact that the last 100 cases were detected in the district in just five days whereas it took 57 days to reach the first 100-mark. Actually, the situation had started deteriorating fast during the last 15 days when the cases jumped up from 295 to 525. Similarly, the death toll has also increased from eight to

20 which indicates a slight rise in mortality rate from 3.75 per cent to 3.80 per cent but the recovery rate during this period has sharply declined from 73.72 per cent to 58.47 per cent which proves the laxity shown by the administration and Health department.

Not only this, in Varanasi the recovery rate was poor than this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions because till Wednesday, it was 58.47 per cent in Varanasi than 69.10 per cent in Purvanchal. Besides, the mortality rate in Varanasi is 3.8 per cent while in Purvanchal 2.23 per cent. The situation was different a few weeks ago when the recovery rate in the district was comparatively well.

In comparison to other two divisions, Varanasi division was affected badly by coronavirus which had seen many phases in the rise of cases. It began when people started

arriving here from abroad prior to the imposition of lockdown but only a few cases were found during the time. It got accelerated after the Tablighi Jamaat Markaz episode but that had only affected limited pockets in the city as well as a few districts in Purvanchal including Varanasi, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Mau, Azamgarh and Mrzapur. However, the third phase when the process of arrival of migrant workers has started, it affected all the districts.

In all the districts the fast rising trend of detection of infected corona patients has been checked to some extent. However, in Varanasi a new phase has started when a good number of cases are being found through contact tracing. In almost all the highly-infected cities, this is the main cause behind the sharp rise in increase in cases. It is the reason why just a week ago in Varanasi there were 107 active

patients which has increased to 198 and in comparison to this rise the recovery was slow as 307 patients have been discharged from the hospitals against 256 a week ago.

In this region of Purvanchal, the maximum cases are in Varanasi as 66.45 per cent patients found in the division. There are 1,579 cases including 541 in Jaunpur, 525 in Varanasi, 352 in Ghazipur and 161 in Chandauli. In all there are 2,376 cases in this belt of Purvanchal with 508 in Azamgarh (242 in Azamgarh, 134 in Mau and 132 in Ballia) and 289 in Vindhyaachal (148 in Bhadohi, 99 in Mirzapur and 42 in Sonbhadra). Out of them 1,642 patients have recovered including 1,112 in Varanasi division, while 339 in Azamgarh and 191 in Vindhyaachal and out of total 685 active cases, there are 431 patients in Varanasi, 162 in Azamgarh and 92 in Vindhyaachal.

21 new COVID-19 cases found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

There is no let up in continuous spike in corona cases as 21 COVID-19 patients have been detected in the district here on Thursday. With this, the total number of patients has increased to 546. Out of them, 317 have been recovered while 208 are active patients. With yet another death, the toll has increased to 21. Among the reports received from Microbiology department in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) on Thursday and Wednesday night, 21 were found positive. Among the negative patients, there were follow-up reports of 10 patients. Later, they all have been discharged.

With the finding of new patients, the number of hotspots has increased to 260. Out of them, 130 have come in green zones while there are

130 active hotspots including 22 in orange zones while 108 are in red zones. As many as 314 samples have been collected and sent for testing during the day. Till date, 11,819 samples have been collected and results of 11,273 have been received while 764 are awaited. Out of all received reports, 11,273 were negative and 546 positive.

Earlier, by 11 am, the reports of 11 positive patients were received and the same included four staff of private hospitals from Luxa and Bhelupur areas and five patients have contact history. According to Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr VB Singh, a male aged 65 from Gwalvans Sahu Lane, Bhulanala (Kotwali) area died at his residence on Wednesday evening and his COVID-19 positive report was received a few hours after his death. Earlier,

he was treated at OPD of Shree Shiv Prasad Gupta Hospital (SSPG).

Among the positive found patients, two staff including a male (33) and female (24) of a private hospital from Luxa area and they hail from Misir Pokhara and Bankati Hanuman Mandir. Two other employees of a private hospital from Kotwali police station are females aged 24 and 25 and belong to Hanumanpur and Kirihya (Khojwa) respectively. Yet another case of contact history is a female aged 42 from Sheel Nagar (Mehmoorganj) under Siga police station who is a housewife. Besides, six patients were found with no contact history. A male aged 42 is from Mahaveer Nagar, Taktakpur, Orderly Bazar is a light billing worker; male 62 is from Misir Pokhara (Luxa); male student aged 19 is from Nai Basti,

Pandeypur (Cantt.); housewife (17) from Laxmikund (Luxa) and male shopkeeper (65) from Gwalvans, Sahu Lane (Kotwali).

Meanwhile, as many as seven new COVID-19 cases including three health employees have been found in Chandauli, increasing the total cases to 165, out of which 100 are still active while 64 have been recovered and one has died. Out of these patients three came from outstations while four are locals. Earlier, by Wednesday, the total number of patients in this belt of Purvanchal (eastern UP) comprising 10 districts of three divisions had increased to 2,376. Out of them, 1,642 (69.10 per cent) have been discharged, while only 685 (28.82 per cent) are active patients. The mortality rate has increased slightly to 2.23 per cent with 53 deaths.

Rare bravery shown by CRPF commando

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

It's great honour for the local dwellers that a commando in Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Pawan Kumar Chaubey, who had rescued a three year old child during an encounter with militants at Sopore in Jammu & Kashmir on Wednesday morning. Commandant of 95 Battalion, CRPF Narendra Pal Singh on Thursday visited at native village of Pawan in Goldhamakawan, Chaubeypur and honoured his family members.

It may be noted here that the militants had opened fire at personnel of the CRPF's 179 Battalion in the morning on Wednesday when they were deboarding near Model Town, Sopore, Baramulla, on patrolling duties. One CRPF personnel and a civilian had been killed. The commando in CRPF Pawan Kumar Chaubey had rescued around three year old child, said to be grandson



CRPF Commandant NP Singh greeting family of CRPF commando Pawan Kumar Choubey for rare bravery shown by him in Kashmir

of civilian killed in attack.

When the news about rescue of a child by Pawan reached to his native Goldhamakawan, Chaubeypur, the villagers felt proud and expressed their happiness that he belongs to his village. At same time, the personnel of 95 Battalion of CRPF also felt proud on the bravery of Pawan and the Commander of

this Battalion Narendra Pal Singh along with his team members reached the village. Singh honoured family members of commando Pawan for his bravery. Pawan had joined CRPF in 2010 and is discharging his duty in Jammu and Kashmir since 2016.

It's a matter of proud for his as commando Pawan belongs

to this city where he is posted, said Singh and categorically denied that the civilian had been dragged out of his vehicle and killed by security personnel. It is nothing but just propaganda to tarnish the image of security forces but such negativity does not reduce the vigour of security personnel, he said.

Singh honoured the family members of Pawan handing over packets of sweet, fruits and clothes and garlanded his father Subhash, mother Hausila and wife Subhanasi.

Singh also assured the father Subhash to have a talk with the District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma for the construction of pitched road approaching to his house when he urged for the same. Singh said that Pawan brought glory not only for this city but also for his organisation and all the personnel of his Battalion feel proud on his bravery and human approach for which the CRPF is known.

DM for overall development of Sewapuri block

VARANASI (PNS): District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj Sharma has instructed all the departments to work with a better coordination for developing Sewapuri development block, selected by Niti Aayog, as a model one. During his recent video conferencing talks with local officials recently, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi had asked about the block of his parliamentary constituency. At a meeting held at his camp office here on Thursday, DM said that 21 clusters have been formed in Sewapuri block apart from deployment of a nodal officer for each cluster.

He said that in 136 schemes, 87 departments of the block have to achieve their goal in 60 days. For this, he said that the district level officers should check the keep performance indicators (KPIs) related to the schemes of their departments apart from determining the tar-



gets, planning for achievements and setting the deadline. He has sought all the details about the same from concerned officers by Friday afternoon. He also directed to prepare a calendar of the programme of departmental training.

According to him, the progress will be assessed on the basis of indicators of each department. Three days a week, every officer will stay in the block and watch the related work, he said, directing that the cleaning work should be started in the village from Friday

itself and cleanliness drive, cross checking will be done. After holding an open meeting in all the gram panchayats, information should be given to the villagers about the schemes and they should be appealed to cooperate with them. All the nodal officers should hold a meeting within two days under their supervision, he instructed the officers.

During the meeting, he directed that after conducting a survey of the families of each village in two days, the list should be prepared to include every eligible person to be

benefited from the schemes. He instructed to prepare all the government buildings of each village like panchayat bhawans, schools, anganwadi centres, health sub-centres, gaushala, etc. by providing photography in one day and preparing the list of buildings which have to be rejuvenated.

He stressed the need for popularising plantation campaigns by planting fruit trees at roadsides, surrounding areas of ponds and in the premises of panchayat buildings. He said that employees, heads and departments doing good work in the campaign will also be rewarded, which will be determined based on the percentage achieved against the target. Officers of all the concerned departments including the Chief Development Officer, Project Director, DRDA, Deputy Commissioner (Labour Employment) were also present.

Another corona infected patient dies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Another patient infected with the coronavirus epidemic died on Thursday. A coronavirus positive female patient was admitted to COVID-19 Hospital SRN. In this way, the death toll from corona has reached 10 in the district. The condition of coronavirus is becoming frightening in Prayagraj. The Health department has increased its activity.

Dr Rishi Sahai, the nodal officer for COVID-19, said that the woman who died of coronavirus was a resident of Malviya Nagar. The woman was admitted to SRN Hospital on June 29 after becoming infected. Her health had worsened. He said the deadly virus has so far claimed the lives of 10 patients infected with the coronavirus in the district.

On Thursday, two more infected patients with the coronavirus were found in the district. Both positive cases belong to the girl child home in Khulabad. No history has been found in these two girls living in the girl child home.

Similarly, another case of coronavirus has come to light in the neighbouring district of Pratappgarh on Thursday. Simultaneously, the number went to 115 cases. The new

infected patient is a former employee of the district homeopathic office, who lives in his home Sansarpur. On being reported to be positive, he has been shifted to COVID-19 Hospital Lalganj. Seven people have died of corona in the district so far, while four are under treatment. Others have become healthy and were discharged.

The good news among the increasing cases of corona infection is that the number of patients recovering from it is also high. 11 corona patients became healthy and discharged from the hospital. Of them, a doctor of the Beli Hospital, resident of Kareli, one patient hails from Civil Lines, one is Baba Ji Bagh, two patients are residents of SRN campus, two from Rajapur and one patient is Naini who has been discharged.

Dr Rishi Sahai, the nodal officer for COVID-19, said that around 400 shopkeepers were marked near the Leader Road who have got their sampling done after a drug trader became infected. Samples from 160 shopkeepers have been collected while sampling operation has also been conducted in 14 hotels in the city.

Samples of 120 employees have been sent from these hotels for testing. Dr Sahai informed that 27 corona posi-

tive patients are admitted in Kotwa COVID Hospital and 33 in SRN COVID Hospital. With this, the report of 470 samples in the medical college lab has come negative, Dr Sahai added.

Meanwhile, a total of 24 fresh cases of COVID-19 were reported in the last 24 hours in Sangam city. Of them, 14 new infected patients of coronavirus were found here on Thursday evening, while 10 cases were reported late on Wednesday night.

Following 14 positives reported today are included Aneeta Jaiswal (55) wife of Chandra Prakash, Shobhit Jaiswal (26) son of Sharda Prasad, Vartika Jaiswal (24) daughter of Sharda Prasad, Prem lata Jaiswal (53) wife of Sharda Prasad, Rishika Jaiswal (18) daughter of Ravindra Jaiswal, Prince Jaiswal (8) son of Ravindra Jaiswal, Swati (27) daughter of late Tej Prakash, Sumitra Jaiswal (87) mother of Chandra Prakash who was suffering from severe cardiac disease and fracture of shoulder expired late night of July 1. All above primary contacts (family members) of positive patient Chandra Prakash

Besides, Naresh Chandra Kesarwani (54) son of Moolchand resident of 649, Krishna Nagar Kydganj, Kumari Shaba (19) resident of

Rajkiya Balgriha (Balika), Noorulla Road, Khulabad, Prayagraj, Kumari Gulabja (18) resident of Rajkiya Balgriha (Balika) Noorulla Road, Khulabad Prayagraj, Jakiya Ifkar (35) wife of Izazul Haq resident of 248/ 279 Dara Shah Ajmal, Prayagraj, Nagesh Singh (42) son of Matafer resident of sector 02/01 Shantipuram, Phaphamau and Twinkle Sonkar (22) daughter of Lt Laxmi Prasad resident of 440/260/1 Unchva Gaddhi, Rajapur.

Similarly, a total 10 new infected patients with COVID-19 were found in the Prayagraj district late on Wednesday night. These include a senior BJP leader from trans-Yamuna. At the same time, three members of the same family living on Dayanand Marg Civil Lines also became corona positive, including husband, wife and daughter. Corona has been confirmed in another young man of the same family.

BJP leaders have also contested from an assembly seat in trans-Yamuna. He lives near the Eklavya Tower of Civil Lines. The BJP leader showed symptoms of cough and fever, so he was tested for coronavirus and the report came positive. Similarly, a 23-year-old girl resident of Mirza Ghalib Road is also corona positive.

NCR to set up business development unit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

North Central Railway (NCR) will set up business development unit at Zonal and Divisional level for increasing volume of freight being carried by Railways. Indian Railways is working on an ambitious target of doubling the freight volume being carried by Railways by 2024.

To achieve this, Indian Railway is strengthening its share in transport of conventional commodities like coal, POL, steel, cement, iron ore, foodgrains, fertilisers etc. besides entering in a big way in transport of non bulk commodities. This traffic segment which is very large in volume and mostly moved through road transport has huge potential for Railways which can be tapped by adopting a suitable business model. Transport of these commodities through rail will not only be cost effective but will also be environment friendly.

This however will require knowledge and experience of industries & experts in this field as Railways has limited experi-

Rlys to give concession

ALLAHABAD (PNS): The entire country is going through a lockdown process to prevent the corona epidemic, in which it has been decided by the Indian Railways to give a concession in short lead traffic to improve industrial activities, under which 50 per cent discount will be given on freight up to 0-50 km, 25 per cent discount on freight up to 51-75 km and 10 per cent discount on freight up to 76-90 km will be provided and freight up to 91-100 km will also be carried by railway.

Earlier, there was a ceiling of a minimum 100 km distance for freight by the railways which has now been ended by giving a concession. This concession will apply to all types of goods except coal and coke, iron ore, military traffic, rail material consignment and container traffic.

This concession will be applicable from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. No other concessions will be implemented with this concession. The concession of 6 per cent in the freight to and from North East Region will continue.

ence of handling such non bulk traffic.

Keeping this in view a multidisciplinary business development unit is being developed at zonal and division level consisting of functionaries from all concerned departments and a similar business development unit has already been formed at Railway Board consisting of executive director level officers from concerned

departments.

These BDUs formed at divisional, zonal level will examine all proposals to tap the non-bulk freight, will examine and develop business models to capture the opportunity and will seek approval from Railway Board level BDU in matters involving more than one zonal Railway and requiring any policy decision.

North Central Railway has

already initiated the process of forming BDUs at zonal HQ level and in all three divisions Prayagraj, Jhansi and Agra. BDUs so formed and contact details of members of BDUs etc. shall be circulated widely so as all proposals received for new business opportunities are dealt expeditiously and implemented on priority.

During the COVID-19 lockdown Railways has already made headway in this direction through running of timetabled parcel services and providing real time assistance in transport of small and medium sized consignments through various measures like introduction of electronic RR, delivery of goods in case of non-availability of paper RR, improved average speed of parcel trains, information sharing on parcel services through NTES, national helpline 139 & 138 etc. As on June 30 North Central Railway with the motto of transporting even a single packet of parcel has loaded 777.5 tonnes of parcel including 177 tonnes medical goods through its 40 notified parcel stations.

AIKSCC to oppose all 3 ordinances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The working group of All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC) met via Zoom and formulated plans to oppose all the three Ordinances announced by the Central Government in the name of relief package while building on its movement for 'Karja Mukti, Poora Daam', said Dr Ashish Mital, general secretary, AIKMS and working group member AIKSCC.

The ordinances remove cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetable oil, potato and onions from the essential commodities, they permit purchase of crops outside the APMC and by MNC-Indian collaborators, they promote contract farming. These will reduce peasants to an appendage of the foreign led Indian corporate and the lion will gain 'freedom' to savour the sheep. These will promote hoarding and black marketing by big buyers, sale of all inputs at high rates by them, unbribe sale of GM seeds and lead to winding up of MSP declara-

tion, government procurement. Corporate will procure crops, store and sell them leading to massive rise in food prices. It will create severe food insecurity for the people.

On July 3, the AIKSCC shall organise protest programmes in support of the struggle by trade unions against changes in industrial labour laws, privatisation of coal sector, LIC, banks and others. Workers have also been protesting for wage payment to migrant workers and grant of 15 kg food in ration to all poor people along with ₹ 10,000 pm to all workers.

AIKSCC shall oppose these ordinances tooth and nail and demand removing all taxes on diesel and petrol to reduce their prices to one third.

The AIKSCC working group has demanded that the government should stop lodging false cases on people who protest for their day to day needs under the violation of Epidemics Act and obstruction in government functioning and other draconian laws.

INFORMATION

UBMITTED: The authorities of the Allahabad University have submitted the information, sought by the fact-finding committee constituted by the University Grant Commission (UGC) to probe allegation levelled against the former vice-chancellor of Allahabad University Prof RL Hangloo. Number of representations had been submitted to MHRD and UGC against administrative, financial and academic anomalies committed by the former V-C.

Former V-C had resigned on December 31, 2019 after which the visitor of AU, which is the President of the country, Ramnath Kovind had formed a three member committee in January. The committee was headed by Prof Nageswara Rao, Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi Open University (IGNOU) and two other members included the V-C of Central University of Gujarat Prof Ramashankar Dubey and V-C of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh Prof Shriprakash Mani Tripathi.

The committee had visited AU a number of times in the month of January and February and met the persons who have complained against Prof Hangloo. Some of the faculty members of AU had submitted a 700 page 40 files to the inquiry committee to support their allegations.

The Public Relation Officer (PRO) of AU, Shailendra Kumar Mishra said although because of the lockdown, there was some delay in compiling the response on the reply sought by the inquiry committee but the same have now been compiled and sent back to them.

It is for the committee to decide whether to again visit AU for the probe or submit their reply to HRD on the basis of the probe that they have done so far, he added.

Thereafter, the inquiry committee sought a reply on 40 points from the varsity administration and the same have been compiled by the AU administration and sent back to the inquiry committee, he added.

Shukla new Secy of UP Board

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Divyakant Shukla has taken over the charge as the Secretary in the UP Board, an important organisation in Uttar Pradesh. The former secretary Nina Srivastava retired from the post on July 1. The transfer process to the post of Secretary took place in the presence of Education Director Secondary Vinay Kumar Pandey. The officers and employees of the Board and Regional Office

appreciated the work and behaviour of the outgoing secretary. However, the change of the board came three years later. On June 22, in an order issued by Uttar Pradesh Secondary Education Department Additional Chief Secretary Aradhana Shukla, it was decided that Divyakant Shukla, Divisional Joint Education Director, Prayagraj would be the next incharge secretary. The same day

Shukla was appointed as Special Officer in the UP Board. It may be pointed out here that the retirement of secretary Nina Srivastava was to take place on March 31 but till then, the Board's High School and Inter results had not come. In such a situation, the government gave her a three-month extension. She declared the result within the stipulated time and then continued till the last day of service to com-

plete the other work. On the occasion of the transfer process to the Board, Education Director Secondary Pandey offered the outgoing secretary a memoir. Prominent among those present on the occasion included Additional Secretary Prayagraj (Shival), Additional Secretary (Regional office) Shiv Prakash Dwivedi, Harishankar Sharma, Satyanarayan Chaurasia, Ramanuj Dubey.



District Magistrate City, Dr BR Tiwari presiding over the all religion heads meeting on Thursday

Pioneer

Religious places in Kanpur to remain closed till July 31

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

All religious places in the city will remain closed till July 31 in view of the spread of coronavirus.

This decision was taken in a meeting between the religious heads and District Magistrate BR Tiwari.

In the meeting of the heads of all religions, it was unanimously decided that in view of the alarming rise in coronavirus positive cases in the city, it was not in the interest of the community to throw open the places of worship.

They all agreed that as per the government directive, all

religious places should be strictly kept closed till July 31 and till further orders.

All the prominent religious leaders belonging to Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs faiths took part in the meeting called by District Magistrate BR Tiwari at the collectorate on Thursday.

The district magistrate said as this was a sensitive issue relating to religion, the district administration intended to take all the religious heads into confidence.

He said it was very encouraging that the meeting was held in a very cordial manner and every religious

head was strongly in favour of keeping the places of worship closed in the present situation.

Dr Tiwari said that as per the decision, all religious places would remain closed till the situation improved or the government decided on it after July 31.

Prominent religious heads were of the opinion that the issue of relaxation was between 'astha' (faith) and 'awashyakt' (need). They said while relaxation in lockdown given to trades were essential for survival, some curbs were also essential for safety of all communities as gatherings could put to risk the entire

people of the city.

It may be mentioned that some self-styled churches were demanding permission to open the churches for Sunday service with restriction of 50 people but the Christian community was strongly against the opening churches. Finally the district magistrate had summoned a meeting of the heads of all religions on Thursday to work out an amicable solution.

Prominent officials who attended the meeting were SSP Dinesh Kumar, ADM Vivek Srivastava, all SPs and representatives of all the religions.

38 more test +ve for coronavirus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Nagar continued to reel under the onslaught of the dreaded coronavirus with 38 more people testing positive in the last 24 hours, taking the tally of the infected persons detected in the city so far to 1,226.

Chief Medical Officer Dr AK Shukla said the 38 new coronavirus cases were from Patara, Pheelkhana, Dadanagar, Civil Lines, Rawatpur, Railway Colony, Babupurwa, Kidwainagar, Dildash Ka Hata, Maniram Bagia, Anwaranj, Gandhinagar, Govind Nagar, RK Nagar, Shyam Nagar, Chowk Sarrafa and TP Nagar.

He said with 19 COVID-19 patients being discharged from hospitals, 901 infected persons had been cured in the city and at present 272 active

More pvt hospitals to admit Covid patients

KANPUR (PNS): District Magistrate BR Tiwari said on Thursday that more private hospitals had agreed to admit COVID-19 patients and for this a special training was being imparted to these private hospitals. He said not only the doctors, even nurses and paramedical staff were being imparted training to handle and treat coronavirus infected patients in the private sector.

Dr Tiwari said now people who could afford could undergo treatment for COVID-19 at these private hospital as well.

IMA-Kanpur secretary Dr Gaurav Dubey said that there was pressure on the district administration to give permission to private hospitals for treatment of COVID-19 patients and after a meeting it was decided to allow treatment of coronavirus infected persons in the private sector. Kanpur Nursing Homes Association president Dr M Saraogi said the private nursing homes had agreed to admit such COVID-19 patients who could afford treatment.

cases were undergoing treatment.

The CMO said with one more COVID-19 patient dying

in the city, the death toll stood at 53 on Thursday evening.

He said 672 swab samples were taken on Thursday out of

which 113 were of migrant workers who had returned to the city from other states and 163 as per government directive.

The CMO said 51 teams visited 3,398 houses and screened the people living there and made them aware of the need to maintain social distancing to keep the coronavirus at bay.

Meanwhile, District Magistrate BR Tiwari has expressed concern over the reduced testing and directed health authorities to carry out as many tests as possible.

He said the LLR Hospital had received over 1,000 rapid antigen card kits from Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Lucknow. He said with the availability of TrueNat and RAC kit further momentum should be given to sampling in the city.

'Groom' ends in lock-up as 'wife' queers the pitch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In a bizarre incident, a groom ready to proceed to the bride's place with the baraat landed in the police lock-up in a high voltage drama in Mangalpur town on Thursday Dehat on Tuesday night.

According to reports, the marriage of a youth of Laljipurwa village under Mangalpur police station of Kanpur Dehat was fixed with a girl of Punkhrayan and was to be solemnised for June 30.

When the marriage party was about to proceed for Punkhrayan, a woman reached there and claimed the groom

to be her husband. She also produced a photo of the groom with her in support of her claim. She also called the police.

The cops immediately reached the spot and took the groom along with his family members and the woman to the police station.

During questioning at the police station, the woman identified as a native of Shivrajpur. The woman said she had developed friendship with the youth in 2015 through Facebook and soon they fell in love. She said the youth often visited her in Shivrajpur or Kanpur and when he proposed to marry her, she left her

house and their marriage was solemnised in an Arya Samaj temple in Rawatpur in July 2018.

The woman said after the marriage, they started living in a rented room in Kanpur. She said her husband went to his village every week on the pretext of convincing his parents about their relationship.

The woman said when her husband stopped coming to her in Kanpur five months back, she contacted him on phone and he said he was unable to come to Kanpur due to lockdown.

According to the woman, after the lockdown was relaxed, her husband stopped attending

her call. When she made enquiries, she came to know that his marriage was fixed elsewhere for July 30. Accordingly, she reached his village on June 30 and found her husband ready to proceed with the baraat.

During interrogation, the youth confessed his friendship with the woman through Facebook and that he used to visit to Shivrajpur to meet her.

SSI Vishnu Kant Tewari said the youth was taken into custody and lodged in the lock-up while the woman was asked to move the court for justice. On learning about the incident, the bride refused to marry with the youth.

Basant Lal takes over as SP (Traffic)

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

New Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Basant Lal took over the charge on Thursday. He said the city traffic problems would be resolved in consultation with the officials of Kanpur Development Authority, Kanpur Nagar Nigam and other departments concerned. Lal was earlier posted in Police Academy, Moradabad. The SP (Traffic) said the city was confronting with the traffic signal problems and dilapidated road conditions. He said Kanpur was a Smart City and the cops of traffic police were honestly discharging their duties. He said regular drives would be conducted to check helmet, seat belt, use of mobile phone and black screen film on cars. At the same time, people would be asked to follow Covid norms by wearing mask to keep themselves and others safe, he said, adding that violators would be dealt with sternly.

Webinar

KANPUR (PNS): An international webinar on 'Alternative uses of bagasse' was organised by National Sugar Institute, Kanpur. Executive Director & CEO (Sugar Business) of DCM Shri Ram Ltd., RL Tamak, in his inaugural address called upon the sugar industries across the globe to innovate on developing value-added products from bagasse as in many countries, the bagasse-based power generation was not feasible and bagasse disposal created a problem. Looking to the composition of bagasse, it can be a potential source for producing 2G ethanol and other bio-products. NSI Director Prof Narendra Mohan, in his key note address laid emphasis on utilisation of bagasse for all purposes — bio-energy, food/feed, bio-material and biochemicals. Utilisation of bagasse in such a manner would prove to be money spinner, providing many products which were environment-friendly and good for health, he said.

Doc's resignation stirs hornet's nest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The sudden resignation of a doctor of G SVM Medical College and Associated Hospitals from Covid hospital post has stirred the hornet's nest. The LLR Hospital and G SVM Medical College have constantly been at loggerheads and some heads have rolled on account of the failure of their officials to settle their scores.

The resignation of Prof GD Yadav of the medical college surgery department from the post of superintendent of Covid hospital has put the medical college and the district administration on the horns of dilemma. It may be mentioned here that majority of senior doctors of G SVM Medical College were abstaining from duty on some or the other pretext and the entire workload was resting on the junior doctors. Similarly, another assistant professor of ophthalmology, Dr Sonali Bhalla, had tendered her resignation for being put on duty in Covid hospital.

G SVM Medical College Principal Dr RB Kamal said Dr Yadav had resigned as he was under much pressure of work and he was also to conduct the examinations of the medical college as well. He admitted that Dr Bhalla had resigned but added that she was appointed on contract basis and a replacement had been made in her place.

'Launch awareness drive on communicable diseases'

CORRESPONDENT ■ BANDA

Sanchari Rog Niyamtran Abhiyan (Communicable Disease Control Campaign) had started on July 1 and will continue till July 31. This campaign had been launched in the district on the directive of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a video conferencing conducted on June 30. This was said by DM Amit Singh Bansal while talking to 'The Pioneer' on Thursday. He said that the Sanchari Rog Abhiyan was started as per the fixed strategy of the government at Banda district hospital and different government hospitals under the leadership of CMO, CMO, superintendents of CHCs and PHCs in the entire district. DM said that he had directed the CMO and CMS to launch a drive to make aware people about spread of communicable diseases like chikanguniya, filaria, malaria etc. DM said that SDMs would cross-check the success of Sanchari Rog Niyamtran Abhiyan and would provide him a feedback about it. He said that no laxity in the implementation of the campaign would be tolerated. DM said that the manufacturing of polythene and its sale was completely prohibited but despite that it was being done. He said that a committee comprising several responsible authorities had been formed to check the use of polythene in the district. These authorities would take stern legal action against those who were found involved in the manufacturing and sale of polythene. Bansal said that the shops of the district would be opened as per the previous roster issued by him. He said that city magistrate and SDMs had been directed to get the norms



DM Amit Singh Bansal during the launching of Sanchari Rog Niyamtran Abhiyan at district hospital Banda

of Covid 19 implemented in the district. DM said that wearing of masks should be checked and those not wearing them should be penalised. He said that instructions had been issued to ensure proper implementation of Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana. DM said that he also directed DPRO to ensure the removal of garbage dumped along the road between Banda and Naraini. He said that he had also conducted a meeting with the authorities to make mega campaign of plantation on July 5 a grand success. DM said that Corona testing had been started at the first floor of trauma centre in district hospital Banda. If someone wanted to get his or her corona test done then he or she could approach the authorities at the hospital between 9 am and 12 noon. DM said that if there was any problem one could contact the control room no 05192-224460.

SUCCUMBS: Ram Swaroop Gautam (57), son of Kedar Prasad, was seriously injured when he was attacked by his rivals with sharp-edged weapons and a stick in Banthari village under Kamasin police station due to old enmity. Reports received that Ram Swaroop and his cousin were attacked while they were going to the tubewell. They were taken to CHC Kamasin. The doctors there referred them to district hospital Banda where Ram Swaroop succumbed to his injuries. SO Kamasin Vinod Singh said that an FIR had been lodged under Section 304-A of the IPC in which eight persons had been named. Singh said that the culprits would be arrested soon.

Illicit liquor factory unearthed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Under the joint operation of Dehat Kotwali police, Excise department and SOG an illicit liquor factory had been unearthed. Giving details, SP Dr Dharmveer Singh said that the illicit factory was being run in the guise of a dairy. The adulterated liquor was being prepared in Pandeypur Lathiahawa village under Dehat Kotwali and after packing it was being sold through liquor shops. Packing equipment, raw material, one rickshaw, three cars etc had been recovered. He said 10 names had come to light of them six persons were arrested and four others were still at large. SP said that investigation was on to find out the supplier of spirit and shops where the illicit liquor was being sold. Under the Gangster Act the

proceedings would be also started to confiscate the assets of the accused.

FLAGGED OFF: MLA City Ratnakar Mishra appealed to people to follow the tips given by the health department for leading a healthy life. These views were expressed by him at district hospital while flagging off the communicable disease control squad. CMO Dr OP Tiwari said that the precaution was more important than medicines. He directed the team to go to people and tell them that diseases like dengue and malaria could be controlled through their own efforts by keeping their premises clean and mosquito free.

HONOURED: On the occasion of Doctors' Day and CA Day Rotary Club Mirzapur Gaurav honoured prominent doctors and CAs of the city at a programme organised by fol-

lowing the norms of social distancing. PPE kits were donated by the club to the honoured doctors. Prominent among those honoured were Dr Khushbu, Dr Chandraketu, Dr Ravi Dubey, Dr SN Pathak, Dr Anand Tiwari, Ravi Kalyani, Shailendra Katare and BB Goenka.

INVOKED: Laljanj police invoked Gangster Act against four criminals, Shivbalak, Balram, Babulal and Rampati here recently.

TRAGIC END: Sushil Kumar (26), a resident of Gadayee Ka Nala under Padari police station, suffered an electric shock when he came contact with an electric pole in which current was flowing. He was taken to district hospital where he died during the treatment. The Padari police reached the hospital and completed legal formalities.

Changes in running of parcel cargo exp trains

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration had taken the following decisions regarding the movement of parcel cargo express trains (PCET).

FREQUENCY REDUCTION: Chief Public Relations Officer Pankaj Kumar Singh said that the 00464 Amritsar-Howrah Parcel Cargo Express train would run twice a week on Wednesday and Friday instead of three days from July 3. Besides the 00463 Howrah-Amritsar PCET would run on Monday and Saturday twice a week instead of three days from July 6.

NEW WEEKLY PCET: The movement of 00468/00467 Amritsar-Howrah-Amritsar new PCET would be done as follows: - The 00468 Amritsar-Howrah weekly PCET would start from July 6 (Monday). It would be run every Monday. It would depart from Amritsar at 20:40 hours, from Jalandhar City at 22:50 hours, from Ludhiana Junction at 24:00 hrs, the second day from Ambala Cantt at 02:10 hours, from Delhi at 05:40 hours, from Kanpur Central at 14:50 hours, from Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Jn to 18:13 hours

and reach Howrah at 08:30 hours the third day. The movement of the 00467 Howrah-Amritsar weekly PCET would start from July 9 (Thursday). It train would be run every Thursday. It would depart from Howrah at 17:30 hours the second day from Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Jn at 08:24 hours, from Prayagraj at 11:30 hours, from Kanpur Central at 14:40 hours, from Delhi at 21:20 hours, the third day from Ambala City at 00:50 hours, from Ludhiana Jn at 02:50 hours and from Jalandhar City at 04:00 hours and reach Amritsar at 06:30 hours. In these weekly parcel cargo express train, there would be total 11 coaches 10 of VP and one of SLR. Meanwhile the 00402 New Delhi-Guwahati PCET would reach Siwan at 06:25 hours and leave at 06:35 hours, reach Hajipur at 08:20 hours and leave at 08:30 hours. The 00401 Guwahati-New Delhi PCET would reach Hajipur at 17:45 hours and leave at 17:55 hours and reach Siwan at 20:30 hours and depart at 20:40 hours.

CONCESSION: Railways was committed to providing protected and safe transportation facility. In order to give a boost to loading of goods the

Ministry of Railways has decided to give a concession in its rates. It will be given in two categories i.e. short lead and long lead. This decision of the Railways will give a boost to industry and trade.

SETTLEMENT DUES: Following social distancing guidelines and not organising a mass function in this Covid-19 infection period a gazetted officer and 41 non-gazetted employees who were retiring on June 30 in various departments of North Eastern Railway (NER) headquarters, Gorakhpur, were on the instructions of the Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO), Shailendra Kumar, given settlement dues, service certificate and gold-plated medal by the Department of Personnel on that day itself. Apart from it seven employees in the Stores Depot, 29 employees in mechanical workshop, three in signal workshop and seven non-gazetted employees in construction organisation and one gazetted and 10 non-gazetted railway workers of Accounts Department who too had retired the same day were given settlement dues besides service certificate and gold-plated medal by the department concerned.

SP (Traffic) spells out priority

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Solving the problem of traffic jam in the city will be my priority. Besides problem will be solved only after listening to everyone. This was said by new SP (Traffic) Ashutosh Shukla while taking charge here. A PPS officer of 1993 batch SP (Traffic) Ashutosh Shukla said that he had worked in Mirzapur, Banda and Chandauli earlier. He had been posted as ASP in Maharajganj since May 2017 and added he would get the benefit of his posting there here. He is originally from Bahrach.

TWO NABBED: Personnel belonging to two police stations of the district arrested two persons along with as many pistols on Wednesday. The police produced both of them in the court from where they were sent to jail. The Gorakhnath police arrested Trimurti Yadav, a resident of Jigina village under the Khalilabad Kotwali police station of Sant Kabir Nagar with a pistol and two cartridges. On the other hand, the Belghat police arrested Panne Lal, a resident of the town with a pistol and a cartridge. Meanwhile the Shahpur police arrested a miscreant, Mainuddin Ansari from an area near the Kowabagh Senior Secondary School and recovered a pistol and a cartridge from his possession. He had been released on bail only a month ago.

4 accused held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MAHOLA

During a drive launched on the direction of SP Manilal Patidar to check motorcycle theft and recover stolen motorcycles four accused were arrested from the road going to Ratauli before Vaarsi forest and eight motorcycles were recovered from them. Under the supervision of ASP Virendra Kumar and CO (City) Jatashankar Rao a team constituted under the leadership of inspector Kotwali City Anil Kumar Singh, comprising S-Is, Bhupendra Singh, Mahendra Singh Bhaduria and Tanveer Ahmed besides constables Narendra Sonkar and Pradeep Kumar on being tipped off by an informer arrested the four accused before Virasi forest. They were identified as Hariom, Bhupendra, Bhupendra alias Chhotu and Brij Kishore Kushawaha. A case was registered against the accused.

Pickup van owner killed in mishap, driver injured

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The owner of a pickup van was killed and its driver seriously injured when the vehicle collided with an uncontrolled dumper on the highway in Koela Nagar under Chakeri police station on Thursday morning. The injured driver was admitted to LLR Hospital (Hallet Hospital).

According to reports, pickup owner Mahendra Pal (40) of Daulatpur, under Sadh police station of Ghatampur, and his driver Monu Pal had gone to



Damaged Picup on the highway in Koela Nagar, Chakeri, on Thursday morning

Pioneer

Naubasta around 5 am on Thursday for loading a consignment. After loading the consignment of doors, they were going to Unnao, when an uncontrolled dumper laden

with crushed stones collided with the pickup from behind on the highway in Koela Nagar (Chakeri), damaging the pickup and injuring its occupants.

The dumper driver escaped leaving the vehicle behind. The local police sent both the injured to LLR Hospital where Mahendra Pal succumbed to his injuries. The condition of Monu Pal was stated to be critical. Chakeri Station House Officer Ram Kumar Gupta said the dumper was impounded and efforts were on to arrest its driver.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY OPEN TENDER NOTICE NO. N-BSB0SnT-OT-2-2020

U.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD. E-Tender Notice Following E-Tenders are invited from the experienced/reputed contractors...

MADHYANCHAL VIDYUT VITRAN NIGAM LTD. HEAD OFFICE 4 A, GOKHLE MARG LUCKNOW. E-TENDER NOTICE Tenders through e-tendering system are invited from reputed manufacturers with adequate experience for Competitive Bidding for supply of Single Phase Two Wire Static Electronic Energy Meter (5-30Amp) DLMS type with Box and seals with following details...

4,343 test +ve on single day in TN

State inches towards 1 lakh cases

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

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



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

While Tamil Nadu has diagnosed 98,392 persons with Covid-29 till date, there are 41,047 active cases in the State on Thursday. The change in the total number of persons tested till date is because of the number of persons who were

cured as well as those who succumbed to coronavirus.

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

Tamil Nadu Government has not reduced the rate of

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

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

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

5 cops held in TN custodial death CB-CID files fresh FIR against Inspector, 4 others

PNS ■ CHENNAI

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

The arrested include an Inspector of Police, two sub-inspectors and two constables who had picked up Jeyaraaj from his mobile phone shop on June 19 allegedly for violating lockdown rules that mandated shopkeepers to down the shutters by 9 pm. Jeyaraaj and Fenix, who was arrested the same night, succumbed allegedly due to police torture on June 21 in the Government General Hospital at Sattankulam. The Tamil Nadu Government had transferred the case to CBI but the Madras High Court which had taken suo motu petition on the custodial deaths asked the CB-CID to take over the probe till the CBI takes charge of the investigation. The High Court was

upset that the cops of Sattankulam Police Station had threatened the Judicial Magistrate who went to the station as part of the judicial enquiry and ordered the district collector to entrust the police station to revenue officials pending enquiry.

Interestingly, the CB-CID officials who took over the probe prepared and registered a new First Information Report under Section 302 of the IPC. The District Police which had earlier probed the case had registered a FIR under Section 174 of the CrPC (suspicious death). The CB-CID police booked Inspector Sidharth, two SIs Raghu Ganesh and Balakrishnan and two constables Murugan and Muthuraj under three Sections, including 302 and 301 of the IPC. The death of the father-son duo as a result of police torture had created a nation-wide uproar with many celebrities including film star Rajinikanth demanding justice for the deceased.

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

It all started with Shamma Kasim, an upcoming film artist complaining to the Police that a group of people who had approached her parents with marriage proposal were hatch-

ing a plan to kidnap her with the intention to ask for ransom money. Shamma's mother filed a police case against five persons who had approached the family with a marriage proposal. The group had furnished fake identities about the youth and his family. This was followed by the group calling on Shamma's parents at her Kochi home. Their dubious behaviour aroused suspicion in the minds of her parents who filed a complaint.

The police arrested all the five youth mentioned in the complaint and took into custody five more persons who are said to be their associates. It turned out that they were members of

a major racket specialising in gold smuggling, blackmailing and flesh trade. On interrogation, the youth disclosed that they were in contact with many more film personalities.

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

NIA likely to probe Malda blast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

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

The reason behind the NIA's intervention is the intensity of the blast, officials said adding the "explosion was so massive that it ripped off the roof of a nearby structure and shattered the window panes of nearby houses besides its sound being heard from a great distance." A hand and the head of the driver were torn and tossed several feet away due to the impact of the blast suggesting "there was something more than met the naked eye." The police in its preliminary findings however suggested a short circuit in the battery box that might have caused the blast while locals said they had noticed a shattered white box at the blast site. The State Crime Investigation Department (CID) was presently conducting the investigations alongside the forensic experts, sources said. The identity of the Toto (e-rickshaw) driver was yet to be established, the police said adding he might have been an outsider working to earn his living in Malda, a town which borders Bangladesh, Bihar's Katihar district and on the third side lie Pakur and Shibganj districts of Jharkhand.

FROM PAGE 1

RAJNATH DEFERS LEH VISIT, REVIEWS LAC SITUATION WITH JAISHANKAR

The pull back plan is to ensure that the two armies, now engaged in stand-off at four sites on the LAC, will go back two to three kms on their respective sides as a major confidence-building measure and defuse tension. In the past few weeks despite such agreements, the Chinese did not retreat and instead continued massive military build-up. Sources also said the Defence Minister's visit was deferred after the Chinese side gave positive signals about its intent to restore peace by retreating. Reacting to the third round of Corps Commander level talks, the Chinese foreign ministry in Beijing said on Wednesday the two sides continue working towards implementing the consensus reached at the two earlier rounds of commander-level talks and made progress in effective measures by frontline troops to disengage and deescalate the situation.

Echoing similar sentiments to normalise situation, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said here on Thursday, "We expect Chinese side to sincerely follow up and ensure expeditious restoration of peace and tranquility in border areas."

He also said discussions at latest meeting of senior commanders of India and China reflected commitment of both sides to reduce tension along the

LAC. The Global Times, the official mouth piece of the Communist regime, said, "China and India have agreed to disengage front-line border troops in batches and take effective measures to ease the situation in border areas."

Sources in South Block confirm that the Chinese have agreed to "step back" a bit from Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Pangong Tso. There is a consensus to create some distance between Indian and Chinese troops, who are eyeball to eyeball at these flash points, and create a buffer zone to avoid any further escalation.

INDIA FASTEST AMONG TOP 15 NATIONS IN COVID RATE

A regional analysis of the global rate of doubling shows that Europe, which bore the brunt of the pandemic in its initial stage and saw massive fatalities, has now learned to live with the virus. Overall, it took 65 days for the cases to double up across Europe --- from 13,61,327 on April 27 to 27,24,343 on July 1. The huge difference between the doubling rate of Europe and Southeast Asia shows how the theater of pandemic has shifted from Europe to Asia.

After Southeast Asia it's the American region, including Latin American countries, which have recorded the fastest doubling rate of 31 days, going from 26,32,998 on May 29 to 52,15,508 on July 1.

The east Mediterranean region

consisting of nations such as Cyprus, Greece, Albania, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Israel took 29 days to double from 5,36,148 on June 2 to 10,68,168 on July 1.

Africa registered a fast rate of doubling of 22 days going from 1,35,412 on June 8 to 2,74,593 on July 1.

The western Pacific region consisting of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia (France), Guam (USA), Hong Kong (China), Japan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Macao (China), Malaysia, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Nauru, New Caledonia, has recorded a doubling rate of 90 days, going up from 1,07,631 on April 2 to 2,14,950 on July 1.

With the economy across the world in the "unlock" mode, health officials will be keeping a close watch on the "rate of doubling" to ensure that the virus does not return with a vengeance to force billions of people indoors again.

TRUMP SEES CHINESE AGGRESSION ...

He said Trump was closely monitoring the situation with India and China and added, "Both India and China have expressed a desire to deescalate and we support a peaceful resolution of the current situation."

Asked about India's decision to ban TikTok and 58 other Chinese phone apps, she referred to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's statement earlier in the day.

He called the apps potential "appendages of the CCP's surveillance state" and welcomed India's decision to ban them.

"India's 'clean app' approach will boost India's sovereignty, will also boost India's integrity and national security as the Indian government itself has stated," he added.

China is building up troops along the LAC, where a clash without firearms between Indian troops and China's Peoples Liberation Army resulted in the deaths of at least 20 Indian Army personnel, including a colonel.

China has refused to say how many of its personnel were killed.

India's Lieutenant General Harinder Singh and China's Major General Liu Lin met on Tuesday at the LAC in an effort to defuse the situation. IANS

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Addition of Long Range Land Attack Missile Systems having a firing range of 1,000 km to the existing arsenal will bolster the attack capabilities of the Navy and the Air Force, it added. Nirbhay, a long range land attack cruise missile with a range of over 1,000 km has under development by DRDO for some time. It is equivalent to the Tomahawk cruise missile of the US.

The IAF has expressed satisfaction on the performance of the Astra BVR and is currently inducting the Astra Mk-I on the Sukhoi fleet. It is also keen on the Astra Mk-II variant being developed by the DRDO.

Pvt trains likely from April 2023

From Page 1

The private entity will have to pay to Indian Railways fixed haulage charges, energy charges as per actual consumption and a share in gross revenue determined through a transparent bidding process.

"Through this the common man will get better trains, better technology and at low cost. The Indian Railways will continue to run 95 per cent of the trains," he said. The statement came a day after Railways formally unveiled its plans to allow private entities to operate passenger trains on its network by inviting requests for qualifications (RFQ) for participation on 109 pairs of routes through 151 modern trains.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Railways invited request for qualifications (RFQ) for private participation for operation of passenger train services over 109 Origin Destination (OD) pairs of routes through intro-

duction of 151 modern trains. The 109 OD Pairs have been formed into 12 clusters across the Indian Railway network. Each train shall have a minimum of 16 coaches. The privatisation would entail private sector investment of about Rs 30,000 crore.

"The objective of the initiative is to introduce modern technology rolling stock with reduced maintenance, reduced transit time, boost job creation, provide enhanced safety, provide world class travel experience to passengers, and also reduce demand supply deficit in the passenger transportation sector," the Ministry had said.

Trains will be designed for a maximum speed of 160 kmph. There would be a substantial reduction in journey time. The running time taken by a train shall be comparable to or faster than the fastest train of Indian Railways operating in the respective route.

India wins case against 2 Italian marines

From Page 1

The Tribunal ruled that the actions of the Italian military officers and, consequently, Italy breached India's freedom of navigation under UNCLOS Article 87 (1) (a) and 90.

In regards to the question of jurisdiction, the Tribunal noted that India and Italy had "concurrent jurisdiction" over the incident and a valid legal basis to institute criminal proceedings against the Marines. The Tribunal rejected Italy's claim to compensation for the detention of the Marines by Indian authorities.

However, the Tribunal has ruled that the two marines accused of shooting two Indian fishermen enjoy immunities that are enjoyed by State

officials. Accordingly, this acts as an "exception to the jurisdiction of the Indian courts". As a result, Indian courts can't judge their case but the Tribunal took note of Italy's commitment that it will resume its criminal investigation into the events of February 15, 2012.

The Tribunal also awarded that India is entitled to payment of compensation in connection with loss of life, physical harm, material damage to property and moral harm suffered by the captain and other crew members of 'St. Antony', the Indian vessel.

The Tribunal further directed the two sides to consult with each other to reach an agreement on the amount of compensation due to India.

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत अनुसंधान खण्ड-1 लो.नि.वि. लखनऊ. नीलामी सूचना एवं शर्तें. दिनांक-23.06.2020

Transgenders' induction

Home Ministry seeks CAPFs' views

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Coordinated efforts showing good result in curbing virus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

"Timely clinical management of Covid-19 cases has resulted in more than 10,000 daily recoveries. During the last 24 hours, a total of 11,881 Covid-19 patients have been cured, taking the cumulative figure to 3,59,859. This further takes the recovery rate to 59.52 per cent," the Ministry said. Presently, there are 2,26,947 active cases and all are under medical supervision.

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

based settings.

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

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

In India, a study by

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

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

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

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

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



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

NEW NORMS AT MONUMENTS FROM JULY 7, 2020

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

plete security from July 6.

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

The SoP mandates wearing

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Thursday told the Supreme Court that 2,765 foreign Tablighis who violated the visa norms will be put on trial and not immediately deported.

The Ministry also said that as many 1906 foreign nationals are still absconding and a Look Out Circular is issued against them. In an affidavit filed before the Apex Court, the Home Ministry said visas of 2,679 have been cancelled, 2,765 blacklisted, 205 FIRs lodged and 1905 lookout notices issued against those absconding. The MHA said the Tablighis from more than 35 countries will be put on

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

Telangana to name a few.

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

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

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

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

Brig dies of corona, IAS officer down with disease

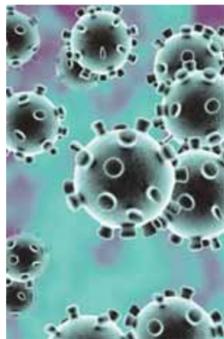
SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

IAS officer of the Joint Secretary rank have been diagnosed with the dreaded disease. The senior officer working with the Land and Land Revenue Department has been home quarantined and her office on the sixth floor of the State secretariat at Nabanna has been sanitized, sources said. She is the first IAS rank officer to contract the disease in the State. The government employees who had come in contact with the officer too have been sent for home quarantine.

Meanwhile, amid rising pandemic cases in Bengal there was some respite for



Capital Kolkata where the number of containment zones came down from

around 1,800 to 1496 on Thursday, sources said adding however that the total number of containment zones in the State was about 3,500 on the second day of Unlock - II period.

Apart from this, two districts including Alipurduar in North Bengal have once again entered the "green zone" back from "red zone" while the remaining 21 districts were still in the red zone category.

Elsewhere, senior Trinamool Congress leader and MP Sougato Roy on Thursday welcomed the proposed Central amendment in the electoral laws enabling the people above 65 years of

age and those suffering from corona to vote from home. The new regulations were likely to be implemented in the coming Assembly elections in Bihar which goes to polls later this year.

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now, a telecom war

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



Yes, the economic realities of China dominating much of our product supply chains, from electronics to drugs, weigh heavy on us. Yes, we are deeply aware of sudden disruptions, litigation and fair trade violations if we take a dramatic step of boycotting China overnight. And while building self-sufficiencies is a long-term and sustained effort, there is no reason why we cannot begin taking *atma nirbharta* seriously while we can. For the latest Chinese ambush at Ladakh has cost us 20 soldiers and over-tested our patience and our strategic responsibility in the region. China

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

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

Size does matter

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



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

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

The enemies within

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



AJOY KUMAR

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUNDBITE

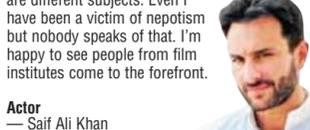
Shashank/j must be having mixed feelings from what could have been done for the promotion of cricket at the international level and what was done to the game during his tenure.

Former BCCI secretary —Niranjan Shah



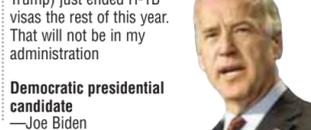
Nepotism, favoritism and camps are different subjects. Even I have been a victim of nepotism but nobody speaks of that. I'm happy to see people from film institutes come to the forefront.

Actor —Saif Ali Khan



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

Democratic presidential candidate —Joe Biden



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

Union Minister —Nitin Gadkari



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Damp squib

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

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

N Nagarajan Secunderabad

Changing the rules of engagement

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

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

SK Prabhakar Gurugram



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

Further action needed

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

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

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

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

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

M Pradyu Kannur

Mumbai sets example

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

Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

An eco-friendly innovation

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



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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



NOT INDIA, IT IS ME WHO IS DEMANDING YOUR RESIGNATION. YOU MUST FURNISH PROOF OF SUCH IRRESPONSIBLE REMARKS.
 —CHAIRMAN OF THE NEPAL COMMUNIST PARTY
 PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL 'PRACHANDA'

It's not that elementary

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



INDRANIL DE

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Put the migrant workers front and centre

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



ONKAR NATH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Centre's decision to impose a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is a former Additional Deputy CAG)

World Bank grants \$750 mn support to small biz

Lauds Govt's MSME package

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Government had in May announced a support

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

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

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

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

not fall victim to the downturn," he said.

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

A sharp recovery in the rupee added to the momentum, traders said. After soaring 600 points during the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 429.25 points, or 1.21 per cent, higher at 35,843.70.

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

M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, jumping 6.05 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Steel, HCL Tech, Infosys and TCS. On the other hand, Axis Bank, HUL, Kotak Bank, ICICI

Bank and Bharti Airtel tumbled out to 2.24 per cent.

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

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

Global indices were positive following news of encouraging trials of a vaccine being developed for the virus. Global markets are awaiting US employment figures, due out later today, to see the progress of the US economy and its resultant impact on global economic growth.

"Indian benchmark indices have sustained their momentum while upsides seem to be limited. Investors are advised to watch out for any signs of trend reversal and keep booking short term profits," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Sector-wise, BSE, IT, auto, consumer durables, teck, industrials, capital goods and power indices jumped up to 2.91 per cent, while bank ended in the red.

Broader BSE mid-cap and small-cap indices spurted up to 1.04 per cent.

On the currency front, the rupee appreciated 56 paise to settle at 75.04 against the US dollar.

In rest of Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with significant gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading around 1 per cent higher in early deals.

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

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

Emphasising that at this juncture Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is the need of the hour, the senior minister

said such funds would benefit the country as there is a need for pumping in liquidity into the market. Economic activities have been significantly disrupted in the wake of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns that were in place to curb spreading of infections.

"Country at this juncture needs liquidity. Without liquidity our economy's wheel will not accelerate... ₹50-60 lakh crore foreign investment is

needed in the country under present circumstances to boost the economy," the Road Transport, Highways and MSME Minister told PTI in an interview.

Infrastructure sector including highways, airports, inland waterways, railways, logistic parks, broad gauge and metro, apart from Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) can attract large scale foreign investment, he noted.

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

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

"Some MSMEs are already listed on the BSE. I have talked to investors in Dubai and the US to come and invest in such

MSMEs based on their three-year turnover, GST track record, IT record and good rating.

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

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

a crucial role," he said.

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

Further, the minister noted that public private partnerships can help harness huge funds and would have a cascading impact by generating more employment and boosting the economy.

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

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

The rupee opened at 75.51 against the US dollar and gained further ground to touch a day's high of 74.99. The local unit settled at 75.04 against the US dollar, up 56 paise over its previous close. This is the highest closing level since March 27 when the rupee had settled at 74.89. It had settled at 75.60 against the greenback on Wednesday.

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	10,493.05	10,598.20	10,485.55	10,551.70	121.65
M&M	506.5	532	504.4	531	32.05
HEROMOTOCO	2550.00	2685.00	2550.00	2680.00	132.55
CIPLA	630	654.45	626	650.95	23.85
TITAN	956.95	994	953.1	984.2	36
HCLTECH	555	572.4	552.9	570.95	19.2
INFY	737.35	765.45	735.4	756	24.1
IOC	86.5	88.9	85.95	88.45	2.8
TATASTEEL	327.05	337.5	324.55	334.15	10.45
TCS	2,102.00	2,165.00	2,098.00	2,159.00	66.95
HDFC	1,852.95	1,899.00	1,842.60	1,892.85	57.7
TECHM	549.9	562.5	542.5	562.5	16.6
MARUTI	5,850.00	5,960.00	5,762.80	5,938.00	134.9
ONGC	81.35	84.15	81.1	82.25	1.8
WIPRO	221	225.45	219.55	223.65	4.6
IT	936	950.7	926	941.25	16.95
LTC	204.45	206.75	202.55	206.6	3.7
RELIANCE	1,743.00	1,767.60	1,735.05	1,759.50	28.4
INFRAEL	219.5	222.95	218.25	222.2	3.55
JSWSTEEL	192.35	195	190.05	194.5	3.05
SUNPHARMA	468	474.95	467.95	474.9	6.75
BAJAJ-AUTO	2,857.90	2,903.45	2,837.10	2,877.25	35.2
POWERGRID	173.5	176.8	172.6	175.45	2
RPL	382.95	391.35	378.75	384.4	4.25
ADANI-PORTS	346	349.6	344.9	347.05	3.25
TATAMOTORS	100.75	102.95	100.4	101.65	0.9
GAIL	104.25	106	103.15	103.65	0.7
HDFCBANK	1,090.30	1,111.25	1,085.20	1,091.50	6.9
SHREECEM	22,850.00	22,950.00	22,511.00	22,806.00	142.5
ULTRACEMCO	3,311.00	3,347.00	3,282.00	3,320.00	21.4
GRASIM	614.95	631.55	614.95	617.25	2.9
SBN	185.65	188	184	185.6	0.8
BAJAJFINS	61,999.95	62,607.00	61,121.65	61,900.00	20.65
INDUSINDBK	498	508	493	494	1.55
HINDALCO	148.9	150.3	146.75	147.9	0.35
DREDDY	3,946.00	3,979.00	3,901.00	3,918.00	6.55
ASIANPAINT	1,700.00	1,704.00	1,660.10	1,689.00	1
COALINDIA	134.05	135	132.8	133.75	-0.1
ZEE	177	179.25	173	175.25	-0.15
ICICIBANK	366	370.9	361.35	363.6	-0.45
BAIFINANCE	2,980.00	3,016.00	2,925.00	2,990.00	-3.9
BRITANNIA	3,553.00	3,567.65	3,512.05	3,540.30	-5.65
NESTLEIND	16,985.00	16,985.00	16,661.10	16,770.05	-28.8
KOTAKBANK	1,358.15	1,371.90	1,342.30	1,353.70	-3.05
NHPC	94.5	94.5	93.15	93.35	-0.25
BHARTIARTL	564.8	567	557.6	558.55	-1.6
EICHERMOT	18,401.95	18,548.95	17,970.00	18,315.00	-86.95
HINDUNILVR	2,167.75	2,186.65	2,145.00	2,157.00	-13.4
VEDL	108	108.65	106	106.75	-0.95
UPL	451.35	453.75	440.35	442.5	-4.45
AXISBANK	441	441.5	421.3	424.8	-8.45

BSE 500

SCRIP	Open	High	Low	LTP	UPDN
BAIFINANCE	2985	3014.85	2926.15	2968.75	217.9
RELIANCE	1750	1766.8	1734.4	1760.55	205.45
AXISBANK	440.5	441.45	421.3	423.55	214.1
IDEA	10.14	10.4	9.75	10.04	214.1
RBLBANK	176	181.2	175.05	177.45	214.1
HDFCBANK	227.8	233	221.6	225.15	214.1
INDUSINDBK	1091	1110.75	1085.5	1089.7	214.1
BANDHANBANK	330.55	335.5	330.05	346.1	214.1
INDUSINDBK	496.65	508	493	494.65	214.1
HDFC	1849	1898.8	1842.35	1889.3	214.1
ICICIBANK	361.9	370.75	362.7	CANFINHOME	214.1
INFY	735.8	765.05	735.8	756.3	214.1
IRCTC	1440	1462.8	1395.35	1411.9	214.1
SBN	185.45	188	184.05	185.45	214.1
TATASTEEL	325.8	337.55	324.5	334.95	214.1
LTC	937	950.7	925.75	940.65	214.1
TCS	2096.1	2165	2096.1	2158.35	214.1
M&M	506	531.9	505.55	529.75	214.1
KRBL	263.85	271.65	265.25	265.8	214.1
KOTAKBANK	1359.7	1371.4	1342.85	1351.65	214.1
TECHM	549.9	562.5	542.75	562.5	214.1
ITM	204.3	206.75	202.65	206	214.1
EMAMILTD	228.2	229.1	218	224.95	214.1
TATAPOWER	46.95	50.6	45.8	49.85	214.1
GLNMARKET	432.05	442.05	427.9	435.2	214.1
DIVISLAB	2114.9	2241	2094.6	2197.1	214.1
MARUTI	5813.05	5961.25	5762.65	5948.45	214.1
HINDUNILVR	2151	2170.05	2115	2152.2	214.1
ONGC	81.5	84.1	81.1	81.9	214.1
M&MFIN	175.75	186.65	174.85	185	214.1
BRITANNIA	6089.9	6262.75	6117.95	6189.1	214.1
INDIAMART	2180	2191.4	2079	2119	214.1
TITAN	956	993.7	938	986.35	214.1
HEROMOTOCO	2567	2684.85	2561.75	2672.55	214.1
CIPLA	631.9	654.45	625.7	645.8	214.1
TATAMOTORS	101	102.95	100.45	101.55	214.1
ASHOKLEY	48.1	49.45	48	49.1	214.1
IOC	86.05	89	85.95	88.4	214.1
NTPC	94.5	94.5	93.35	93.55	214.1
FRETAIL	142.1	142.1	136.2	142.1	214.1
MOTHERSUMI	98	104.2	97.85	103.65	214.1
PEL	1376	1421	1376	1389.1	214.1
ESCORTS	1044.7	1050.95	1021.6	1041.2	214.1
LICHSGFIN	280	283.8	276.8	282.15	214.1
SUNPHARMA*	468.2	474.7	468	473.5	214.1
BHEL	37.4	37.4	36.4	36.7	214.1
NHPC	155.15	157.15	153.25	153.9	214.1
POWERGRID	174.95	176.7	172.7	175	214.1
ASIANPAINT	1693	1707.7	1660.3	1686.7	214.1
BHARTIARTL	565.7	566.7	557.5	558.5	214.1
BAJAJ-AUTO	2869.95	2913.3	2793.2	2868.75	214.1
ADANIGREEN	323.8	357.8	323.8	357.8	214.1
VEDL	108	108.65	106.05	106.4	214.1
EQUITAS	52.5	55.4	52.1	54.8	214.1
BEL	90	90.3	88.55	89	214.1
FCNSUMER	15.35	16	15.35	15.35	214.1
CHOLAFIN	199.95	201.7	192.25	197.2	214.1
PELICOR	4245	4313.4	4125	4179	

HONG KONG CITIZENSHIP PLAN

China threatens retaliation against UK

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

Britain's offer came in response to a sweeping new security law that China unveiled for the former British territory this week. Hong Kong was under UK jurisdiction until it was handed over to China in 1997 with a guarantee that Beijing would preserve the city's judicial and legislative autonomy for 50 years. The Chinese embassy in London stressed that "all Chinese compatriots residing in Hong Kong are Chinese nationals". The British plan covers almost three million Hong Kongers who either have a British National Overseas (BNO) passport or are eligible to apply for one. The embassy said these people were Chinese nationals as well.

well as international law and basic norms governing international relations," it said in a statement.

"We firmly oppose this and reserve the right to take corresponding measures," it said without elaborating. Beijing has never publicly raised the possibility of offering Britons either Chinese citizenship or broader residence rights.

The Chinese statement concluded by urging London to reassess its decision and "refrain from interfering in Hong Kong affairs in any way". Britain had sought closer relations with China after ending its decades-long membership in the European Union this year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government also irritated the US administration in January by allowing the private Chinese telecoms group Huawei to enroll Britain's speedy new data network.

But Britain is now studying ways it can cut Huawei out of its system entirely and build up an alliance of European and Asian providers that reduces China's dominance in the field. **AFP**

Hong Kong protester arrested on suspicion of stabbing police

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

About 370 people were arrested during and after Wednesday's protests against the law being imposed by China to curb activities surrounding the anti-government protests that has been ongoing since June last year. Ten of them were arrested on suspicion of violating the new security law, some of whom were in possession of paraphernalia that advocated for Hong Kong's independence. The law took effect Tuesday and outlaws secessionist, subversive, and terrorist acts, as well as any collusion with foreign forces when it comes to the intervening in the city's affairs. **AP**

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

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

Amidst global anger and outrage in Hong Kong, Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday signed the legislation soon after lawmakers voted unanimously to adopt the law that will allow Beijing to crackdown against dissent, criminalising sedition and effectively curtailing protests with punishments up to life in prison.

Hong Kong police on Wednesday arrested 10 people under the law, which came into effect on Tuesday, as thousands of agitators defied tear

gas and pepper pellets to protest against the legislation.

Prime Minister Morrison told reporters that he was disturbed by the crackdowns on protesters in Hong Kong.

Replying to a question on if Australia would offer a safe haven for Hong Kong residents, he said, "We are considering (it) very actively and there are proposals that I asked to be brought forward several weeks ago."

The prime minister said the Cabinet would soon consider "to provide similar opportunities" to what the UK has offered to Hong Kongers.

"When we have made a final decision on those arrangements I'll make an announcement, but if you're asking are we prepared to step up and provide support, the answer is yes," Morrison said. **PTI**

China condemns 'foreign meddling' in Hong Kong

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

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said no amount of pressure from external forces could "shake China's determination and will to safeguard national sovereignty and Hong Kong's prosperity and stability".

He urged the US to abide by international law and stop interfering in Hong Kong's affairs, and not sign a sanction bill into law.

His comments came after the US House of Representatives on Wednesday joined the Senate in approving a bill to rebuke China over its crackdown in Hong Kong by imposing sanctions on groups that undermine the city's

autonomy or restrict freedoms promised to its residents. If the bill becomes law, "China will definitely take strong countermeasures, and all consequences will be borne by the US side," Zhao said at a daily briefing.

Meanwhile, dozens of pro-Beijing activists and lawmakers protested outside the US Consulate in Hong Kong to demand that the US stop meddling. The group said it gathered 1.6 million signatures online in support of its call.

Tam Yiu-Chung, Hong Kong's sole delegate to the National People's Congress Standing Committee, said on public broadcaster RTHK on Thursday that the new security law imposed by Beijing on Hong Kong was not harsh. If it were, no one would dare violate the law, he said.

His comments came a day after thousands of protesters marched against the security law, which took effect in Hong Kong late Tuesday. **AP**

Jeffrey Epstein associate Ghislaine held

Washington (AP): British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell was arrested by the FBI on Thursday on charges she helped procure underage sex partners for financier Jeffrey Epstein.

An indictment made public Thursday said Maxwell, who lived for years with Epstein and was his frequent travel companion on trips around the world, facilitated Epstein's crimes by "helping Epstein to recruit, groom, and ultimately abuse" girls as young as 14. It also said she participated in the sexual abuse.

Epstein killed himself in a federal detention center in New York last summer while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

Maxwell has, for years, been accused by many women of recruiting them to give Epstein massages, during which they were pressured into sex. Those accusations, until now, never resulted in criminal charges.

The indictment included counts of conspiracy to entice minors to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, enticement of a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, conspiracy to transport minors with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity, transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and two counts of perjury.

Messages were sent Thursday to several of Maxwell's attorneys seeking comment. She has previously repeatedly denied wrongdoing and called some of the claims against her "absolute rubbish." Among the most sensational accusations was a claim by one Epstein victim, Virginia Roberts Giuffre, that Maxwell arranged for her to have sex with Britain's Prince Andrew at her London townhouse. Giuffre bolstered her allegations with a picture of her, Andrew and Giuffre that she said was taken at the time.

Andrew denied her story. He was not mentioned by name in the indictment. The court papers said Epstein's abuse of girls occurred at his Manhattan mansion and other residences in Palm Beach, Florida; Sante Fe, New Mexico and London.

Maxwell was described in a lawsuit by another Epstein victim, Sarah Ransome, as the "highest-ranking employee" of Epstein's alleged sex trafficking enterprise. She oversaw and trained recruiters, developed recruiting plans and helped conceal the activity from law enforcement, the lawsuit alleged. The indictment mirrored many of the claims previously made in civil lawsuits against Maxwell.

It said that as early as 1994, Maxwell would "entice and groom" minor girls by asking them about their lives, their schools and their families.

Daniel Pearl's killers custody extended for 3 more months

PTI ■ KARACHI

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

the Supreme Court on June 29 rejected a petition filed by the Sindh government to suspend a high court verdict that overturned the conviction of the four men.

The court, however, allowed the province to take measures to keep them in custody. Their detention expired on July 1. Officials said that the Sindh Government extended their custody for another 90 days. **PTI**

Jaishankar to headline India summit in UK

London (PTI): External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will headline an India Global Week summit on the vision for a post-pandemic world next week, pitched as one of the biggest international events on India's globalisation.

Themed #BeTheRevival: India and a Better New World, the three-day conference between July 9 and 11 will offer a virtual platform to explore business, strategic and cultural opportunities that India has to offer the world and deliberate on the challenges faced globally beyond COVID-19.

Organised by UK-based media house India Inc. Group, the webinar will include sessions on Geopolitics, Business, Arts & Culture, Emerging Technologies, Banking and Finance, Pharma, Defence and Security, Social

Impact and the impact of the Indian Diaspora. It will also feature country-specific sessions on Australia, Japan, Singapore, the US, and the UK.

"As we emerge out of the shadows of COVID-19, let us direct our energies towards understanding challenges and making informed decisions to rebuild in the post-pandemic world," said Manoj Ladwa, Founder & CEO of India Inc. Group - the organisers of the annual conference, being held virtually in the coronavirus lockdown scenario.

"In these three days, we will not only look towards building optimism but also charting a course of action that India can take in concert with global economies to revive and rebuild for a better and brighter future," he said.

Landslide at Myanmar jade mine kills at least 162

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

The Myanmar Fire Service Department, which coordinates rescues and other emergency services, announced about 12 hours after the morning disaster that 162 bodies were recovered from the landslide in Hpakant, the center of the world's biggest and most lucrative jade mining industry. The most detailed estimate of Myanmar's jade industry said it generated about \$31 billion in 2014. Hpakant is a



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

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

"The jade miners were smothered by a wave of mud," the Fire Service said. It said 54

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

ing. Those taking part in the recovery operations, which were suspended after dark, included the army and other government units and local volunteers. The London-based environmental watchdog Global Witness said the accident "is a damning indictment of the government's failure to curb reckless and irresponsible mining practices in Kachin state's jade mines."

"The government should immediately suspend large-scale, illegal and dangerous mining in Hpakant and ensure companies that engage in these practices are no longer able to operate," it said in a statement.

At the site of the tragedy, a crowd gathered in the rain around corpses shrouded in blue and red plastic sheets

placed in a row on the ground. Emergency workers had to slog through heavy mud to retrieve bodies by wrapping them in the plastic sheets, which were then hung on crossed wooden poles shouldered by the recovery teams.

Social activists have complained that the profitability of jade mining has led businesses and the government to neglect enforcement of already very weak regulations in the jade mining industry.

"The multi-billion dollar sector is dominated by powerful military-linked companies, armed groups and cronies that have been allowed to operate without effective social and environmental controls for years," Global Witness said. **AP**

78% of voters back extending Putin's rule

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

In the week-long balloting that concluded on Wednesday, 77.9% voted for the changes, and 21.3% voted against, with 100% of the precincts counted by Thursday morning, Russia's Central Election Commission

said. The turnout exceeded 64%, according to officials.

The reported numbers reflect the highest level of voter support for Putin in 10 years. In the 2018 presidential election, 76.7% of voters supported his candidacy, while in the 2012 election only 63.6% did.

But Kremlin critics say the numbers alone show they are false, with an unrealistic approval rating for the Russian leader amid wide frustration in the country over declining living standards. **AP**

Russia denies supplying weapons to Taliban

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

Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova rejected the claim by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who said Wednesday that he had repeatedly raised the issue during his talks with the Russians.

"Russia has only supplied weapons to the legitimate government of Afghanistan, which is well known," Zakharova said at a briefing. On Wednesday, Pompeo said that "the Russians

have been selling small arms that have put Americans at risk there for 10 years."

He added: "When I meet with my Russian counterparts, I talk with them about this each time: 'Stop this.'" Russia, which has long been critical of the US-led operation in Afghanistan, welcomed February's peace deal between the US and the Taliban aimed at ending the protracted war. Zakharova didn't comment on Thursday on reports that Moscow offered bounties for killing US troops in Afghanistan, but other Russian officials have denounced them as fake. **AP**

LAWMAKERS TO GET CLASSIFIED BRIEFING ON RUSSIA BOUNTY INTEL

Washington: US officials will provide a classified briefing for congressional leaders Thursday about intelligence assessment that Russia offered bounties for killing US troops in Afghanistan. The meeting comes as Trump, who says he wasn't briefed on the information because it wasn't verified, is under increasing pressure to provide answers about the US Response to Russia or the lack of one. **AP**

US adds 4.8 million jobs as unemployment falls

Washington (PTI): The US has added as many as 4.8 million new jobs in the month of June, bringing down the unemployment rate to 11.1 per cent, latest monthly figures said on Thursday, prompting President Donald Trump to say that the American economy was "roaring back" after being devastated by the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

The unemployment rate declined by 2.2 percentage points to 11.1 per cent in June, and the number of unemployed persons fell by 3.2 million to 17.8 million. In all, 4.8 million jobs were created in June, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics said in its latest monthly report.

"Our economy is roaring back," President Trump told reporters during a White House news conference.

But, the Wall Street Journal said that the US labour market is operating with millions fewer jobs than in February, the month before the coronavirus pandemic struck the country's economy.

Unemployment rate in May was 13.3 per cent and in June at 11.1 per cent, registering a one of the largest one-month drop.

Trump at his hurriedly convened press conference described it as a "spectacular news" for American workers and families and for the country as a whole.

"There's not been anything like this. Record setting. It was just put out that the United States economy added almost 5 million jobs in the month of June, shattering all expectations. I was watching this morning and the expectations were much lower than that," he said.

The stock market is doing extremely well, which means jobs, he said. A total of 7.5 million jobs created in the last two months, and that's a record by many millions of jobs, he added.

"Today's announcement proves that our economy is roaring back. It's coming back extremely strong...."

"It's coming back extremely strong. We have some areas where we are putting out the flames or the fires, and that's working out where well," said the president.

Trump said that this has been possible due to the historic actions taken by his administration.

"My administration has taken working with our partners in Congress to rescue the US economy from a horrible event that was formed, took place in China and came here and they could have stopped it. Nobody likes to write that, but they could have stopped it. They know it and

I know it," he said.

"Through the Paycheck Protection Program, we've extended over USD 520 billion in loans to nearly five million small businesses saving and supporting the jobs of 10s of millions of American workers. This has been a tremendous success. Levels that nobody has ever seen before. But we saved all of those—all of those jobs and all of those small businesses. And some will be large businesses soon, perhaps," he said.

In a statement, Brian Coulton, Chief Economist at Fitch Ratings, said that the fact that the unemployment fell far more than expected despite a rising participation rate underlines the rebound in employment, most strikingly in leisure and hospitality.

"Nearly 5 million people on temporary lay-off in May went back to work. But slightly more sobering is the upward creep up in permanent job losers which, along with the recent rise in virus cases, emphasize the recovery challenges ahead," Coulton said.

The US is currently the worst-hit nation by the deadly disease. The country has reported 2.68 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and over 128,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

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

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

The UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) said on Thursday that it successfully broke into EncroChat, a major provider of encrypted communications offering a secure mobile phone instant messaging service, as part of Operation

Venetic - dubbed one of the largest law enforcement operations of its kind which also led to considerable criminal cash, firearms and drugs being seized.

"This operation demonstrates that criminals will not get away with using encrypted devices to plot vile crimes under the radar," said UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.

"The NCA's relentless targeting of these gangs has helped to keep us all safe. I congratulate them and law enforcement

partners on this significant achievement. I will continue working closely with the NCA and others to tackle the use of such devices - giving them the resources, powers and tools they need to keep our country safe," she said.

EncroChat had 60,000 users worldwide, with around 10,000 in the UK, and its sole use was to coordinate and plan the distribution of illicit commodities, money laundering and plotting to kill rival criminals. **PTI**

New Zealand's Health Minister resigns after virus blunders

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

David Clark had earlier described himself as an "idiot" for breaking the nation's lockdown measures and then last week appeared to blame a beloved health official for border lapses, generating an angry response from the public.

Announcing his resignation, Clark said he'd put all his energy into the job.

"But it has become increasingly clear to me that my continuation in the role is distracting from the government's

overall response to COVID-19," he said.

Clark said he intended to remain in the parliament as a lower-ranking lawmaker.

New Zealand's health response has been praised around the world after the country managed to eliminate community transmission of the virus. But Clark himself has been widely ridiculed.

His latest gaffe came last week when he appeared to place the blame for allowing some returning travelers to leave quarantine without being tested with his top official, Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield. **AP**

Johnson's father flies to Greece despite ban

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

Stanley Johnson posted videos on Instagram taken from a plane with the words "Arriving in Athens this evening!" as well as a photo of himself in a mask in what appeared to be an airport.

The elder Johnson, 79, has a villa in Greece.

Greece has banned flights from the UK until at least July 15. The Daily Mail reported that Stanley Johnson flew to Athens via Bulgaria.

He told the newspaper he was visiting Greece on "essential business trying to COVID-proof my property." Opposition politicians accused the prime minister's father of flouting lockdown rules. **AP**

Ban gives tobacco illegal drug status in South Africa

Cape Town: The message was dropped into a WhatsApp group used by suburban moms in South Africa. Amid the grumblings over homeschooling during lockdown, one mom went off topic: "Does anyone know where to get illegal cigarettes? I just need a few. I'm desperate." She emphasised her anguish with an emoji, a face with eyes bulging and tongue hanging out.

The "desperate mama," as she described herself, is one of 9 million smokers in South Africa affected by the government's decision in late March to

ban the sale of all tobacco products, ostensibly to help protect citizens' health during the coronavirus pandemic.

The ban remains even after South Africa eased most of its strict lockdown restrictions, including another contentious outlawing of alcohol sales.

Confirmed COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly in Africa's most developed economy. But that economy is suffering, and now restaurants, cinemas and even casinos are set to reopen. And allowing the people to purchase alcohol again has led to an increase in

drunken brawls and traffic accidents, putting added strain on hospitals as they deal with the virus. Yet it's still illegal to buy a pack of cigarettes.

"It makes no sense," said Sinenhlanhla Mnguni, chairman of the Fair Trade Independent Tobacco Association, which represents smaller manufacturers.

The association challenged the ban in court and lost. Another case, with global industry giant British American Tobacco taking the government to court, has begun. **AP**

Trend Slazer

Saif trolled for claim on nepotism

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

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

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



'Remember that photo of yourself from five years ago that makes you feel bad about your current weight? Well,

that same person five years ago had something else making her feel bad about her weight. We're programmed to feel unworthy. Be kind to yourself and your body. Your weighing scale doesn't define you, you do!

—Neha Dhupia

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

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

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



Never Have I Ever renewed

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

With the show, she has used her "relationship with being Hindu" and the experience of "straddling the lines of two cultures" to narrate story of a 15-year-old Devi, first-generation Indian American, and her desperation to feel that she belongs in the society.

"The scene where Devi prays to her household shrine of Gods, it's a lot similar to my upbringing. And when I was a teenager, I resisted wearing Indian clothes because while beautiful, I found them itchy and hard to wear," she said.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Sleep well

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Worthy successor

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'People have seen enough of formula'

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

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

She adds, "People are always looking to immerse themselves into something new. That's been our biggest strength. From *Phillauri*, *Pari* and now *Bulbbul*, while we have accidentally created a sub-genre of supernatural feminism films, we have consciously told the story through the lens of clutter-breaking visual effects."

Karnesh is delighted that *Bulbbul*'s VFX has been hailed unanimously. The use of symbolism like the red moon to evoke elements of rebellion, passion and revolution has been lapped up by the audience and critics alike.

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



THAT RIGHT INGREDIENT



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

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

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

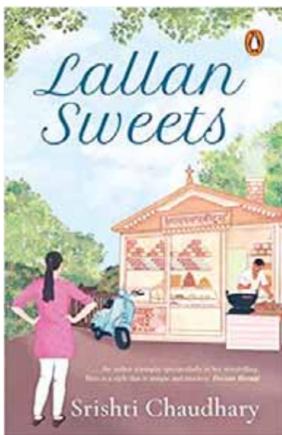
HERE ARE TWO EXTRACTS:

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

"Not inherited?" Pappu Uncle asked blankly.

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

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

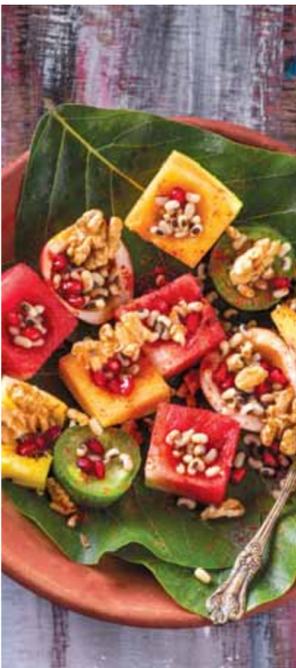
Chapter 19:

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

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

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

R E C I P E S



BEETROOT KACHORI

WHAT YOU NEED

- Refined flour: 1 cup
- Semolina: ¼ cup
- Ghee: 3 tbsp
- Beetroot puree: ½ cup
- Honey: 1 tbsp
- Gulab Jamun: 4
- Oil
- Cardamom powder: 1 tsp

METHOD

- In mixing bowl, add refined flour, semolina, ghee and mix well.
- Add beetroot puree, honey and start kneading into dough.



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

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



VIRGINIA PEANUT SOUP

WHAT YOU NEED

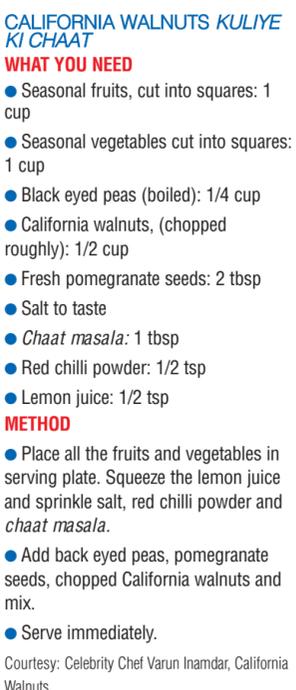
- Butter: 2 tbsp
- Onion (chopped): 1
- Chicken stock: 6 cups
- All-purpose flour: 2 tbsp
- Heavy cream: 1 cup
- Natural peanut butter: 1 1/2 cups
- Hot sauce: 2 tsp
- Limes (juiced): 2
- Peanuts (chopped): 2 tbsp
- Scallions (chopped): 2

METHOD

- Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed pot over medium heat.

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

● Garnish with the chopped peanuts and scallions.
Courtesy: Chef Chris Carey, Ashby Inn.



CALIFORNIA WALNUTS KULIYE KI CHAAT

WHAT YOU NEED

- Seasonal fruits, cut into squares: 1 cup
- Seasonal vegetables cut into squares: 1 cup
- Black eyed peas (boiled): 1/4 cup
- California walnuts, (chopped roughly): 1/2 cup
- Fresh pomegranate seeds: 2 tbsp
- Salt to taste
- Chaat masala: 1 tbsp
- Red chilli powder: 1/2 tsp
- Lemon juice: 1/2 tsp

METHOD

- Place all the fruits and vegetables in serving plate. Squeeze the lemon juice and sprinkle salt, red chilli powder and chaat masala.
- Add black eyed peas, pomegranate seeds, chopped California walnuts and mix.
- Serve immediately.

Courtesy: Celebrity Chef Varun Inamdar, California Walnuts.

TOASTED ALMONDS AND TOMATO UTTAPAM PIZZA

WHAT YOU NEED

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



METHOD

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

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

NILGIRI TURKEY KORMA

WHAT YOU NEED

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

tbsp

- Garam masala powder: 10 gm
- Oil: 100 ml
- Salt to taste
- Water for use

METHOD

- In a cooker, add turkey meat, salt, turmeric powder and water.
- Cover with lid and boil it. Put it aside when the turkey is boiled.
- In a mixer jar, add spinach leaves, mint leaves, coriander leaves, green chilli, water and grind it into a fine paste.



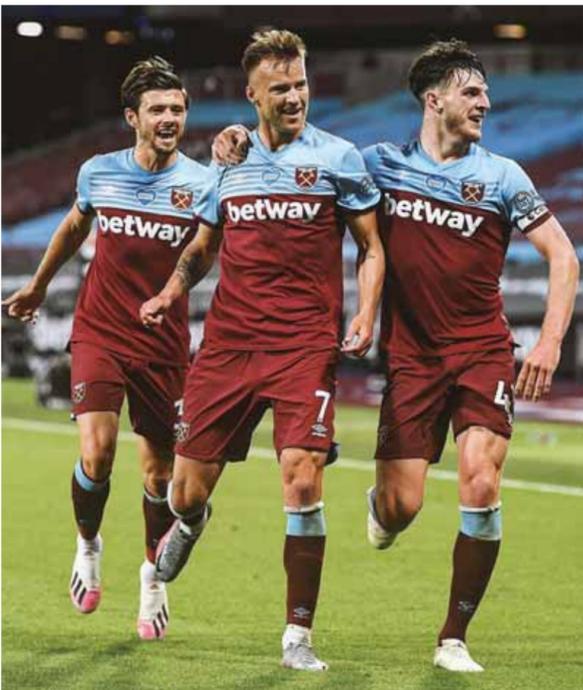
- In a pan, add oil, then add *shahi jeera*, chopped onions, ginger garlic paste, and fry for five minutes.
- Add boiled turkey meat pieces and mix well. Then add fresh curry leaves and mix well. Cook for 10 minutes.
- After that add coconut paste and mix well until the oil oozes out.
- Add curd, salt to taste, ground spinach paste and mix well for five minutes. Fry until aromatic.

- Add one glass of water and mix well, then add coriander powder and mix again.
- Cover with lid to boil the turkey meat for 10 minutes.
- After 10 minutes, open the lid and stir well.
- When curry is almost done, add *garam masala* powder and stir. Add fresh coriander leaves, put in a serving bowl, and serve hot.

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

HAMMERS BLOW

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

to reach that landmark.

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

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

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



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51 & COUNTING

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

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

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

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

FOXES OUTFOXED

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

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

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

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

NUMBER GAME

- 10** Chelsea lost their 10th league game of the season on Wednesday; only in 2015-16, when they finished 10th, have they suffered more defeats in a single campaign in Roman Abramovich era (12)
- 18** Only West Ham (22) & Aston Villa (19) have dropped more points from leading positions in this season than Chelsea (18)
- 1** Willian is the first player to score a penalty and a direct free-kick goal in the same PL game since Cesc Fabregas did so for Chelsea against West Ham in March 2016
- 2** Tomas Soucek is the 12th Czech player to score a Premier League goal and the second to do so for West Ham after Radoslav Kovac
- 12** Willian is the first player to score a Premier League goal in every month of the year
- 2** Following their 1-0 win at Stamford Bridge in November, West Ham complete their first league double over Chelsea since 2002-03 — a campaign in which the Hammers were relegated from the Premier League
- 9** Everton are unbeaten in their last nine PL games at Goodison Park (W5 D4); their longest run without a league defeat there since between April and December 2016 (11 games)
- 1** Everton were awarded their first penalty of the season in the PL on Wednesday, having been the only side yet to win one. They had gone 38 league games without taking a spot-kick
- 50** Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has scored his 50th PL goal in fewer appearances (79) than any other Arsenal player, and is the 6th fastest to this total among all PL players
- 3** Allan Saint-Maximim has become just the third Newcastle player to assist three goals in a single PL game, after Moussa Sissoko v Norwich in Oct 2015 and Andy Cole v West Ham in March 1994

SINGLES

- WI LEGEND EVERTON WEEKES DIES AGED 95**
- BRIDGETOWN:** Legendary batsman Everton Weekes, the last of the famed Windies 'Three Ws', died on Wednesday at the age of 95 and was hailed as "a founding father" of the sport in the Caribbean. "Our hearts are heavy as we mourn the loss of an icon. A legend, our hero, Sir Everton Weekes," tweeted Cricket West Indies. "Our condolences go out to his family, friends and many fans around the world. May he rest in peace." Barbadian Weekes was part of a feared post-World War II West Indies team which also featured Clyde Walcott and Frank Worrell.
- FULTON QUILTS AS BLACKCAPS BATTING COACH**
- AUCKLAND:** Peter Fulton has quit as New Zealand's batting coach to take up the job of head coach of the Canterbury men's team. Fulton, a former int'l player who featured in 23 Tests and 49 ODIs for Kiwis, took up the position with the national team in August 2019 and travelled to Sri Lanka and Australia besides being part of the home tours against England and India. Fulton said he had enjoyed his time with the national team but the Canterbury offer was hard to ignore.
- CA TO NOT USE DUKES BALL IN FC CRICKET**
- MELBOURNE:** Cricket Australia has decided to not use the Dukes ball from this summer's Sheffield Shield, having used it alongside Kookaburra for four seasons. Australia has been using Dukes ball since the 2016-17 season in Shield matches with an aim to help its cricketers prepare for the hostile English conditions. CA's Head of Cricket Operations, Peter Roach, said the ineffectiveness of spinners in first-class cricket in recent times played a role in CA's decision to do away with the Dukes. The CA official, however, didn't rule out the possibility of re-introducing it later.
- PAULINHO OUT OF GERMAN CUP FINAL**
- LEVERKUSEN:** Bayer Leverkusen will be without forward Paulinho for the German Cup final against Bayern Munich on Saturday and the Europa League mini-tournament after he tore an anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee, the club said on Thursday. According to club the 19-year-old Brazilian injured his knee in a training session on Tuesday. He has been scheduled for an operation in Austria on Friday and will be out for several months.
- SL CRICKET KEEN TO HOST IPL IN AUGUST**
- COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka Cricket is optimistic of conducting its inaugural T20 league from August 8 to 22 despite the Govt's decision to postpone the reopening of the country's int'l airport till August 1. SL C has got the green signal from the sports ministry, but the Lanka Premier League's fate depends on the Govt's decision to open the country's borders for foreign arrivals.
- PUNJAB FC HANDED 3-WINDOW TRANSFER BAN**
- KOLKATA:** Punjab FC, formerly known as Minerva Punjab FC, have been handed a three-window transfer ban by FIFA's Discipline Resolution Chamber (DRC) for failing to pay the dues of North Macedonian footballer Hristijan Denkovski. The fiasco took place in August last year when Ranjit Bajaj was still an active decision-maker at the club and the ban was handed on Tuesday. The ban on signing any player, nationally or internationally, is from the upcoming summer transfer window. The ban will be lifted once the payment is made and the proof of payment is sent to FIFA. AGENCIES

Inter hits 6

Sanchez takes centre stage in Nerazzurri's rout of Brescia

AFP ■ MILAN



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

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

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

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

points of leaders Juventus with nine games still to play.

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

Sanchez, who made just his fourth league start this term, had his loan deal from Manchester United extended earlier in the day until the end of the Italian season.

Brescia, who were again without Mario Balotelli due to



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

ZLATAN RETURNS

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

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

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

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

Milan stayed seventh despite the late fightback.

Promising victory against Qatar will be suicidal: Stimac

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

"With strong belief in what we do and a clear mindset, everything is possible. We are certainly not going to come out on the pitch to lose the game. But to promise victory against Asian champions and such a great team as Qatar would be suicidal," Stimac said from his home in Croatia.

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

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

NEW DELHI:

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

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

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

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

It was earlier reported that the decision-makers in the BCCI were divided in 3:2 ratio with regards to deciding on the venue of the league. "See, it is a case of the

MS didn't look rusty in CSK camp: Chawla

CHENNAI:

Chennai Super Kings captain MS Dhoni was not looking rusty in the nets while practicing for the 2020 edition of the Indian Premier League, according to spinner Piyush Chawla. Dhoni was set to make his comeback to competitive cricket in this IPL before the coronavirus pandemic forced its indefinite postponement. Before the start of the tournament, the CSK management held a training camp at the Chepauk Stadium in early March where Dhoni was present.

"Honestly speaking, whenever a cricketer makes a comeback after such a long break, people think that he will be a bit rusty. But I am sure he was doing something at Ranchi because when Dhoni landed in the camp, he didn't look rusty at all. His routine work was — he played five-six balls and then used to clear the fence," Chawla told Aakash Chopra on the latter's YouTube channel.

"He batted for long. In fact, Suresh Raina, Ambati Rayudu, Dhoni and Murali Vijay...there were limited players in the camp and there were a number of bowlers. So everyone batted for long — 2-2:30 hours every day. Every batsman played 200-250 balls," said Chawla.

Dhoni has last played competitive cricket in India's semi-final tie against New Zealand in the 2019 ICC World Cup on June 10, 2019. IANS



MS Dhoni in a Chennai Super Kings uniform.

Villarreal maintain CL push



AFP ■ MADRID

Gerard Moreno took his season's La Liga goal tally to 15 with a double strike as Villarreal stayed on course for the Champions League with a 2-0 win at Real Betis on Wednesday.

Villarreal are in fifth place in the table, three points behind Sevilla who occupy the fourth and final qualifying spot for next season's Champions League.

Moreno opened the scoring

after just seven minutes from the penalty spot and added a fine individual goal on the half-hour mark.

Moreno's 15 goals are just two back from Real Madrid's Karim Benzema with Barcelona's Lionel Messi leading the way with 22.

Real Betis' hopes of a fight-back were undone just before the half-time whistle when French international Nabil Fekir was red-carded.

Villarreal have now won five and drawn one of their six games since La Liga resumed after a three-month coronavirus suspension.

Next up is a home clash with Barcelona at the weekend.

Meanwhile, veteran midfielder Raul Garcia scored twice to move Athletic Bilbao four points from the Europa League places in a 2-0 win at Valencia.

Garcia, 33, took his tally for the season up to 13 with his efforts either side of the break at the Mestalla.



Novak & wife test corona -ve

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic and his wife have tested negative for the coronavirus, his media team said on Thursday, 10 days after announcing they had contracted the virus.

The top-ranked player tested positive for the virus after playing in an exhibition series he organized in Serbia and Croatia amid the pandemic. "Novak Djokovic and his wife Jelena are negative for Covid-19. That was shown by the results of the PCR tests that both had in Belgrade," his media team said in a statement.

Both Djokovic and his wife had no symptoms and were in self-isolation in the Serbian capital since testing positive.

The news comes amid a new spike of cases in Serbia and the reintroduction of some restrictive measures, such as wearing of masks and social distancing. AP

Simmons rejoins Windies team

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

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

"Phil Simmons is back on the job. The West Indies head coach returned to the field with his players on Thursday after his mandatory quarantine and Covid-19 tests," Cricket West Indies said on Thursday.

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

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



in the UK to attend his father-in-law's funeral.

However, the 57-year-old Simmons received the backing of Board president Ricky Skerritt, who insisted that he had taken permission before venturing out and made it clear that Simmons' job is "not in any way threatened".

"I want to assure West Indies cricket fans that Phil Simmons still has the full

'The Ruth Strauss Foundation Test'

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Thursday announced that the third Test between England and West Indies will be named "The Ruth Strauss Foundation Test" to support families facing the death of a parent to cancer.

The players will wear special Ruth Strauss Foundation branded Test shirts with red caps being presented before play.

backing of Cricket West Indies no matter what has been said. When all is said and done, Phil's job is not in any way threatened by that letter," Skerritt said during a conference call.

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

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